

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Coláiste Chathail Naofa
Dungarvan, County Waterford
Roll number: 72220T

Date of inspection: 13 November 2013



**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
AGUS SCILEANNA** | **DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
AND SKILLS**
INSPECTORATE

Whole-School Evaluation Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in November 2013 in Coláiste Chathail Naofa, Dungarvan. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the inspection team met with the school's board of management, in-school management, and groups of teachers, parents and students. Inspectors also reviewed a range of school documentation and responses to questionnaires and examined other data in relation to the operation of the school. As part of the evaluation, a range of lessons across a number of subject areas was inspected. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Introduction

Coláiste Chathail Naofa is a co-educational school under the auspices of Counties Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB). There are 148 students in the post-primary sector of the school and three programmes are offered: the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. A significant Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme is also offered in the school. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Schools Initiative (DEIS).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- The board of management is committed to inclusive education.
- A significant number of priorities have been identified for school development.
- The principal and deputy principal are effective in carrying out the day-to-day management of the school.
- The very good pastoral supports in place and the range of co-curricular activities offered to students reflect a strong ethos of care for students.
- The quality of teaching varied; it was fairly good or good in the majority of lessons. Very good practice was noted in a small number of instances. There was significant scope for development in the methodologies used in a minority of lessons.
- Evidence accrued during the course of the evaluation indicates willingness on the part of the whole-school community to embrace change and improvement, but a need for greater leadership to bring this improvement to fruition.

Recommendations for Further Development

- The board of management should establish improved student attainment as its overarching priority and develop a statement of strategy in this regard.
- The principal should adopt a stronger leadership role in order to effectively progress the school's priorities.
- School management is encouraged to establish a representative staff council to act in an advisory capacity in matters relating to school improvement.
- Assessment for learning (AfL) strategies, differentiation and the tracking of student progress should be prioritised in order to ensure that all students reach their full potential.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The board of management, which is a sub-committee of the newly established WWETB, meets regularly and is committed to providing an inclusive education for the students in the school. At the time of the evaluation, the term of office of the board had expired and some of its members were no longer eligible to sit on the board. A properly constituted board of management should be established by the ETB as a matter of urgency.

Minutes of recent board meetings indicate that much of the board's time is devoted to processing disciplinary issues relating to individual students. This is a necessary aspect to the role of the board. Nevertheless, it is essential that it does not deflect from the board's responsibilities in relation to school governance, such as policy development and strategic planning.

All school policies required by legislation or circular are in place. However, a significant number of them are out of date. A systematic approach to policy development and review, with consultation with the relevant school partners, should be initiated without delay.

The board and senior management identified a number of priorities for the school. These include increasing enrolment, improving the school's profile within the local community, and focusing school self-evaluation (SSE) on literacy and numeracy, attendance, homework and attainment. These are all significant priorities and relevant to the current school context. Attainment should become the overarching priority of the school and the board should develop a statement of strategy in this regard. Senior management and staff should then use the SSE process to develop and implement strategies which will bring about measurable improvements in attainment.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The principal and deputy principal work as a team and are effective in carrying out the day-to-day management of the school. The principal has responsibility for the deployment of teachers, preparing the timetable, liaising with the ETB, and for communicating with teachers and parents. The deputy principal supports the principal in carrying out a number of essential administrative duties, including the PLC sector of the school. As junior and senior heads of discipline respectively, both have pivotal roles in the implementation of the code of behaviour. They also undertake some teaching duties.

The principal and deputy principal have complementary visions for the school. They both wish to raise attainment with a view to improving progression to further education. The principal's focus is on increasing the number of students in the school, which in turn would facilitate a greater number of subjects offered. The deputy principal articulated his desire to improve the level of care and support offered to the students already in the school, particularly those with additional social or educational needs. The senior management team meets each morning to discuss issues of a practical nature, but do not currently meet for the purpose of future planning for the school. It is recommended that the principal and deputy principal include in their schedules at least one formal planning meeting each week to plan for the achievement of identified priorities.

There is good deployment of post-holder positions to the second-level sector of the school with two assistant principal (AP) posts and six special duties (SD) posts. AP duties for the post-primary sector are the co-ordination of special educational needs (SEN) and the overall co-ordination of programmes. Special duties teachers carry out a range of administrative tasks and co-ordination of specific programmes. Some teachers carry out similar duties on a

voluntary basis. In light of the identified priorities and future curriculum reform, a review of post-holder duties is recommended to meet the evolving needs of the school.

The principal and deputy principal maintain a very close working relationship with some of the APs in the second-level sector; they regard them as part of the senior management team. The principal described his relationship with the general body of staff as positive; that of a team player, working with them rather than adopting an authoritarian approach. Notwithstanding the benefits of a team approach, it is recommended that the principal adopt a stronger leadership role in order to effectively progress the school's priorities.

The current code of behaviour is a lengthy document detailing the general school rules, the rewards and the disciplinary sanctions. However, there are inconsistencies in the implementation of sanctions. From a student, parent or teacher perspective, balancing care and discipline requires clarity, understanding and consistency in implementation. To this end it is recommended that, as school leaders and heads of discipline, responsibility for addressing serious breaches of the code of behaviour should rest with the principal or deputy principal. While it is acknowledged that the school endeavours to maintain an orderly learning environment, the frequency of using suspension as a sanction should be reviewed to take into account the loss of time in school and the implications for learning and attainment.

Professional development opportunities afforded to the staff in recent years include in-service training on AfL, differentiation and further developments in information and communication technology (ICT). There was little evidence in the lessons observed that these initiatives have been implemented at a practical level across the curriculum. A review of such initiatives should be undertaken by senior management as part of their strategic planning for improved attainment. Subject departments should then incorporate these methodologies into their common schemes of work for each year group and into their teaching.

The curriculum is tailored to the needs of the student cohort and a broad range of subjects is offered at both junior and senior cycle. However, significant deficits were noted in the deployment of resources across the curriculum. LCA students do not currently receive the necessary 28 hour instruction time as required by circular M29/95. Some of the school's curricular concessions are not being used for their specific intended purpose. In order to address these deficits, an audit of the resources available to the school should be undertaken. To ensure that the future deployment of resources is underpinned by sound education values and is sustainable in light of the school's identified priorities, school management is encouraged to establish a representative staff council to carry out review of curricular provision. Such a council could also act in an advisory capacity in progressing matters relating to improvement in student learning and, in this way, take collective ownership of ongoing school improvement.

There is significant provision for students with SEN in terms of teacher allocation and post-holder duties. The current model of provision is not tailored to the specific needs of identified students. A register of all students in receipt of additional support should be established detailing the amount and type of support provided and the designated teachers. A system to track and evaluate the progress of these targeted students should also be put in place. To support this provision in a resource-effective manner, a core learning support team should be established. Team teaching with a qualified learning support teacher should also be considered as a means of maximising resources.

A number of initiatives to improve students' literacy and numeracy development have been instigated under the DEIS programme. For example strategies have been put in place to improve attendance, but have not been evaluated with regard to their effectiveness. To assess their impact to date and to plan in a more targeted and integrated way, a review of current initiatives is recommended as DEIS moves into a new cycle.

Care for students' social and personal needs permeates all aspects of school life. A highly committed pastoral care team is in place to support students who are experiencing personal difficulties. The work of the home-school-community-liaison teacher (HSCL) complements the in-school supports afforded to students, while the national behavioural support service (NBSS) addresses the specific needs of a number of targeted students. A breakfast club operates each morning and lunches are provided where needed. Concern for students' health and well-being is also reflected in the range of extra-curricular activities organised by a number of teachers on a voluntary basis. Recent success in this regard included the awarding of an active flag to the school.

The recent decision to introduce monthly tests for students is acknowledged as a good beginning in the school's efforts to improve student attainment. To extend this good initiative, an academic monitoring system involving target setting and the review and analysis of outcomes in certificate examinations is recommended. Such an analysis should focus on the uptake of levels and on outcomes both within and across subject areas. This would enable senior management, staff and students to assess whether or not students are working to and reaching their full potential in all subject areas. It should also build on the improved attainment noted in some subject areas in the certificate examination results of 2013.

Educational and vocational guidance is afforded to senior cycle students primarily through timetabled lessons as part of the LCVP and LCA programmes. In accordance with the Education Act, senior management should ensure that a whole-school guidance plan, incorporating all relevant student supports including Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), is in place to meet the students' overall guidance needs. Personal counselling is provided by an external professional counsellor on one day each week.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Post-Primary Schools*, with the exception of the lack of implementation of the RSE programme at both junior and senior cycle.

Student leadership is facilitated through the work of the student council. According to the findings of the student questionnaires, a significant number of students believed that they did not have a say in relation to school improvement. To overcome this, all students should be informed on a regular basis that the student council serves as the forum for student contributions to school improvement.

1.3 Management of facilities

Coláiste Chathail Naofa is very well maintained and affords students a very attractive learning environment. There is a good ICT infrastructure and classrooms are equipped with computers, data projectors and, in some cases, visualisers. In-school professional development has recently been provided to support teachers in their use of Dropbox for the purpose of professional communication and dialogue.

A well-resourced JCSP library provides a supportive learning space for students and the work of the librarian, in conjunction with some of the teachers, has brought about the successful implementation of a number of literacy initiatives. This has resulted in a greater number of students using the library for personal reading.

The recently awarded Active Flag should be put up without delay in order to highlight this significant achievement and the students' efforts in this regard.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

Seventeen lessons were observed during the evaluation, across a range of year groups, programmes and subjects. The quality of teaching varied; it was fairly good or good in the majority of lessons. Very good practice was noted in a small number of instances. There was significant scope for development in the methodologies used in a minority of lessons.

Some subject department plans were more advanced than others in terms of linking the overall learning outcomes with the detail contained in their schemes of work. It is recommended that the intended learning outcomes for each topic be included in schemes of work, along with the methodologies and resources to be used and the protocols to assess student learning. Reference could also be made to the manner in which literacy and numeracy can be integrated into each subject. The subject departments or individual teachers who have already embraced these approaches to planning are encouraged to share their expertise in this regard.

Lesson plans, articulated in terms of content to be covered or proposed learning outcomes, were shared at the beginning of most lessons. Teachers should ensure that the proposed outcomes challenge the learning potential of all students. Teachers should revisit these outcomes at the end of the lesson to ascertain what learning has taken place.

Question and answer sessions were observed in all lessons. Best practice was noted where teachers blended lower-order and higher-order questions and alternated between global and directed questions. These practices optimised student participation in the lesson. In lessons where global questioning eliciting information recall prevailed, it was noted that a number of students remained disengaged throughout the lesson. All teachers are encouraged to use AfL questioning strategies to encourage full student participation and progression of learning.

ICT was very effectively integrated into some lessons. There were other lessons where more effective use of ICT would have enhanced learning.

Pair or group tasks were observed in most lessons. This is good practice as it affords students opportunities for active engagement and learning. The rationale for many of the group activities observed was unclear and in most instances did not result in active or meaningful learning. To ensure that pair or group work is effective in promoting active and independent learning, it is recommended that teachers provide activities which have a clear purpose, a defined time-frame and necessitate interaction between students.

The quality of student learning varied from fair to very good. It was good or very good in lessons where the methodologies used encouraged active student participation and where worksheets were differentiated in accordance with the students' needs. Where it was fair, there was scope for development in relation to the differentiated nature of the learning outcomes. In some lessons where common tasks were assigned, the higher-achieving students completed them well in advance of other students. However, they were not then provided with additional work to enable them to progress further. In these instances greater use of AfL strategies and differentiation in the teaching methods adopted and in the resources used is recommended to support student learning.

There was good classroom management and a positive learning environment in most of the lessons observed. Students were well behaved and applied themselves to the work assigned in these lessons. Most teachers were affirming and encouraging of students' efforts.

Homework was assigned in all of the lessons observed. A sample of students' journals indicated that homework is not assigned on a regular basis in some subjects. Many teachers checked copybooks in class and gave written or verbal comments on the work completed. It was unclear in some instances as to whether homework was being corrected or merely checked in terms of its completion. To this end, a whole school policy regarding the assigning, monitoring and correction of homework should be developed and implemented by all teachers

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Four subject inspections and one programme evaluation have been carried out in recent years. Whole-school recommendations arising from these reports relate to subject provision, the allocation of time, timetabling, and provision of dedicated classrooms to support the learning environment. Areas for development in relation to teaching and learning included improving attainment, methodologies to support greater communicative competence and student note-making.

3.1 Management

Most of the recommendations relating to whole-school provision have been addressed. However, the implementation of the weekly 28 hours instruction time for LCA is still outstanding. This must be addressed as a matter of priority as there is still a notable deficit in educational provision for students taking this programme.

3.2 Learning and teaching

Good progress has been made in implementing the recommendations outlined in the teaching and learning sections of previous subject inspection reports. The progress made in one subject area was confirmed as part of a recent follow-through inspection, while the implementation of recommendations in another subject brought about improved outcomes in the recent certificate examinations. It is recommended that all teachers continue their endeavours in effecting improvement in teaching and learning to ensure that the improvements realised to date are sustained and extended.

4. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

As a participant in the DEIS initiative, Coláiste Chathail Naofa has carried out work to improve literacy and numeracy development, attendance, retention and progression. This work provides a very good backdrop to the formalised introduction of the SSE process. Senior management and staff have had a number of meetings in recent months for the purpose of advancing the self-evaluation process. The emphasis on data collection has resulted in the completion of a number of surveys within the school. It is now timely to use the information accrued to date to set specific and measurable targets to be achieved within a given timeframe thereby advancing both the DEIS plan and SSE in an integrated manner.

The pastoral care system, the involvement of many teachers in activities to support the students and the findings from the student and parent questionnaires indicate willingness on the part of the whole-school community to embrace change and improvement. Improvement will only be possible with clear and effective leadership. To this end, school management should work towards implementing the recommendations arising from this evaluation and developing a roadmap which should lead to advances in school improvement and positive outcomes for students.

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Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

- The Board of Management of Coláiste Chathail Naofa welcomes this report which recognises that the board is committed to an inclusive education and that the good pastoral supports in place and the range of co-curricular activities reflect a strong ethos of care for students.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

- The Board of Management and staff acknowledge the recommendations made in the report and plan to review our school plan accordingly. The Board of Management is committed to developing an improved student attainment strategy and it will be on the agenda of all future meetings.
- The principal is committed in his vision to address key areas of school improvement and will set up three committees to lead in the following areas: an improved student attainment committee, an assessment for learning committee and an increased enrolment committee.
- A staff representative group, made up of the different programme co-ordinators and senior management has been set up to look at curriculum and subject options.
- A new board of management has been set up with new parents and staff representatives in line with ETB guidelines.
- Staff have been trained in the RSE programme and all students have been taught the required number of classes.