

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Newport College
Newport, County Tipperary
Roll number: 72450N

Date of inspection: 21 April 2016



**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 April, 2016 in Newport College. 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 of the school 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

Newport College is a co-educational, multi-denominational, post-primary school under the auspices of the Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB). It is one of two post-primary schools in Newport and its students come mainly from twelve feeder primary schools in Clare, Limerick and Tipperary. Enrolment is increasing with current mainstream enrolment at 127 students. There are also forty-seven Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) students attending Newport College. The school partakes in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Skills' action plan for educational inclusion. In addition to the Leaving Certificate and the Junior Certificate, it offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- Newport College is a positive and affirming place to learn and work.
- High expectations are set for punctuality, attainment, attendance and behaviour and students are well supported to achieve to their full potential.
- The evidence shows that parents, teachers and students are happy with the school and their involvement with it.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good or better in all the lessons observed.
- The school's clean and well-maintained surroundings reflect the high expectations set within the school and provide a good quality working and learning environment.
- The parents' association, board of management and in-school management are supportive of each other and work closely together for the overall good of the school.

Recommendations for Further Development

- Senior management should ensure the current ongoing work on health and safety is completed in line with relevant guidelines.
- All whole-school initiatives for teaching and learning should be combined to form one cohesive plan and the use of ICT to enhance students' learning experiences should be an integral part of this plan.

- Steps need to be taken to ensure that students are more actively involved in the learning process during lessons.
- Senior management needs to oversee and support an improvement in subject planning.
- Through long term planning for school development the board of management should aim to ensure applications for accommodation and associated resources are made sufficiently in advance of the needs arising.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The board of management is properly constituted and is coming to the end of its first full school year since formation. Some continuity of personnel has been maintained with the previous board. The board is involved in policy development and review. It supports and encourages collaboration with the community of Newport and its surrounds. Areas for the school's development have been identified and members are kept informed of operations and management by means of a principal's report. Good progress has been made in stabilising and increasing enrolment and this has resulted in the need to seek further accommodation. Future planning should be based on the demographics of the surrounding areas, any likely changes and local industry needs or plans.

Minutes of board meetings are kept but not all are sufficiently detailed and some lack relevant dates and names. It is vital that all decisions and action plans are recorded carefully. To further support and formalise levels of communication between staff, parents and the board it is recommended that an agreed written report be provided after every meeting. The board's plan to meet with the student council is a worthwhile initiative; it should also consider meeting formally with the parents' association on an annual basis.

The board is working on its identified priorities of implementing the revised junior cycle framework and promoting school self-evaluation. In progressing this work, it should ensure the potential of information and communications technology (ICT) to promote student learning is planned for and maximised. When used well, ICT is a valuable resource for encouraging self-directed learning, for varying classroom practice and for engaging students as well as providing an efficient way to record attendance and results. It allows ease of access to planning documents, schemes of work and resources and any modifications can be done quickly.

The senior management team members are energetic and enthusiastic. They collaborate with and support each other and their commitment to the school is evident. They foster good working relationships with staff and allow members to lead projects and initiatives. Both senior managers maintain a visible presence and are heavily engaged in the day-to-day running of the school. As the school is growing, it is necessary to put systems in place to release them from some of their day-to-day responsibilities. Clearer delineation of roles would minimise the potential for duplication and would ensure that the wider school population knows who the first point of contact should be, depending on the issue.

The school's health and safety statement is in need of further development, It should be reviewed and updated in line with the *Guidelines on Managing Safety and Health in Post-Primary Schools (2010)*. The school is aware that it needs to develop a systemised approach to the management of occupational health and safety based on its assessment of its risks and senior management has started working on this.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

A key strength of the school is its caring and dedicated staff. Distributed leadership allows staff members to lead and take responsibility for many initiatives, all of which add to the students' learning experiences. Post-holders and voluntary post-holders are commended for their diligence. It is recommended that whole-staff consultation form part of any future review of posts and that post-holders provide the board of management with a report of their work annually.

Senior management values the input of all staff members. Working task-groups have been set up to progress teaching and learning strategies and promote literacy and numeracy. The groups are functioning well; over time, they should feel confident enough to make decisions without having to refer back to the entire staff as there should always be room for reflection and review as processes move forward.

Teachers are open to accepting new ideas such as annual subject reports for the board of management, pre-submitting house examinations to senior management, and students' attendance at parent-teacher meetings. Their willingness to change reflects their professionalism, their focus on student well-being and their support of and good working relationship with management. All interactions observed among and between staff members and students were respectful and pleasant and the school motto 'every child matters' appeared to be well lived out.

Although there was some evidence of very good practice, there is a need to focus on improving the overall quality of subject planning. The most effective lessons observed during the inspection were carefully planned and suitably differentiated to ensure all students made progress. It is necessary for senior management to oversee the development of relevant and useful planning documents as some of the subject plans are in need of significant improvement. Planning for team teaching and combined groups should be included and targets for improvement should be set based on certificate examination results analysis.

High academic expectations are evident as students are expected to take all subjects at the higher level and a change can only happen after in-school discussion and with parental consent. There is also an expectation that students will be punctual, behave well and have good attendance. The code of behaviour is fair, implemented consistently and understood fully by all. Initiatives to counteract poor attendance have been very successful and the number of students attending lunchtime detention or being suspended has decreased. The consistency and diligence of the staff members in implementing these strategies is to be commended.

The student council is democratically elected and the members feel that they have a say in how the school operates. Their input is included in policy reform and management is happy to consider any issues raised by the students. During the current year, a quiz night for fifth-class feeder primary school pupils was organised and run by the student council and it proved to be very successful. Under the guidance of the link teacher, the student council members took full responsibility for the entire event. They gained valuable experience and proved that the high expectations set for their capabilities are justified.

A high value is placed on parental involvement. Parents are invited to events and celebrations in the school. They are consulted on issues relating to their children's education and are expected to attend the parent-teacher meetings, along with the student concerned.

Guidance, counselling and care strategies including social, personal and health education (SPHE) and relationships and sexuality education (RSE) programmes are in place to

support all students. Students with additional educational needs are supported in an inclusive and integrated manner. As the school caters for students from Tipperary, Clare and Limerick, it means that there is a need to foster working relationships with outside agencies in three different counties. Although this adds considerably to the workload when seeking support for students, the care team deals with the situation pragmatically and effectively.

The teachers' commitment to providing a good holistic education for the students can be seen in their willingness to facilitate a variety of extra-curricular activities. Time and commitment is given by staff members on a voluntary basis and has allowed for students to experience travel abroad as well as having opportunities to become involved in competitions and sport.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

1.3 Management of facilities

The school building and grounds are very well maintained and were litter free. As student numbers are growing, an application has been made for additional accommodation. Presently, there is one lesson weekly where no classroom is available and the hall needs to be used. Classrooms were well decorated with relevant posters and displays of students' work. Photographs of school outings and profiles of present and past students enhanced the décor of communal areas, all helping to produce a positive learning environment. The school has participated in An Taisce's Green Schools programme for a number of years and has recently been awarded its fifth green flag. This is a significant achievement.

ICT facilities are good. Each classroom has a computer, data projector and access to broadband. It is recommended that engagement with ICT be further developed to enhance teaching and learning, to ensure efficiency in administration and to provide a source of communication with the wider school community.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

In all lessons the quality of teaching and learning was good or better. In a significant number of lessons exemplary practice was noted. In almost all instances, lessons were very well prepared. This high quality of planning and preparation supported lessons that were well paced and delivered in a confident and engaging style. Developing the subject department plans to ensure that all the schemes include consideration of the methodologies to be used for the topics taught and creating a space where teachers can record a brief reflection about lessons will further support lesson planning.

The best practices that were observed involved lessons where there was a suitable range of learning activities for students. These activities were varied so as to engage learners of all learning styles. For example, visual and kinaesthetic approaches as well as group work and pair work were used well in the very good lessons observed. Good use of ICT was evident in a number of lessons.

The main recommendation in relation to teaching and learning arising from this whole school evaluation centres on seeking ways to maximise students' active involvement in their learning. This could be achieved by a variety of approaches and, in line with the approach inherent to school self-evaluation, would be best supported by first gathering data

at the subject level on the approaches that students find most helpful for their learning and then using and extending these approaches across all subjects. Students demonstrate a readiness and a maturity that suggests it would be beneficial to further develop the use of peer assessment. This would enable students to become more engaged in evaluating their own learning by comparing it with that of their peers.

Some very good examples of written formative feedback were noted during the evaluation. The benefit of providing students with short, written guidance on how to improve their work is that, it not only serves as a record, it also complements and gives further weight to the frequent, helpful, oral feedback that teachers give students. Feedback was a notable element of all lessons and helped students to focus on important elements of their learning. The best lessons used a structure where the learning intentions framed the lesson and where, at the end of the lesson, the learning intentions were used to help students recapitulate what they had learned.

The quality of lesson management was very good. Very good classroom routines were in use and students were clearly familiar and comfortable with them. Interactions were well managed and were in all instances highly respectful.

The learning environment in all classrooms was clean, bright and well maintained. Classrooms, which are primarily teacher-based, had, in nearly all instances, stimulating displays of students' work as well as suitable charts and posters on display.

The atmosphere in all lessons was very positive. It was underpinned by the excellent relationships that teachers and students enjoy. In the very best lessons, affirmation of students' efforts and work, and a sense of enjoyment were clearly evident in conjunction with purposeful, diverse, engaging and progressive learning activities.

There is a diverse cohort of learners in this school and in almost all the lessons there was a focus on their needs as individuals. Teachers responded to students' needs in a supportive and caring manner and had prepared the lessons to help ensure that they met the diversity of learning needs in their classes. Interactions with students showed that they enjoyed their lessons. Students gave good quality answers to questions posed by their teachers. The work that students had completed in their copybooks showed that their learning was progressive. In the copybooks viewed it was clear that students had completed a good volume of work and that their homework was corrected regularly.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

The four most recently published inspection reports were taken into consideration for this evaluation. Management is to be commended for acting on timetabling issues raised during previous evaluations. However, there is further work to be done to ensure that the recommendations made are shared with the whole staff and that relevant teaching and learning recommendations are implemented school wide. It would be prudent to ensure that inspection reports form the basis of future planning, both for whole-school and for subject planning.

3.2 Learning and teaching

Good progress has been made in the relevant subjects but there is still scope to fully engage with many of the recommendations. Learning could have been enhanced further had the students been given opportunities to reflect on their own progress and self-assess their level of learning. The good practice of giving verbal feedback was used frequently. Building on this practice by providing high quality formative feedback will ensure that assessment of

and for learning will give students guidance for improvement as well as affirmation of their work. The best examples of pair work and group work were where clear direction was given and definite timelines were set to complete tasks.

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

The school's self-evaluation process has successfully evolved from its DEIS planning. The views of staff, parents and students have been gathered to assist in the review and self-evaluation processes. Dividing the identified developmental priorities into short-term and long-term goals with time-bound, measureable action plans will help to keep the working groups focused and provide evidence of improvement when reviewed.

Newport College has a committed and dedicated staff which has made good progress on improving through the use of SSE. Evidence shows that it is working diligently on the main areas of focus. New data have been gathered to provide up-to-date baseline findings and effective working groups with clear agendas have been formed. For best results, it is important that the data gathered inform the planning process rather than being applied to previously decided action plans. All initiatives and strategies should be linked and unified. Long term planning should be based on relevant data such as is available from the Central Statistics Office and local industrial planning applications.

The school has huge capacity to improve through self-evaluation. The staff members provide a good mixture of enthusiasm and reflection and keep the students' best interests in mind for all decision making. The vigour and enthusiasm for improvement among senior management is commendable.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

In Newport College a Health and Safety review has been completed. There have been no major infrastructural changes since the last Health and safety statement. We are currently working with TETB and IPB developing systems to be implemented. On the 3rd October 2016 we attended TETB Risk Management programme which will be completed on 10th November 2016.

We are currently reviewing all policies in relation to Health and safety and they are presently with TETB for ratification.

We have introduced a shared learning platform for all staff.

We look forward to implementing the recommendations.