

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

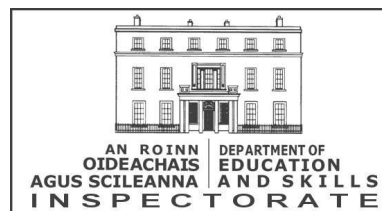
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole-School Evaluation  
Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

**CBC Monkstown Park  
Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin  
Roll number: 60180R**

**Date of inspection: 20 January 2012**



# **Whole-School Evaluation Management, Leadership and Learning**

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in January 2012 in CBC Monkstown Park. 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, 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***

CBC Monkstown has a long history as an educational provider for boys in the Dun Laoghaire area where the college's origins as CBS Eblana date back to the 1850s. In 1950 CBC Monkstown was founded and moved from the school's original location to its current location in Monkstown Park. Established under the patronage of the Christian Brothers, the school is now under the lay trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST).

As a fee-paying voluntary secondary school for boys, it has an enrolment of 531 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the established Leaving Certificate programme. Plans for the further development of the school buildings are at an advanced stage with a proposed completion date of 2013.

## **1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

### ***1.1 Key Findings***

- The quality of teaching and learning in CBC Monkstown Park is very good.
- The high quality leadership and clear vision for school development, provided by the senior management team, is a key factor in the ongoing improvement of the school.
- The leadership opportunities that have been provided for all members of staff have developed a culture of distributed leadership and shared responsibility.
- The day-to-day management of the school is carried out effectively.
- Students are proud of the school and commented favourably on the atmosphere and care provided for them.
- CBC Monkstown Park is a reflective school with the capacity to engage in robust school self-evaluative practices.

### ***1.2 Recommendations for Further Development***

- The board of management should take a more progressive role in dynamically leading and maintaining the impetus of school improvement.
- A whole-school approach should be taken to improving the quality of the formative assessment practices currently employed in all subject areas.

- The organisation and delivery of special education in the school should be reviewed.

## **2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

### ***2.1 School ownership and management – the Board of Management***

#### **Composition, functioning and fulfilment of statutory obligations**

The board of management presented as a committed and informed body and is in its final year of a three-year cycle. The effectiveness of the board's reporting mechanisms vary. The good practices currently in place in relation to communication and consultation with ERST and the teaching staff should be extended to parents and, where appropriate, students.

The principles of the ERST charter provide the board with a clear framework. However, strategic planning for the school's development is primarily driven by the school's senior management team with a significant input from the school's staff. The board should now facilitate the development of a more formalised school improvement plan. In doing so, the board will develop a more proactive leadership role and help to further support the school's already high functioning management and leadership structures.

The school has developed and reviewed a considerable number of required and relevant school policies. To further improve the ongoing review system, proposed review dates should be identified for all existing policies.

Results from parent questionnaires and discussions with parents, indicated an awareness of the school rules and a confidence in the implementation of the code of behaviour. Parents also indicated that they believe that there is a positive atmosphere in the school and that the school is effectively managed.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

#### **The school's priorities for development**

To improve the quality of teaching and learning, a substantial review of the school's practices was undertaken in 2009. As a result of this review, a number of items were identified as having a direct impact on students' experiences and attainment levels. These factors included student absenteeism, improving collaboration among teachers, professional development and the school's assessment and reporting structures. The goal underpinning this review, achieving excellence in teaching and learning, should provide all members of the school community with a common purpose that is grounded in improving students' experiences and outcomes.

Another key priority for the school is the realisation of its planned building project. Recently the school has made significant strides in relation to achieving this long-term goal and school management hope to see its completion by 2013.

## ***2.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning***

### **Leadership of staff**

Appointed in 2009, the principal provides very good leadership for the school and its staff. This direction has been identified and developed in a consultative manner with staff. The principal has empowered staff members to become active participants in the management and leadership processes within the school enabling a robust distributed leadership model to evolve. The deputy principal, who has considerable experience at senior management level, contributes to the ongoing development of the school in addition to carrying out a significant teaching role and ongoing managerial tasks.

The principal and the deputy principal operate effectively as a team. Their approach fosters and encourages delegated responsibility among staff and helps to promote the culture of openness to review and improvement which was evident throughout the inspection.

Senior management encourages staff members to take on leadership roles in many aspects of the school's operations. The middle management team consisting of four assistant principals and twelve special duties teachers is responsible for a wide variety of curricular, administrative and pastoral duties. In addition to their assigned individual tasks, the assistant principals also meet with the principal on a weekly basis to discuss ongoing school management and leadership issues. These meetings provide senior management with useful insights and support from the assistant principal group.

An advisory board of studies has been in operation in CBC Monkstown Park for a considerable period of time. This voluntary group meet on a weekly basis to discuss issues prioritised by the principal. The board of studies discuss key issues with a view to providing the principal and the staff as a whole, with a considered report identifying key findings and recommendations for improvement. Salient examples of reviews undertaken by the board of studies include the introduction of additional mid-term reports and the formalisation of a professional development policy. This group is proactive and responsive and actively promotes school improvement.

Staff meetings are scheduled regularly providing staff with a forum to discuss the various aspects of school organisation and improvement. The recent incorporation of peer-led continuing professional development (CPD) sessions enables and promotes the sharing of good practice among staff members. The further development of professional capacity in the area of formative assessment techniques should now be prioritised. This should be addressed through the implementation of a variety of initiatives including formal CPD but also incorporating strategies such as peer-mentoring and inter-departmental workshops.

The more comprehensive subject plans reviewed demonstrated evidence of self-reflection at subject department level. In the best examples, strategic plans were identified, examination results analysed and inspection recommendations developed. The collaborative practices currently being developed should be continued, further enabling good practices to be shared within and between subject departments.

### **Leadership of students**

Results from student questionnaires and discussions with students, indicated good levels of satisfaction with most aspects of educational provision in the school. Students expressed very positive attitudes in relation to school atmosphere and everyday interactions with other students. Areas where students were less satisfied included the school's facilities, use of

information and communication technologies (ICT) in lessons and their ability to contribute to school improvement. To place a greater emphasis on the student voice in the school, the board should proactively encourage inputs from the student council at board meetings and throughout the school in general.

The admissions procedure is outlined in the school's admissions policy. This policy lists clear selection criteria in order of priority. While the school endeavours to fulfil its inclusive ethos in the practices embedded in everyday school life, some aspects of the admissions policy should be reviewed in order to reflect the school's commitment to inclusive education. The board should prioritise this review in order to ensure that school policy reflects the many inclusive practices in place.

The school actively encourages all students to become involved in extra-curricular activities, primarily rugby, in order to develop school spirit and camaraderie. The rationale behind compulsory involvement in sports should be clearly outlined and explained to all students in order to maximise the benefits of their participation as these reasons were unclear during the discussions held with the student focus group.

The system governing the management of student's behaviour in the school is outlined in the school's discipline code. Both parents and students reported that they are fully aware of the school rules. A clearly defined pastoral system is in place in order to support students and to address instances of misbehaviour. Students identified the area of positive reinforcement as an area of weakness in the school. It is recommended that a more comprehensive approach be taken to developing the school's code of discipline into a more positive code of behaviour that sets out the programmes, practices and procedures that together form the school's plan for helping students behave well and learn well. This review should be carried out using the National Educational Welfare Board's (NEWB) *"Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools"*.

Attendance is monitored very effectively in the school. A new system has recently been introduced and once this system has been embedded, it will provide a very good method of monitoring and tracking student absenteeism.

CBC Monkstown Park offers students a very broad curriculum. Overall this curriculum is scheduled effectively. First-year students are given the opportunity to sample optional subjects until Christmas and students identified this as a positive intervention to support their subject choice. Primarily, classes are of mixed-ability with the exception of some banding arrangements in Irish, Mathematics and French. It was reported that these arrangements are operating well. The vast majority of students do not receive the minimum twenty-eight hours instruction time per week. School management has made some progress in addressing this and should continue to develop the school's curriculum and scheduling systems to ensure that all year groups receive the required instruction time as per circular letter M29/95.

Analysis of attainment in the state examinations indicates that student outcomes are consistently high in almost all subject areas.

Educational support for students is well documented and itemised in an educational support student register, as is good practice. Individual education plans (IEP) have been developed for a number of students and this practice is commended. Currently, resource allocations are not designated entirely to their intended recipients but are partly used to provide tuition for students that the school deems to require additional educational assistance. The school should ensure that all resource allocations are deployed to support the students who are allocated hours by the special educational needs organiser (SENO).

In addition to this, a significant amount of time is allocated to some teachers delivering educational supports for the purposes of planning and preparation. While the allocation of some administration time is acceptable, the quantity of time in this instance is excessive and should be reduced. The timing of the current sixth-year numerical ability test should also be reviewed in order to maximise the time available for any resulting interventions.

### ***2.3 Management of facilities***

The full integration of an ICT infrastructure in the existing building presents some challenges, however where even partial integration has been achieved, teachers' and students' access to ICT has improved. Notable efforts have been made to develop virtual learning environments in some subject areas and these efforts are commended. To prepare for the impending development of facilities, school management should identify areas requiring CPD particularly in relation to developing a culture of e-Learning in the school.

## **3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

### ***3.1 The quality of learning and teaching***

Twenty three lessons were evaluated and with the exception of TY all year groups were observed. The range of subjects included core, optional and practical subjects.

The majority of lessons were very well planned and structured and demonstrated continuity with prior learning. The majority of teachers were very well prepared for lessons and there was good compliance with correct procedures during classroom activities. In a significant majority of lessons, teachers identified and shared learning outcomes with students and then used them at the end of the lesson to summarise and to evaluate the learning. This good practice should occur in all classrooms.

In some lessons, teachers used ICT to illustrate key concepts and give them a real-life context. ICT was best utilised when it was integrated into the flow of the lesson so that it served a specific learning aim and represented a productive use of lesson time. The lack of a good ICT infrastructure in the school made the choice of suitable resources in many lessons somewhat restrictive. There was scope for the further focused use of ICT in many lessons. Where relevant, a clear focus on the use of subject-specific terminology or vocabulary was evident, and this was often reinforced by visualisation on the board.

A positive rapport and good classroom atmosphere prevailed in all lessons. Teachers were caring and supportive of their students who in turn were courteous and respectful of their teachers. Teacher affirmation of student effort was a key feature of all lessons. The most successful lessons facilitated students' self-directed learning, often through group work, pair work and practical activities. This approach should be extended so that there is a good balance between teacher instruction and student activities. Overall teachers should improve the levels of student engagement and participation in lesson activities.

In a significant majority of lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good, very good or exemplary. There was convincing evidence of good quality learning in most of the lessons observed. However, co-operative learning should be further developed through brainstorming, pair work and the assignment of appropriate written tasks. Best practice was observed when differentiated tasks were implemented to support increased levels of student participation and engagement. Students were encouraged to think, to reflect and to provide considered responses to questions posed. Many teachers used a range of student directed questions to test understanding and recall.

A range of assessment modes were employed including questioning, facilitated discussion, oral feedback and in-class testing. Some teachers checked the quality of student understanding at intervals in lessons through the use of customised worksheets. Verbal feedback given to individual students and to the whole class offered clear advice and direction for improvement in the majority of lessons. However the practice of giving written, formative feedback was not evident in many of the students' copy books examined. This is an essential element of *Assessment for Learning* and the school should strive to implement it in every subject area. This strategy should improve uptake of higher level and student achievement across the curriculum. Homework is assigned regularly in most subject areas as evidenced in student copies and journals. Teachers were seen to collect and monitor homework frequently.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

##### ***4.1 Management***

Good efforts have been made to address the recommendations made in previous inspection reports. The school timetable has been adjusted to accommodate recommended changes in Physical Education, Technical Graphics and Physics. Subject department capacity building has been supported and renewed subject plans have been developed. TY planning should be further developed in line with Department guidelines and subject plans should include the setting of long term goals for each subject to inform future planning. School management has addressed some compliance issues and has improved subject choice for students choosing senior science subjects. Efforts have also been made to increase the number of students choosing higher-level Irish and these efforts should be monitored and maintained.

##### ***4.2 Learning and Teaching***

Teachers have attended well overall to the implementation of many of the recommendations made in previous subject inspection reports. There was evidence of planning of learning outcomes through sequencing of lesson content and activity and selection of appropriate resources. A range of methods, including those that promote active student learning, investigative and discovery learning was evident in some lessons. However further use of co-operative learning to improve student engagement would be desirable.

#### **5. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

##### ***5.1***

CBC Monkstown Park is a reflective school and has identified key areas for development. To achieve these goals, the school has put strategies in place and has monitored the effectiveness of these strategies in some cases. To improve this system further, a clear focus should be placed upon gathering reliable quantitative data that can be used to ascertain the level of success of particular interventions. It is the view of the inspection team that the educational community in CBC Monkstown Park possesses the required commitment, leadership and collective professional capacity to achieve this positive outcome.

# **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 would like to thank the Inspectorate for its detailed and valuable report.

#### **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 of CBC Monkstown will be addressing the recommendations outlined in the WSE-MLL report in the next academic year.