

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Terenure College
Templeogue Road, Dublin 6W.
Roll number: 60570H**

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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 October 2013 in Terenure 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 manager, 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

Terenure College is a Catholic, voluntary, fee-charging, secondary school for boys. The school operates under the trusteeship of the Irish Province of Carmelites who first opened a school in Terenure in 1860. The school is committed to the holistic development of all students, with the promotion of the Carmelite ethos reflected in the Carmelite values of community, prayer and service. The patron of Terenure College is the Prior Provincial. The school has a current enrolment of 689 post-primary students.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- The school has a unitary manager but is working toward the establishment of a board of management.
- School policies are developed collaboratively but some are in draft form and some are in need of review.
- The principal and the deputy principal collaborate effectively as a senior management team.
- The teaching staff are self-motivated and welcome leadership opportunities.
- The broad curriculum and the range of extra-curricular activities are appreciated by students and parents.
- A caring ethos promoted by the Carmelites pervades the school and is sustained by the staff to create a strong sense of community.
- The quality of learning and teaching ranged from good to very good in all lessons observed and exemplary practice was frequently observed during the course of the evaluation.

Recommendations for Further Development

- The establishment of a board of management should be progressed.
- A school plan should be developed which identifies priorities for the school and planned actions to address these.
- Management should lead a review of all school policies and long-established practices including the placement of students.
- The principal, together with the deputy principal, should proactively lead developments in teaching to improve student learning.
- Timetabling concerns regarding the provision of social, personal and health education and physical education should be addressed

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The Prior of Terenure College functions as the school's unitary manager. The school has benefited substantially from the continued support of the Carmelites in sustaining the school ethos as well as from their significant investment in the school's infrastructure and facilities. The manager has a deep knowledge of the school and works closely with the principal. They have developed clear decision-making procedures and consequently the school is well organised and efficiently managed. Although planning is in progress, a key decision to establish a board of management in line with section 14 of the Education Act, 1998 has not been achieved. This matter should be progressed as a priority. The breadth and depth of knowledge and experience that board of management members drawn from the wider school community can bring will enhance the management of the school.

Teaching staff, parents and students actively contribute to policy formation. While many of the policies have been recently updated, some are still in draft form, and the attendance and the substance use policies require review and further development. In addition, the manager should lead a review of the admissions policy to make clarifications and to ensure there are no barriers to inclusion. The school is advised to clearly mark all policies with the date of ratification and the date proposed for review. A structure to track the development and review of all policies should be created.

The principal and the deputy principal collaborate effectively as a senior management team with a clear division of roles and responsibilities. They are highly visible in the school and readily accessible to parents and staff. They meet daily to ensure the well-organised operation of the school. They are ably supported by the six form masters who function as a middle management team. The team meets weekly with management and is consulted about all school matters. Consideration should be given to form masters remaining with their year group throughout the junior or senior cycle to facilitate continuity for the students and parents, and to foster the development of relationships. Teachers with assigned posts contribute positively to the life of the school. In addition to posts of responsibility paid by the Department, the school finances a number of privately-paid posts. The school is advised to develop a transparent written policy regarding the appointment of assigned posts.

A group of dedicated parents leads a vibrant parents' association in actively supporting the school and contributing to many aspects of school life. All parents are members of the association and support the work of the association with good attendance at various events. Good communication links have been formed between the association and the principal. In the questionnaires administered during this evaluation, almost all parents who responded agreed that overall, they were happy with the school.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

In 2008, the trustees commissioned a strategic development plan for the school. The plan identified ten key decisions, each with a number of actions. This plan has served as a guide in the development of the school and most of the key decisions have been implemented.

While many of the essential elements of a school plan exist independently, the school does not, in effect, have a whole school plan. It is recommended that a school plan with an overview of the established features of the school and a development section specifying priorities and planned actions be developed. The findings of this report and the school's engagement with the school self-evaluation process will support the advancement of the latter section. The plan should be regularly reviewed and updated. It should serve as a basis

for the work of the school as a whole and for evaluating and reporting on whole school progress and development.

The school manager and the senior management team have identified teaching and learning as a priority for development. Ongoing work in this area includes the advancement of a homework credits and reporting system, a mentoring scheme for sixth years, and the provision of after school and holiday study facilities. The development of literacy across the school was recently identified as the focus of the school's self-evaluation process. A teacher has been named as the literacy link teacher and a working group representing a range of subject areas has been formed. A policy has been developed and a number of literacy activities have been identified in most subject plans. Whole school targets based on evidence related to the identified needs of the students should now be set. There was scope for literacy development in most of the lessons observed. The enhancement of literacy skills across the school requires further research and planning.

The provision of continuous professional development (CPD) is supported by management. The school should consider auditing the professional developmental needs of the teaching staff particularly in relation to teaching and learning, and literacy development, and then sourcing expertise from within the staff and outside the school to provide on-going CPD in-service.

Senior management are very affirming of staff and are proactive in delegating leadership roles widely to build capacity. Members of staff are self-motivated and welcome leadership opportunities. The deployment of teachers is effective and the timetable has been very well constructed through appropriate consultation with teachers. A broad curriculum is on offer and management strives to meet the needs of all students. This is evidenced by the decision to drop German, to introduce Applied Maths and to consider providing Agricultural Science.

A caring ethos is promoted by the trustees and sustained by the staff. There is a very good pastoral care structure and a range of support services are in place. Most students and almost all of the parents who participated in the questionnaire stated that students felt safe and cared for in the school. The guidance and counselling service is effective. It provides individual and group support and monitors retention and progression. A diligent pastoral care team meets weekly to discuss the provision and to monitor specific students. Twice annually form masters meet with the team to review their year group. The support provided for students with special educational needs (SEN) or in need of learning support is appropriately structured. The SEN co-ordinator and the guidance counsellor meet weekly to monitor specific students. The chaplaincy team and the form tutors also contribute to the pastoral care of the students.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) for third year students is currently being delivered in a modular format which is not in line with best practice. The SPHE curriculum is not designed to be delivered as a set of stand-alone modules. Modules should be integrated and cross-referenced across other modules. Best practice is when SPHE is delivered by experienced and appropriately trained teachers during one weekly lesson throughout the school year. This timetabling issue should be addressed.

Student punctuality and attendance is monitored, recorded and reported to parents. However, there is a need to update the school's attendance strategy. A clearly structured code of behaviour is implemented through a well organised student support system. The separate anti-bullying policy now requires changes in light of Circular 045/2013 and the publication of revised anti-bullying procedures for schools.

Mixed-ability grouping in first year is good practice. All first-year students follow the same curriculum apart from their choice of one optional subject. Information about this choice is given to students during open days. The school is advised to consider giving students more than one curricular option in first year and to providing first year students with the opportunity to sample a number of options. This will enable students to make more informed choices based on actual experience.

In second year, students are set into classes for English, Irish and Mathematics based on their achievement in first year. The school is advised to delay setting of students until third year in light of research that indicates that setting compared with mixed-ability placement can have a negative impact on students. Where setting continues to take place in the junior cycle, the school is advised to consider the results of standardised cognitive, literacy and numeracy assessments as well as past attainment.

There is much scope for developing subject planning. Subject plans follow a common template with most focussing on the topics and content to be covered annually for each year group. A few subject plans are more like a series of individual plans combined into one document. Subject department planning is a vehicle for collaboration and dialogue between teachers and for ensuring consistency in terms of ensuring that the learning outcomes for each year group are achieved. It is therefore recommended that further development of the plans should focus on identifying the intended learning outcomes for each section of the students' course. There is also a need for greater focus on teaching and learning approaches in the plan. Some individual teachers do ask their students to review their experiences of the subject on an annual basis or more frequently and such practice is commended. In reviewing their plans on an annual basis, it is recommended that subject departments focus on uptake of higher level as well as student performance in each subject in certificate examinations as this could lead to key decisions being taken about placement of students and subject options.

The Transition Year plan should be reviewed in line with Circular M01/00 to ensure full compliance especially in subject planning, completion of a full school year and the approach to Leaving Certificate material.

Each subject has a faculty secretary, which is generally a permanent position. It is suggested that each subject plan contain a description of the key features of this role and that the position be rotated among teachers in order to allow different capacities of teachers to emerge. There is a good system of communication between subject faculties and senior management. Furthermore, electronic folders for each subject provide a good means for sharing resources between teachers. Assessment methods are also identified in the plans. Management provides an analysis of results in certificate examinations to each subject department on an annual basis and this analysis features in some subject plans.

There is a representative student council that is democratically elected. They meet regularly with a staff representative. Each member chooses to serve on one of three sub-committees which contribute to cultural, green schools and fundraising activities. The council is consulted as appropriate in the development of relevant school policies. However, as only some of the students who completed questionnaires recognised that they had a say in how to make the school a better place, there may be a need for the student council both to liaise more with the student body and to promote their role. Students are given additional opportunities to develop leadership through participation in a range of activities.

Confirmation was provided that the manager 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

Students are based in single classrooms for most non specialist subjects. While there are many advantages to this arrangement, it can restrict some teachers in accessing information and communication (ICT) technology and in using a wide range of teaching materials that would have to be transported to each lesson. This arrangement should be kept under review. Teacher-based classrooms would also give scope for increasing the display of student work and the development of a more print-rich environment in the context of the school's focus on literacy.

Students are offered a broad range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. There are high rates of participation and almost all the students who completed a questionnaire stated that they partake in activities outside of class time.

The school has a very good range of facilities which are acknowledged and appreciated by students, parents and staff. The school accommodation including a recently refurbished theatre and a library, and the extensive grounds and sports facilities are maintained to a high standard. There is a comprehensive health and safety statement which outlines a good process for identifying issues and acting on them.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in all lessons observed and exemplary practice was frequently observed during the course of the evaluation. Most lessons were engaging and well delivered, Key strengths included a high standard of questioning, linking the current lesson with previous learning, and high quality interaction with students during lessons. Teachers included all students in their questions, asked a range of lower-order and higher-order questions according to their students' abilities and often used questions to focus students. Students in turn frequently asked questions of their teachers.

A feature of almost all lessons was the strong expectation of student participation in their learning. The level of teacher-student interaction in lessons was a key strength in this regard. Co-operative learning was encouraged in some lessons which led to very good student-student interaction and strengthened learning. There were, however, opportunities for co-operative learning that could have been exploited more in some lessons. There was evidence that students were appropriately challenged by the teaching and learning activities in almost all lessons and were making very good progress. Teacher enthusiasm for their subject was a real motivator of students.

Preparation for all lessons observed during the evaluation was very good. However, some teachers ran out of time and homework was assigned hastily. Many lessons would have benefited from the introduction of the intended learning outcomes at the start and a final consolidation phase to ensure that the learning outcomes were achieved. It is therefore recommended that all teachers adopt this approach, as it will ensure that students become more aware of what they have learned in each lesson. Teachers had clearly reflected on the best way to approach their delivery of lesson content and this, in general, led to very effective lessons. Where observed, ICT was used effectively. There may be a need for further professional development in this area.

Homework was assigned in most lessons and students are frequently tested. There is good communication with home about student attainment and the completion of homework. Students' work was generally well maintained and there was evidence that teachers

frequently correct the students' work. There was evidence of some good individual practice in the use of assessment for learning. In some lessons, teachers gave students developmental feedback on their written work so that the students could clearly identify their strengths and areas for development. Peer assessment was also very well used in one lesson. However, there is a need for the introduction of a whole school approach to assessment for learning techniques. It is therefore recommended that management take a more proactive role in leading the further development of teaching and learning in the school.

Classroom management was effective in almost all lessons and the quality of student-teacher relationships and student-student relationships was respectful. Students were affirmed and encouraged in their efforts in many lessons. Most teachers moved around the classrooms encouraging interaction and ensuring that students were completing their tasks.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

Progress has been made in the implementation of a number of the recommendations made in subject inspection reports. The school manager and the principal discuss the recommendations and present them to the staff. Faculty secretaries have the responsibility to ensure their implementation and a number of subject plans indicated engagement with recommendations. Physical Education is now more accessible to senior cycle students but it still an option and provision is not in line with Department policy. It is recommended that all students be timetabled for Physical Education.

3.2 Learning and teaching

A number of previous recommendations centred on strategies to promote learning. A number of examples of co-operative learning were observed as were isolated examples of aspects of assessment for learning. However, there is still room for improvement in implementing these strategies across the school. The use of the target language was very good in all but one of the observed language lessons. Some improvements were noted in collaborative subject planning but, this is still an area for further attention. Each subject department should identify areas for collaborative development and areas for review on an annual basis.

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

The school has previously engaged in self review through a strategic development plan. Stakeholders were consulted on issues in relation to the future development of the school. Most of the objectives have been reached. In addition, a number of individual teachers have commenced the use of surveys with students to evaluate their own effectiveness. More recently the school has begun to engage with the school self-evaluation process.

There is a strong commitment by all stakeholders in Terenure College to the continued development of the school. Staff are firmly supportive of management and capable of and open to change. It is important that senior management lead this, especially in terms of developments in teaching to improve learning.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Terenure College greatly welcomes the Whole-School Evaluation (Management, Leadership and Learning) Report and is pleased with all of its findings. We believe that it reflects very accurately the core values of the College – particularly that a caring ethos permeates the school creating a strong sense of community.

The College is justifiably proud of the quality of the relationships that exist among its members. We are happy that a deep sense of collaboration which permeates management, staff, parents and pupils was acknowledged. It was particularly satisfying that exemplary practice in learning and teaching was frequently observed by the inspectors. As recognised by the Report, the College has always strongly supported the provision of continuous professional development. This, together with a committed and dedicated staff, leads to lessons that the inspectors found to be engaging and well-delivered with a high standard of questioning of students. The College is pleased that the high level of teacher enthusiasm for their subject was recognised as a real motivator of students.

As the Report notes, the overwhelming majority of the parents are happy with the school. In addition, they felt that their children were safe and cared for. It is also good that the role and work of a dedicated and vibrant Parents' Association was acknowledged.

However, the students were always at the heart of the College. It is therefore no surprise that students felt safe and cared for in the school and that the inspectors recognised that a very good Pastoral Care structure and range of support services existed in the school. The broad curriculum, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities (all continually evaluated) helps to meet the needs of all students. As the report states, the student council is only one way of many in the College through which leadership skills are developed among the students. All of these things support and strengthen the level of student-teacher interaction in lessons which the inspectors found to be very good.

The Carmelite Order continues to provide significant support to the College especially through the provision of facilities, finances, and through the appointment of a number of Carmelite friars to work in variety of roles within the College (teaching, principals, and chaplain). It is much appreciated that this support and continued presence was acknowledged by the inspectors during their evaluation.

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

As the Report notes, it is the intention in the very near future to establish a Board of Management. Given the intricate nature of the College campus (with two schools, a religious community, a public church, a rugby club, a swimming pool, and extensive grounds among other things), this will take complex work to establish it on a strong foundation.

The current College strategic plan has nearly run its course. It is envisaged that a new school plan will be developed integrating together the findings of this report and the school self-evaluation process. A review of all school policies (including the placement of students and a new Transition Year plan) will take place within the next year by management.