

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Rosemont School  
Sandyford, Dublin 18  
Roll number: 60930L**

**Date of inspection: 2 October 2014**



**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 October in Rosemont School. 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***

Rosemont School is a fee-charging all-girls school that welcomes students from a large catchment area. It was founded by a group of parents in 1977. The school's trustee body, Rosemont Educational Foundation Ltd. (REFL), is inspired by the teachings of the Catholic Church and Opus Dei. The school relocated from Blackrock to Sandyford in 2012.

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

### ***Key Findings***

- The quality of leadership and management at all levels is very effective.
- There is a well-developed sense of delegated responsibility and a strong commitment among staff.
- Student care, academic monitoring and support structures are highly developed in the school.
- In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was of a consistently high standard.
- There has been significant progress in addressing almost all recommendations made in previous evaluations.
- The school is a reflective and proactive organisation that implements very good self-evaluative practices to achieve ongoing and lasting school improvement.

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

- A collaborative system of strategic planning, designed to evolve with the school, should be further developed and embedded.
- The school's admissions policy should be reviewed to reflect the school's current admissions procedures.
- The practice that results in some sixth-year students receiving less than the minimum 28 hours instruction time should not re-occur.
- The school should initiate a collaborative review of its Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes with a view to developing greater awareness of the content of the programmes among parents and addressing any perceived shortfalls identified by students.

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

### ***1.1 School ownership and management***

The board of management of Rosemont School effectively carries out its functions and actively promotes the school's ethos. The board has a systematic approach to school policy review and development and has developed a wide range of essential and appropriate school policies.

The board is a reflective body that promotes a self-evaluative approach to school management and leadership. The performance and professional development meetings held by the board with the school principal and senior management team are good examples of this approach. In reflecting on its own work, the board has identified specific areas where additional expertise and advice would assist and strengthen its ability to make more fully informed decisions. The board has also identified curriculum issues as an area to be developed and has made plans to reinstate an academic advisory committee that would help inform and guide the board's decision making in this area. This is most timely and beneficial particularly due to the ongoing developments with the Junior Certificate Student Award.

The board has initiated the development of focused strategic plans. These plans are now progressing using the SMART model of planning. Recent work on the school's enrolment plan should be seen as a template for future developments. This approach will help management and staff to contribute more effectively to the medium and long-term developmental priorities outlined in the school plan and provide a greater level of accountability and transparency among all members of the school community. This approach will help to maintain the continuity and impetus of planned and ongoing initiatives and projects.

The school currently has capacity for expansion in terms of enrolment. Projections indicate that school enrolment will grow steadily over the next number of years. The school's admissions policy contains a number of clauses that could be perceived as making access potentially difficult for students. These clauses should be removed in order to more accurately reflect the school's actual admissions procedures.

The senior management team is comprised of the principal, deputy principal and a member of the teaching staff who is appointed for a three-year term of office. This team is a cohesive and effective unit. The team recently facilitated a full review where staff members were encouraged to provide constructive feedback on the performance of the senior management team. This resulted in a number of developmental priorities for the senior management team including clearer role identification and improved communication systems. The senior management team's openness and commitment to improvement in this regard is highly commended.

The senior management team, led by the principal, capably executes the management and leadership of a wide variety of initiatives and tasks for which it takes responsibility. The school's only special duties teacher has responsibility for planning, organising and reviewing the school's praiseworthy Transition Year (TY) programme. An effective partnership approach to managing the school is in place and good systems have been implemented to facilitate this partnership approach. Teachers are empowered to lead initiatives and to take responsibility for various interventions. The commitment of teaching staff in willingly taking on such responsibilities is highly commended. This effective distributed leadership model has enabled the school to develop and strengthen its supports for students considerably. The senior management team and teaching staff should work towards developing this strength within the recommended strategic planning system.

Since the school's foundation, partnership between the school and the parent body has been central to the school's ethos. This is a significant strength in Rosemont School. Parents are encouraged and facilitated to be involved in their daughters' educational and social development through regular meetings and coaching sessions. Social, educational and fund-raising events are planned regularly and are used to develop greater links between the school and the wider parent body.

Students work with the student council liaison teacher to elect and carry out the functions of the student council. Student council members have received training and have collectively identified a number of improvement issues that they would like to address. One such area is the school's environmental sustainability. This priority should be progressed through the Green Schools' initiative when practicable.

### *1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning*

The senior management team demonstrates a commitment to excellence, improvement and reflection. The principal observes lessons and encourages new teachers to improve and develop their practice. Peer observation has been promoted and supported in the school as part of an ongoing project. There is scope for further development in this area through the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process.

School management provides effective leadership to ensure good quality teaching and learning. Very good systems have been established to facilitate ongoing development and review in the areas of student coaching, TY, student support, international student care and special educational needs. Excellent leadership for learning is evident, particularly through the fostering of a culture that promotes reflective practice on the part of both teachers and students, shared learning and the provision of good information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning.

Ownership of learning is a key component of the school's ethos. Students, parents and teachers emphasised its importance, and the concept was evident in practice in the lessons observed. The school strives to equip students with the necessary skills for life and for independent thinking. This is achieved through a concerted approach to maximising students' abilities to think, adapt and improve. Moodle is utilised in this context and students are encouraged to take personal responsibility for their learning and to catch up, practise or research topics using this virtual learning platform.

Another positive method, employed to lead students, is the school's 'Virtues' programme. This programme is a systematic approach to developing students' personal values within the school's ethos. This initiative provides class teachers with a tangible opportunity to lead students and promote positive characteristics and traits. The Virtues co-ordinator provides inputs for teachers and parents and this helps to maintain a consistent and structured approach to the delivery of this beneficial programme.

Formal academic monitoring and testing occurs approximately six times per year for all students. The results of these tests are made available to parents. Student coaches review attainment trends collaboratively with their students and this process helps students to identify issues and to make any required adjustments. International students are given direction through the international student liaison officer and receive additional English language support where necessary. During the student focus group meeting, some students suggested a more scaffolded approach to developing first-year students' and international students' independent learning skills, literacy skills and work load in order to facilitate a smoother transition into the ownership of learning system.

The school curriculum is broad and balanced and students are given the opportunity to sample all subjects in first year prior to making their optional subject choices for junior cycle. The current configuration of the sixth-year timetable, where up to eight subjects may be studied, does not ensure that all sixth-year students receive a minimum of twenty-eight hours instruction time. This practice should not re-occur.

Positive student behaviour is encouraged through the implementation of the school's code of behaviour. In the context of a planned expanding enrolment, attention should be given to developing an appropriate ladder of referral. This would help students and teachers identify appropriate awards and sanctions at the various levels. Students expressed positive opinions regarding the restorative approach taken by teachers and this good practice is commended.

Strategies to support and care for students are excellent. The student coaching system is the cornerstone of the care procedures in the school. Each student has an identified coach with whom they meet regularly. These meetings, scheduled by both teachers and students, provide opportunities for teachers to monitor students' social, personal and academic development. While coaches have no official role in the school's behaviour management system, coaching can often provide students with very positive interactions with their teachers and thereby promotes a culture of mutual respect and positivity.

Appropriate policies and programmes have been developed for the school's SPHE and RSE programmes as per Circular Letters M11/03 and 37/10. Feedback from the parent and student surveys and the student focus group meeting suggests that students and parents are unclear about some aspects of the SPHE and RSE programmes and some students may require a deeper exploration of specific topics. The school should initiate a collaborative review of its current practices with a view to developing greater awareness of the content of the programme among parents and addressing any perceived shortfalls identified by students.

The planned educational supports for resource and learning support students are excellent. Individual education plans have been developed for all resource students, and learning support and gifted student programmes have been developed for students in need of greater support and challenges. All students are tested in first year with the results used to inform teaching practices. Students are re-tested in second year to monitor improvements and identify any ongoing issues. Appropriate methodologies are shared among staff and specific interventions are discussed among teachers to further include students with additional educational needs.

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, sports and recreational facilities are newly built and provide excellent resources for both teachers and students. The capacity of the building significantly exceeds the school's current enrolment and provides considerable space for all teaching and learning activities. The building is very well equipped and maintained to a very high standard. Specialist rooms are available and utilised appropriately in all of the relevant subject areas.

ICT is used to facilitate subject planning and collaboration, and its innovative integration into learning and teaching is encouraged by school management. In preparation for greater use of ICT in a teaching and learning context, the school should carry out an analysis of its

wireless network to ascertain its current limitations and plan for greater exploitation of this resource.

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

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

All teachers in Rosemont were observed as part of the evaluation. The quality of teaching and learning observed was of a consistently high standard with significant strengths evident in most lessons.

Subject department and individual teacher plans were of a high quality and provided much evidence of collaboration, self-evaluation and innovation on the part of teachers. Plans identified the required learning outcomes for each year group and section of the course as well as appropriate teaching and learning strategies and assessment methods. The plans indicated the significant commitment to assessment for learning (AfL) practices in the school.

All teachers displayed considerable expertise in their subject and commitment to their students and an openness to development of their skills in order to provide the best possible service to all students.

Lessons observed were very well planned and executed. Students themselves, during the focus group interview, identified effective planning of lessons as a key to the effectiveness of their learning. Preparation of teaching and learning resources was exemplary so that both electronic and physical resources were prepared in advance and utilised effectively in lessons. ICT was widely and effectively used. The use of Moodle was observed in some lessons. It is a resource that all teachers should utilise as it lends itself to students' ownership of learning.

The structure of all lessons was very good; from the outset of every lesson there was a clear sense of the purpose of the lesson, very good links were made with prior learning and appropriate time was given to each activity in the lesson. Transitions between activities were seamless and the balance between teacher and student activities was very good. The pace of lessons was good and there was recapitulation and review at the end of each lesson.

Teaching methodologies were appropriate as there was a good balance achieved between teacher-directed learning and students taking responsibility for their own learning. Teachers directed learning through giving clear instructions, through the resources utilised, through teacher modelling of good practice and through the use of questioning. The quality of questioning of students was very high; questions ranged from lower to higher order, and covered and engaged all students. The use of differentiation was evident in all lessons. This was achieved through the questions asked, the individual attention given, especially to students in need of extra support, and the assigning of differentiated tasks.

The school's focus on ownership of learning was in evidence in all lessons. Teachers have high expectations of the students and there was much evidence that the students were appropriately challenged by the teaching and learning activities. Students were constantly challenged to think more deeply about the topic through the questions asked. Students readily asked questions and sought explanations. It was praiseworthy to see the use of the target language by teachers and students in all language lessons.

Teachers encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning through such activities as pair and group work, role play, student presentations and reading ahead for homework. In practical classes much discovery learning was in evidence. The layout of practical classrooms readily facilitated cooperative work. Other teachers are also encouraged to reconsider the layout of their classrooms to facilitate group activities. In some instances greater organisation of purposeful group work is recommended.

In every lesson there was evidence of very good learning. Students displayed very good recall and understanding of each lesson topic and their questions demonstrated good understanding and a high level of engagement.

An awareness of the opportunity to develop students' literacy and numeracy was in evidence in some classrooms, for example through good dictionary work and through the display and use of key words. Such practice and a stronger focus on numeracy could be extended to all lessons, especially given the focus by the school on numeracy as an area for development in the current school year.

The classroom environments were bright and pleasant and many had displays of students' work and material relevant to the subject. Teachers are encouraged to continue to develop the learning environment in each classroom by displaying students' work and key words pertaining to their subject. Very good classroom routines were in evidence. All interactions between students and between students and teachers were positive, fair and respectful. Student behaviour was excellent and a warm, friendly and affirming atmosphere prevailed.

The quality of assessment of students was very good. Students are tested regularly in lessons and parents receive a report home on their child's work six times a year. Homework is frequently assigned in all lessons as evidenced by students' journals and copies. Teachers are commended for their use of AfL strategies in their lessons. Such strategies include the identification of clear criteria for successful student work, the use of self and peer evaluation based on these criteria and the widespread use of formative assessment by teachers when correcting longer pieces of students' work. These strategies are well embedded in the school. Every task that the students carried out was evaluated by their teacher, their peers or themselves using clear criteria for assessment. This approach encourages students to actively monitor and evaluate their own learning and to focus on areas where they can improve. Students are given much feedback on their work and progress by their individual teachers and coaches.

An analysis of results in Certificate examinations for each subject area is conducted annually and is used for review and reflection. Uptake of higher level is very good in almost all subject areas and attainment levels are high.

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

#### ***3.1 Management***

School management has taken positive action in addressing almost all recommendations made in previous evaluations. Specific issues relating to timetabling and the scheduling of classes have been resolved. Reference to the school's six-year cycle incorporating TY should be explicitly outlined in the school's admissions policy.

### ***3.2 Learning and teaching***

Improved questioning strategies were observed in the lessons evaluated. A good variety of questions was employed and students were afforded appropriate 'wait-time' in order to formulate their answers. Formative assessment, both orally and written, was appropriate and well developed in most of the lessons observed. There is still some scope for further development in planning and structuring group and pair activities.

The practice of sharing developments and improvements in subject areas is developing well in the school. Teachers with particular interest or expertise in areas such as ICT and AfL have coached other teachers and made presentations to their colleagues. This excellent practice should be developed and built upon.

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

School self-evaluation and reflection are key components of the school's improvement agenda. This considerable strength is evident in all aspects of the school from board level to senior management, teachers, students and parents. Collaborative reviews help to inform the school's actions and assist in the planning for future improvements.

In addition to the advanced school-developed practices, focused SSE is developing under the framework outlined in circular 40/2012. The school has initiated self-evaluation in the areas of literacy and numeracy across the school community. The SSE process should now be utilised to maximise the impact of professional discourse particularly in relation to teaching and learning. To support this practice and maximise the potential of SSE, the supports and guidelines available in '*An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools*' should be used.

Rosemont School has demonstrated the capacity to commit to improvement through self-evaluation. The school's constant focus on improvement is evident in the quality of teaching and learning observed. The school's reflective and self-evaluative approach will ensure sustained improvements into the future.



# **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 Rosemont welcomes the WSE-MLL report. The report's findings highlight the effective quality of leadership and management at all levels.

Of particular interest were the following findings by the Inspectors:

- Excellence in teaching and learning and in leadership of learning
- Rosemont strives to equip the students for life
- Excellence in class preparation and evidence of students being academically challenged
- Evidence of teachers' exemplary hard work and commitment
- The school's ethos in evidence in the classrooms, in partnership with parents and in programmes such as the coaching and virtues programmes
- Evidence of students' ownership of learning and excellent student behaviour
- Rosemont is a proactive, self-evaluating school, constantly focused on improvement
- Excellent facilities and bright classroom environments with ICT widely and effectively used

## **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 welcomes and acknowledges the recommendations which are being carefully studied by the Board and Senior Management. Some steps have already been taken to update and implement policies and practices as recommended.

- As outlined in the report the school has put measures in place to ensure we are compliant with numbers of hours of tuition for the sixth year classes.
- Our admissions policy has been amended as suggested and is now on the school's website.
- The school at all levels, Board of Management, senior management, teachers, parents and students are working on a more collaborative system of strategic planning to drive the school forward. As Rosemont continues to grow, the advice on adopting a forward planning approach for increased student numbers was particularly welcome.