

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

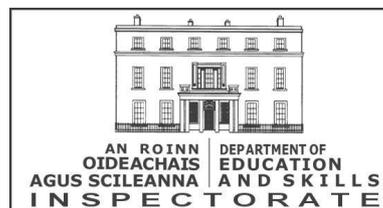
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Clongowes Wood College  
Clane, County Kildare  
Roll number: 61720F**

**Date of inspection: 19 September 2012**



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

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in September 2012 in Clongowes Wood 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, 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***

Clongowes Wood College is a fee-paying, post-primary boarding school for boys with a current enrolment of 463 students. The school was founded in 1814 and the Provincial of the Society of Jesus (SJ) is the sole trustee. The students come mainly from Leinster as well as a variety of locations throughout Ireland and abroad. A number of bursaries are provided under the school's Alberto Hurtado Programme (AHP) to finance the education of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and also thereby to broaden the social mix of students attending the school. The curricular programmes provided are the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

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

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

- Very good quality leadership and management are provided by the board of management, headmaster and assistant headmaster.
- Leadership roles are effectively distributed as evidenced by the responsibilities delegated to members of the school community.
- The school provides a very supportive, student-centred educational environment that reflects the Ignatian maxim, *Cura Personalis*.
- A broad range of subjects, extracurricular and co-curricular activities is provided for the students.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good with exemplary practice noted in a number of lessons.
- Regarding the implementation of recommendations in previous evaluation reports relating to the timetabled provision of Physical Education (PE) and the organisation of streamed classes for Irish in Transition Year (TY), the recommendations relating to PE remain outstanding and following a review, streamed classes for Irish in TY were retained.
- Clongowes Wood College clearly demonstrates its capacity to achieve ongoing school improvement.

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

- All third-year class groups should have a dedicated weekly time slot for their Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lesson and a double period weekly for PE.
- The provision for PE should be extended to all students.
- The scope to achieve widespread consistency in relation to some aspects of the classroom pedagogy observed, should be explored.

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

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

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

In accordance with the school's constitution the board of management has twelve members comprising of six trustee nominees, three teacher representatives and three parent representatives. The members capably fulfil their leadership role in managing and maintaining the school's continuous development. The Jesuit philosophy and the school's strong Catholic ethos inform the board's decisions. The headmaster acts as secretary to the board.

The board remains well informed about the quality of teaching and learning in the school through the headmaster's reports and the comprehensive analysis of leaving certificate results that it receives annually. The teachers' professional development is actively supported.

The formulation, review and ratification of school policies are ongoing. Commendably, the teaching staff, parents and students are consulted in their development. It is also commendable that a whole-school literacy and numeracy policy is currently being drafted given the focus being placed nationally on literacy and numeracy.

Good communication is maintained with the school community by issuing an agreed report following each board meeting. The headmaster also presents an annual report on the school to the annual general meeting of the Parents' Association. The good practice for which there is precedent of inviting a member of staff to make a presentation to the board on the individual's area of responsibility is an initiative worth developing as it is a good means of affirming staff. An annual invitation to representatives of the School Council and the Parents' Association to make a presentation to the board also merits consideration in this regard.

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*.

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

Strategic planning is a strong, effective facet of the board's work. The board is committed to progressing the priorities that are outlined in *SP2020*, a ten year strategic plan for the school. The plan is wide-ranging, deals with many areas relevant to the future development of the school and provides a good framework for the work of the board.

Good progress is being made with respect to the implementation of the plan. For example, the board has commissioned an external review of the school's management structure and distributed the tasks necessary to realise the objectives outlined in the plan. The ethos sub-committee, which has permanent board status, has been delegated responsibility for reviewing the Jesuit ethos programme in the school. Furthermore, pending the appointment of a director of ethos, a pastoral assistant for ethos has been appointed with particular responsibility for ensuring continuance of the school's Ignatian ethos.

Sub-committees have also been appointed to carry out the necessary work in relation to the AHP, planning for the school's bicentenary celebrations in 2014, and the review of plant and facilities. Another sub-committee has responsibility for monitoring the progress of all the objectives set out in *SP2020* and reports to the board at regular intervals.

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

### **Leadership of staff**

The headmaster and assistant headmaster work very well as a team and have appropriate areas of personal responsibility. In broad context, the headmaster has wide-ranging responsibilities relating to the management of Clongowes Wood College as a seven-day boarding school while the assistant headmaster's primary responsibility is to oversee the efficient operation of the daily school routines. They both encourage and expect high professional standards from teachers and strong academic achievement by students relative to their abilities. They strongly support teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) as the in-service training that is organised annually indicates. Moreover, the respondents to the WSE-MLL parent questionnaire overwhelmingly indicated that in their view the school is well run.

The distribution of leadership roles is evidenced by the delegation of a range of posts of responsibility to members of the teaching staff. Each post-holder has an agreed job description and the post-holder's skills are matched to the post. Each post-holder also submits a performance report at least once annually and meets with the headmaster to discuss performance of the agreed duties every year. Consideration should also be given to having an annual plenary meeting with all the post-holders as a further means of underlining their important role in the school. At present the posts of responsibility are being reviewed under the remit of *SP2020*.

Effective leadership for learning is evident in the deployment of the teaching staff, the provision of teaching and learning resources and the good communication that is maintained with the teachers. The facilitation of subject department planning and the overall high quality of subject plans are further indicators of the good leadership for learning. By way of supporting this good work, it is recommended that all subject department plans indicate how the analysis of examination results impacts on teaching and learning in their respective subject areas in addition to the statistical details of the annual analyses already contained in the plans. A section on areas for subject improvement and a

literacy and numeracy policy should also be included in the subject department plan where they have yet to be documented.

### **Leadership of students**

Clongowes Wood College provides a very supportive, student-centred educational environment that reflects the principles of the Ignatian maxim, “Cura Personalis” to which the school adheres. “Cura Personalis” prioritises respect for the needs of the individual and appreciation for the individual’s particular gifts.

The pastoral care provided for the students ensures their well-being. This care includes the planned induction programme for first-years, effective year head and housemaster systems, an active pastoral care team, as well as good provision of guidance, counselling and learning supports. Organised study is also provided.

Each year group has an academic year head (AYH) and an assistant AYH who have responsibility for the academic well-being and progress of the students in their charge. The exception is TY, which has an AYH and a programme co-ordinator. The AYHs and their respective year-group housemasters, who are school personnel employed to ensure the well-being and care of the students while boarding, liaise closely in monitoring the students. Each AYH also meets formally with the assistant headmaster each month and the AYHs meet formally together each term. Formal monthly meetings of all AYHs would also be a worthwhile means of supporting their collaboration.

There is a pastoral care team for each year group and all relevant care policies have been formulated. The guidance counsellor has contact with all year groups and meets regularly with students individually. A qualified psychotherapist is also available to support students.

There is very good quality learning support available to students with special educational needs. All first-year entrants are assessed and students identified with special educational needs are appropriately supported. The models of learning support include close co-operation with mainstream teachers, team teaching, small group settings and individual student withdrawal. Students who have been allocated resource hours are provided with an individual learning plan (IEP) to further support their progress.

A broad and diverse range of subjects are provided. There is a short taster programme for first-year students to help them determine their optional subject choices. TY students also have the opportunity to experience new subjects. Consideration is being given to introducing Technical Graphics. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) might also be considered.

At present there are five option bands including a language option band provided for the intending leaving certificate students from which they make their preferred subject choices. Most students select seven leaving certificate subjects only for examination. As a result, some students are receiving less than twenty-eight hours instruction per week. In addition, the number of full school days falls somewhat short of the equivalence of 167 full teaching days per year. The board of management is advised to address these matters.

While acknowledging that the timetabled provision for SPHE and PE is under review, third-year students currently do not have a dedicated weekly time slot for SPHE. The subject is provided for this year group by arranging class time with other subject departments. It is recommended that all third-year class groups have a dedicated SPHE time slot in order to properly provide for the provision of this subject. The size of the core group of staff involved in teaching SPHE should also be increased in order to underline the importance of the subject. In the case of PE, third-year students have a single period of PE

weekly and the subject is not timetabled for leaving certificate students. Third-year students should be allocated a double period for PE and the provision for PE should be extended to all students as was previously recommended in the school's PE subject inspection report.

The school's mandatory TY programme strongly focuses on the students' personal development. For example, opportunities are provided for the students to develop their academic, interpersonal and career skills and to undertake career and community based work experience. The students must also demonstrate their application to their coursework by producing a portfolio of their year's work.

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities have a very important place in the students' education. The school's very impressive provision in this regard is evidenced by the sports, music, drama, debating, shows, outdoor pursuits, tours and charitable fund-raising events that are an integral part of school life. Students are also encouraged to prepare projects for competitions such as the BT Young Scientist Competition and the Physics Olympiad and Maths Modelling project with the University of Limerick, while the in-school Academy provides opportunities for interested students to present papers on topics to their peers and staff members. Consideration should be given to the formulation of a policy for gifted students in order to further underline this important aspect of school life.

The opportunities given to students to assume leadership responsibilities are evidenced by their roles as members of the student council, individual year councils and year captains. Senior cycle students are also encouraged to help organise a variety of co-curricular activities, to act as mentors for first-year students during their induction period and to become house leaders. Notwithstanding these opportunities the opinions of a significant minority of student respondents to the questionnaire, who felt that they did not have a say in how to make the school a better place, should be explored.

Recognition and affirmation of student achievement is another notable feature of the students' education. The range of established practices in this regard includes the issuing of a diligence and attainment report for each student at five-weekly intervals and the public acclamation that meritorious students receive for their achievements for example, on Union Day which is a notable occasion in the school's calendar. Given the fact that affirmation of students is an important aspect of school life a section on the affirmation of students merits inclusion in the school's Code of Behaviour.

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

The campus of Clongowes Wood College comprising the school's buildings, and indoor and outdoor facilities are all very well maintained and cater very well for the students' educational needs. The art work, photographs, displays of historical artefacts and the varying architectural styles that characterise the interior of the school provide a stimulating school environment. Recent additions to the school include the new refectory, James Joyce Library, the Science and Arts block and the Sports Hall.

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

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good with exemplary practice noted in a number of lessons. All lessons had a planned development that incorporated a variety of teaching and learning methodologies to support learning. There

was however, some scope to achieve more widespread consistency in relation to some pedagogical practices observed and the attainment of this objective should be pursued.

Effective classroom management and a good relationship between teachers and students were very evident. The positive classroom atmosphere was also enhanced by displays of visually stimulating subject materials that included examples of students' work in many instances. In a minority of classrooms the usage of wall space for this purpose could have been further developed.

The students were informed of the lesson topic or purpose of the lesson at the outset. In the vast majority of lessons the intended learning outcomes were also clearly communicated. This should be extended to all lessons. The students' engagement in their lesson was then effectively progressed by various means such as recapping on prior learning, correction of homework, teacher exposition or the students' undertaking of an appropriate practical task. In most language lessons use of the target language was maintained throughout the lessons. However, there was sometimes scope for further development in this respect in a minority of lessons.

Very good use of resources such as the data projector, board and prepared handouts was frequently observed. For example, the data projector facilitated the display of information, visual images, the setting and solving of prescribed tasks and the innovative use of film clips. More widespread consistency needs to be developed in the teachers' practice of uploading prepared resources to the subject folder as some high quality electronic resources that had been produced were not always available in the relevant folder.

The board was used very effectively in a number of lessons to highlight important points of information including key words and to demonstrate to the class the solutions to mathematical problems and aspects of prescribed tasks. The quality of teaching and learning was also enhanced by the specialist facilities provided for the sciences, music and practical subjects. Practical lessons observed were well organised.

The supportive, differentiated approaches observed included teacher interaction with the class, collaborative learning and the support of individual students while monitoring students' progress in completing set tasks. The emphasising and noting of key words was a strong feature of some lessons. Effective co-teaching was also observed. Greater use could have been made of directing targeted questions to named students rather than asking global questions in some lessons.

The students remained engaged and willingly participated in their lessons. For example, they were responsive to their teachers' questions and their answers reflected a good understanding of the lesson topic. Indeed, their positive disposition to their lessons was borne out in the students' questionnaire responses. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they found their classes interesting and enjoyable and that their teachers encouraged them to work to the best of their ability.

Homework is regularly set and corrected by the teachers with formative feedback comments provided to support their students in maintaining improvements in the quality of their work. The teachers' good practice of noting the homework set on the board at the start or during the final phase of the lesson was frequently noted. It is recommended that junior cycle students be provided with dedicated lesson time to note their homework assignment into their journals as this was sometimes overlooked.

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

##### ***Management***

The recommended increase in the timetabled allocation of history lesson periods for second-year students has been provided. The recommended increase in the timetabled provision of PE to which reference has already been made remains outstanding. The policy of dividing students into streamed classes for Irish lessons in TY was reviewed as had been recommended and it was decided that streaming should be continued in order to best meet the students' varying needs.

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

The recommendations made in previous evaluations relating to teaching and learning methodologies have been addressed as was evidenced by the widespread use of assessment for learning principles during the lessons observed and the widespread and appropriate use of ICT in enhancing teaching and learning. Subject department plans have been further developed where such a recommendation was made. .

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

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

The trustee and senior management share a vision for the school and its ongoing development that is well articulated in *SP 2020* as are the school's prioritised objectives. The able leadership that senior management provides is complemented by the commitment and contributions of the entire school community to ensuring that the students receive an enriching holistic education in the Jesuit tradition. The views of staff, parents and students also inform the school's self-evaluation and development. Moreover, the responses to the parent and student questionnaires reflect very well on the school. Clongowes Wood College clearly demonstrates its capacity to achieve ongoing school improvement.

# 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 CWC warmly welcomes the MLL report. The school found the entire experience of the inspection encouraging and helpful, The Board took real satisfaction in the many positive comments made by the inspectors. In particular, we welcomed what they said about the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of leadership and their overall impression of Clongowes as a happy, caring and supportive environment for its students.

As a seven-day boarding and six-day teaching school, we aim to integrate living and learning as fully as possible. As a Jesuit school, committed to a vision of forming the whole person, both through the curriculum and the multitude of co-curricular activities offered, as well as by means of comprehensive supervision and pastoral care, and to helping our students to grow in social concern, the creation of the kind of atmosphere noted by the inspectors is of the highest importance to us.

As a Board, we are pleased to note the inspectors' belief that Clongowes shows clear evidence of capacity for on-going school improvement. We wish to thank them for their work, their help and the professionalism with which they carried out the inspection process.

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

We will give careful consideration to all of the observations in the report. Follow-up actions are planned or have already been undertaken since the inspection was completed, in order to respond to its findings and implement its recommendations. In particular, we note the following:

- The provision of PE in the Senior Cycle as recommended as soon as possible, probably from September 2013 when classes may be phased in.
- The requirement for a double period of PE and for a formally timetabled period for SPHE in Third Year will be fully addressed by September 2013 as had been planned.
- The inspectors commented that the school should seek to increase the core group of staff involved in teaching SPHE- the Board will endeavour to do this, as staffing allows.
- The inspector's comment regarding "*the inclusion of a section on the affirmation of students*" in the Code of Behaviour has been acted on and the Code duly amended.

In conclusion, we repeat our thanks for what we found a genuinely helpful and constructive experience and wish to convey our gratitude and appreciation to the two inspectors involved.