

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Killinarden Community School**

**Killinarden, Dublin24**

**Roll number: 91337B**

**Date of inspection: 8th May 2014**



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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 May 2014 in Killinarden Community 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 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***

Killinarden Community School is a co-educational community school with a current enrolment of 467 students. The Archbishop of Dublin and the Dublin Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) are joint patrons of the school. The curricular programmes provided by the school are the Junior Certificate (JC), the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in our Schools (DEIS) action plan.

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

### ***Key Findings***

- The board of management, the senior management and all members of staff display great commitment and dedication to the school.
- The management structures of the school are good and dedication to carrying out tasks associated with management is evident.
- The JCSP literacy and numeracy initiatives are examples of excellent practice in terms of fostering learner motivation and developing key skills in these areas.
- The broad curriculum available in the school and the taster programme in first year are excellent.
- Student attendance, attitude to learning and relatively high rates of student suspension are among the key factors affecting student attainment, an area in which there is scope for development.
- The care for students is very good with a number of key staff from the School Completion Programme (SCP) and school staff working together to ensure the wellbeing of students.

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

- In order to increase student attainment the board needs to take greater oversight of DEIS planning and review.
- The role of the principal should be enhanced to include a greater focus on leadership of learning, in order to ensure that the school meets its own DEIS targets in relation to increased student attainment.
- An e-Learning plan, with a focus on the effective integration by teachers of information communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning should be developed.
- All teachers need to engage in a whole-school approach to integrating the strategies of assessment for learning (AfL) into their classroom practice.

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

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

The management structures in the school are good. The board of management is properly constituted, meets very regularly and displays great commitment to the school. The board has been engaged in policy development and ratification. Notwithstanding the good work done to date, some mandatory policies still need to be ratified and some policies are out of date. It would be very useful therefore, for the board to put in place systematic structures for review and adoption of policies and to ensure that all mandatory policies are ratified and that regular review takes place.

The board spends considerable time dealing with student discipline matters and makes tremendous efforts to resolve such issues. It is noted, however, that the levels of student suspension are very high and in keeping with DEIS ethos, strategies to achieve a targeted reduction in the numbers of days lost to suspension need to be implemented as a matter of urgency.

The main role that the current board has adopted is to provide effective ongoing support to the school principal. There is scope now for the board to take on a stronger leadership role and establish a strategic plan for the development of the school. Strategies to fulfil key priorities in terms of student attainment in the certificate examinations, improved student attendance and innovative teaching and learning need to be more firmly established. In order to fulfil this, the board needs to regularly review data and progress made in relation to the school's own DEIS targets. The board should also publish an annual report on the work of the school.

Partnership with parents is important to the school's ethos and a parents' association has been established. There is a high level of communication between school and home. The school's website and the student journal are used effectively to communicate with parents. It is good practice that the parents are consulted in the context of policy development. There is a very well-equipped parents' room and the majority of parents surveyed stated that they feel welcome in the school and that the school is well run.

A representative student council has been elected and meets regularly. The student council is well supported by staff and has involvement in a number of areas of school life. However, student survey results indicate that there is significant scope to develop student voice in the school.

### ***1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning***

The senior management team display a partnership approach to managing the school and the school is well run on a day-to-day basis. The roles of principal and deputy principal are clearly defined and carried out with great commitment. The role of the principal needs to be enhanced to encompass a greater focus on leadership for learning in order to ensure the attainment of the school's stated DEIS target to improve student attainment. In this context focus should be on developing whole-school capacity among teachers to deliver high-quality innovative teaching.

Teachers who hold posts of responsibility carry out certain management functions and do so with commitment and dedication. It is very good practice that senior management leads a review of posts every three years in consultation with the staff. In the current middle management structure, the post of assistant principal is tied to the role of year head. This is a limiting factor in the effectiveness of the middle-management tier. Consideration should

be given to changing this, as this may restrict staff, including non-post holders, in the development and deployment of their own professional expertise. In addition it is recommended that, in line with best practice a written report be provided by each post holder and a formal annual review in conjunction with senior management take place.

There are some good examples of distributed leadership where staff lead teams for example, the ICT working group and the DEIS planning team. This model should be used to form other networks in the school with a particular focus on the development of effective whole-school teaching and learning strategies. Staff are encouraged and facilitated by senior management to avail of continuous professional development (CPD) and the excellent practice of staff recording a commitment to follow-up actions after CPD is noted. It is timely for whole-school CPD in the area of innovative teaching and learning methodologies to be provided. Such innovative methodologies should form part of the agenda for whole staff and subject department meetings.

The teaching staff are deployed in line with their qualifications and expertise. However, staff who are new to the school are not provided with a formal induction or mentoring process. Given the considerable expertise in the staff, it is recommended that all new teachers be supported by a formal induction process which could include mentoring and opportunities for peer collaborative review. A staff handbook would also be very beneficial.

The DEIS plan is currently in its third year. Very good baseline data has been collected which has been used to inform the setting of targets. It is recommended that the targets set be readjusted to ensure that they are all SMART and that regular formal review take place. Student attainment is a priority in the school's plan. A review of certificate examination results shows that there have been improvements in attainment in some subject areas. However, overall that there is significant scope for development regarding student attainment. Some subject departments have adopted the excellent practice of rigorously analysing results and setting very clear targets for improvement. This depth of analysis and setting of SMART targets needs to extend to all subject departments as a priority. In addition the methodologies that will be used by teachers to achieve improved attainment need to be documented. Senior management has led the effective practice at subject department level but there needs to be a greater oversight at management level of the overall school trends and targets to ensure that student attainment improves.

The curriculum provided for the students is very good and the broad range of subjects available is commendable. In time consideration should be given to a review of the curriculum whereby the introduction of the Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) should be considered.

The JCSP is provided for two class groups. The JCSP literacy and numeracy initiatives are examples of excellent innovation in the school. The JCSP policy is currently under development and it is recommended that it be completed. Under the current school arrangements JCSP students do not have access to a modern language and this should be reviewed in the interests of equity. The LCA is working well in the school. Students must seek their own work experience currently and this limits the range of experience that students obtain. The school should review this and consider how supports can be put in place to ensure the provision of a wider-range of work experience so that students' own expectations for their future careers can be broadened.

The taster programme for first-year students provides an excellent opportunity to sample a range of new subjects. Students in first year are grouped into three bands according to ability on the basis of assessments carried out when they are in sixth class in the primary school. Care is taken to facilitate movement between the bands. Students following the JCSP receive a very favourable pupil-teacher ratio and are very well supported in a variety

of effective ways. Students following the JC are placed in two bands. It is recommended that this arrangement be reviewed in order to avoid the risk of negative labelling, restricted curriculum and encourage higher expectations. It is recommended that mixed-ability groupings be formed for students following the JC. Such a move to mixed-ability settings would require further professional development support for teachers in the areas of differentiation and active teaching methodologies.

Some aspects of school timetabling need to be reviewed. The school should provide the minimum requirement of 28 hours tuition in line with Circular M29/95. The sixth year timetable shows that students have three double periods in a row on one day. In fifth year one group of optional subjects is timetabled on three consecutive days. Such distribution is not optimal. It is recommended that the frequency and distribution of double periods in senior cycle for optional subjects be reviewed.

There are some very good practices in relation to monitoring student attendance such as electronic tracking, regular contact with parents and student awards. However, there is significant scope for development in relation to poor student attendance and punctuality, as it is impacting negatively on student attainment. As some problems with the reliability of the electronic system were reported, there is now a need to focus on assuring the reliability of the data and also to review the effectiveness of the strategies as laid out in the school's own DEIS plan.

Guidance is provided through a range of strategies to all year groups. A strong focus has been on counselling to meet the diverse needs of the students. A good guidance plan is in place. The plan would be enhanced by the inclusion of more detail regarding information on specific strategies to raise student expectations in terms of choice of curricular programmes and career paths. A formal analysis of progression in line with the school's DEIS plan needs to take place on an annual basis. The results of student and parent surveys indicate a need for greater advice in relation to subject choice which suggests a need to broaden the provision of vocational guidance.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is provided to all students in junior cycle. The RSE policy has yet to be formulated. This matter should be expedited as a matter of urgency.

The student support structure in the school is very good. The role of tutors and year heads in the care of students is paramount and their dedication is most noteworthy. A care team has been established and is chaired by the school chaplain. Care plans are put in place for identified students. A review of the minutes of care team meetings indicates that there is not full attendance at these meetings. It is suggested that members of the team prioritise their attendance at these meetings. The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator visits parents and provides courses for them. Increased links with parents with a view to strengthening their role and understanding of priorities such as improved student attainment and better attendance could be forged. The personnel of the SCP provide excellent support for students through a range of interventions such as breakfast and homework clubs and a transfer programme for incoming students.

There is a very good code of behaviour in place and student behaviour in the course of the inspection was very good overall. However, results of student surveys indicate that there are difficulties relating to student behaviour in the school. It was evident that teachers are concerned about discipline and spend a huge amount of time dealing with discipline matters. Almost half of students surveyed do not believe that students are treated fairly in the school. It is now timely to review the issues in relation to student behaviour and to ensure a whole-school approach to implementing the code of behaviour and, in particular, to using the strategies recommended by the behaviour support team in the school. Given the

expertise available on the staff, the introduction of practices associated with restorative justice merit consideration.

The provision for students with special educational needs is very good and the Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) provide great support to students. All students are tested on enrolment in the school. It is suggested that a cognitive ability test be used to ensure that all students' potential is measured. Tuition for students with additional needs including English as an additional language, is delivered principally by withdrawing students from lessons. It is recommended that more of the resource hours be delivered by adopting team-teaching strategies. This will enable the effective practice of learning support being delivered in the mainstream classroom and minimising loss of time from certain subject areas.

There are good leadership opportunities for students through participation in a range of extra-curricular activities such as sports, drama and music. There are also very good leadership opportunities through mentoring and student council activities.

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 is very well maintained and the management of the facilities is very good. The school has some excellent facilities in particular the JCSP library, the canteen and the hair and beauty salon.

The specialist rooms are well equipped and kept in good order. The art work on the walls of the school is outstanding. The social areas are bright and attractive. The DDLETB provides access to its large sports facility which is located next to the school.

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

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. Effective practice was observed in most classrooms, but not all. There is scope for a re-invigoration of teaching methodologies in order to enliven the learning process and promote an enhanced level of active participation by students.

Many lessons were well prepared in terms of the advance organisation of resources such as worksheets, materials, and videos. Best practice was observed where thought had been given to the student learning process. In these cases, content was presented in small portions in a variety of ways, and active learning methodologies were used and appropriate assessment opportunities were built into the lesson.

Most lessons had a clear focus or aim. In some cases, a greater level of engagement in the learning process was encouraged through the setting out of the intended learning outcomes. In some lessons, the progress towards achieving those outcomes was well assessed, but in other lessons the connection between the intended outcomes and what had been actually achieved was not explicitly made.

The majority of lessons were conducted in a positive, affirmative atmosphere. Teachers have a good rapport with their students. Good classroom management was evident in the efforts made to establish consistent classroom routines with respect to noting attendance, seating arrangements, and respect for others. However, finishing the lesson early, and overly slow pacing of lessons, as happened in a number of cases, should be avoided.

Lesson content was communicated clearly in most lessons. Classrooms have been well equipped with ICT resources. An innovative use of ICT was seen in one lesson where a visual display allowed students to track their own progress in project work. However, care needs to be taken not to overuse ICT in a passive manner, for example, simply to present text or to show videos.

Considerable work has been completed by the school's ICT planning group with respect to the introduction of tablet devices and the upgrading of the school's ICT systems. However, the focus should now be on the educational benefits to be gained from the use of ICT. Thus, it is recommended that the school develop an e-learning plan in line with the advice provided by the National Centre for Technology in Education. Teachers should research, share and implement good strategies for making the best use of ICT in the classroom to actively engage students in learning.

Students' progress during lessons was assessed mainly through the completion of written work, verbal questioning and teacher observation. Good use was made of directed questions to assess individual student's progress and homework was assigned in many lessons but not in all. Some good AfL practices were evident. In a few lessons graphic organisers and brainstorming techniques were used. However, very little use was made of peer-assessment or self-assessment techniques. In many cases only very brief or simple responses were required from students. This dominance of teacher-led input was observed in number of ways in other lessons. To ensure consistent use of best practice in the classroom, it is recommended that the school initiate a cross-curricular and whole-school project focused on enhancing and embedding AfL approaches in all classrooms.

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

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

Following previous inspections the principal has met with subject departments to discuss the findings and recommendations. There are some outstanding recommendations which have not been fully addressed, for example in relation to reducing suspensions (DEIS report, 2011) and timetabling issues in senior cycle History. In order to ensure that the outstanding recommendations are implemented, it is suggested that an action plan be devised delineating the time frame and responsibilities. It is recommended that the principal and the board of management, seek such action plans, review progress at regular intervals and take greater oversight of the follow up to inspections.

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

Good practice as recommended in previous inspection reports regarding the use of AfL strategies, active learning methodologies and ICT was noted in some lessons. However, there is still significant scope for development in implementing these recommendations in the subjects inspected and in extending the use of AfL strategies, active learning methodologies and ICT on a whole-school basis.

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

As part of the school's self-evaluation (SSE) process a significant survey of students, parents and staff was conducted by an outside agency in November 2013. Specific areas of concern identified included student discipline, students' attitudes towards learning and bullying. The outcomes of the survey have been considered by senior management but have not yet been presented to the staff or the board. In order to progress the SSE process, it is recommended that action now be taken on the priorities identified by the survey and that these priorities along with the recommendations in this report are integrated with DEIS planning.

It is recognised that the board, the senior management team and the staff show tremendous commitment to the students. The capacity for school improvement was evidenced by the engagement of all staff in the inspection process and the ensuing professional dialogues. The capacity for school improvement will be further strengthened by increased strategic and instructional leadership, relevant CPD in teaching strategies and the embedding of whole-school approaches to raising student attainment.



# **Appendix**

## **School response to the report**

### **Submitted by the Board of Management**

#### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.**

The Board is pleased that the Inspectorate acknowledged the commitment and dedication of all staff to the school and the high level of care for all our students.

It is affirming that the excellent JCSP literacy and numeracy initiative, involving the JCSP demonstration library as a core resource, was an example of excellent practice in terms of learner motivation and development.

#### **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 acknowledges the recommendations made in the report. Together with parents, pupil and staff we are committed to their implementation and will include them as priorities in our school development plan for 2014/15.

