An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT
Moyle Park College
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Roll number: 60121B

Date of inspection: 7 March 2013

Whole-School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in March, 2013 in Moyle Park 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, 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

Moyle Park College is a boys' voluntary secondary school in Clondalkin village in west Dublin. It is the only boys' post-primary school in the area. It is under the trusteeship of the Marist brothers and was founded in 1957. It has a long tradition of providing a holistic education that is rooted in the values of the Marist community to students from diverse social and economic backgrounds in the local area. There were 659 students enrolled at the time of the evaluation. Enrolment has been steadily rising over the last few years after many years of falling enrolment.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- Very good quality management and leadership are provided by the board of management, principal and deputy principal.
- Partnership with parents is central to the school's ethos and the vast majority of parents surveyed think that the school is well run.
- Leadership roles are distributed across the school community with both post holders and non-post holders taking responsibility for important areas of school life.
- A commendably broad range of subjects and programmes is provided to cater for the needs of students.
- The school has an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere and student care and student support are of a very high quality.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons observed.
- A good range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities support student learning and personal development.
- The school has shown that it has a very good capacity to engage with the school self-evaluation process and to progress a programme of school improvement.

Recommendations for Further Development

- The board should lead the preparation of a strategic plan to progress the school's developmental priorities, in particular the school's stated priority with regard to raising expectations and improving students' academic performance.
- A further review of the post schedule should be undertaken at a whole-school level based on the current needs and developmental priorities of the school.

- All subject departments should set targets and implement action plans to increase, or maintain, student participation in higher level courses and to improve student attainment.
- A representative student council should be formed through which students can become involved in the affairs of the school.
- Student engagement should be enhanced through the promotion of active and independent learning methodologies and the integration of *Assessment for Learning* strategies into classroom practice.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

There are very good quality management structures in the school. The board of management (board) is appropriately constituted, meets regularly and receives very good support from the trustees towards the effective provision of education in the school. There is a significant range of expertise on the board, board members have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and show a deep commitment to the school.

The board has adopted a range of policies, including mandatory policies. There are effective procedures in place for the adoption and review of policies. Communication between the board, the teachers and the parent body is very good. For example, the parents association frequently present a report to the board.

School development planning is well established in the school. This is evident in the annual report to the trustees and the development of a school plan that details a number of achievements to date. A number of developmental priorities have also been identified including a school-wide renewal of the Marist values on which the school is founded.

As is appropriate, a number of the school priorities focus on the area of teaching and learning, for example, to encourage as many students as possible to study subjects at higher level. The board's commitment to this priority is exemplified by its support for teacher continuing professional development and its invitation to subject departments to present a short report on achievements and plans for development to the board. A further area that the board should use to support this priority is an annual review of a statistical analysis of student outcomes in certificate examinations, including the uptake of higher level courses.

The board should lead the preparation of a strategic plan to progress the school's developmental priorities, in particular the school's stated priority with regard to raising expectations and improving students' academic performance. It would be useful going forward for the school to take an action planning approach in terms of identifying specific actions to achieve school priorities, those responsible for these actions, some general success criteria and timeframes for improvement.

Partnership with parents is central to the school's ethos. Parents interviewed have found their interactions with the school to be positive and productive. This is supported by the evidence of parent questionnaires. A proactive parents association which meets regularly is actively involved with the school. Parents interviewed appreciated the openness and approachability of management.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Leadership of staff

A new senior management team has been appointed in this school year and both members of the team share a clear vision for the development of the school and provide capable and effective leadership to the school community. They have a very good work ethic, have complementary skills and work very well together as a team. The senior management team has adopted a particular focus on leadership for learning in order to motivate, manage and support others to improve educational outcomes for the students in the school. For example, the principal has undertaken to speak to all staff on an individual basis during the course of the academic year in regards to teaching and learning. This is commendable. The vast majority of parents surveyed think that the school is well run. In addition, staff and parents reported that communication systems in the school are very good.

Middle management is supportive of senior management and performs a range of functions across the school community. Members of the middle management team meet frequently with senior management and are consulted with regard to school priorities and organisational matters. An example of very good practice is the annual meeting between post holders and a member of the senior management team. The short report prepared by post holders as a basis for this meeting should be made available to the board of management.

Management is commended for carrying out an audit of school needs in 2011 that resulted in a minor review of posts. Staff members proved flexible and some adjustment in post duties occurred at that time. However, an examination of the current duties associated with posts showed that some areas prioritised in the review are not being addressed while areas given a low priority in the review remain in the post schedule. In the case of other posts an obvious inequity in duties exists. For example, in relation to the role of Year Head, some post holders are Assistant Principals, others are Special Duties Teachers. There is a need to revisit the original review of posts with a view to ensuring a closer alignment of the post schedule with the priority needs of the school and to ensure a greater equity in the duties associated with posts.

Leadership is distributed across the teaching staff and the volunteerism of staff is excellent. The extent to which staff volunteerism has contributed to progress made and to the school's capacity to respond to students' needs is notable. The professionalism of staff is evident, some members of staff act as local facilitators for the support services and a number of staff members are involved in further study.

A very good indicator of the distributed leadership in the school is the number of task groups across the school that contribute to the effective organisation and development of school life, for example, the advisory board of studies that addresses curriculum change, the core care group and the health and safety group. The new group formed to drive the school self-evaluation initiative will be able to build on the good work of other groups.

All of the subject department planning folders reviewed were of good quality with some very good subject planning documentation evident. The most effective curricular plans identified and aligned learning outcomes for each year group with content, methodologies, resources and modes of assessment. This good practice should be extended.

All subject planning folders examined included a statistical analysis of certificate examination results but only a small number of planning folders contained reflection on these results or any discussion about the results or raising attainment. It is evident that students attain well in some subject areas and good individual results were evident across

the subject range. However, in a range of subject areas, student uptake of higher level papers is significantly below the national average, especially at leaving certificate level. There is also scope for improvement in the grades achieved at higher level. This trend is not as marked at junior certificate level and in a number of subject areas student uptake of higher level courses compares favourably with the national average. However, in those subject areas in junior cycle in which students are set into ability groupings at an early stage, it was noted that student uptake of higher level courses was lower than average and that a higher than average percentage of students achieve an A or B on an ordinary level paper, suggesting that some students could have undertaken higher level papers with success.

The school recognises that raising attainment is an area for development. The school is highly commended for introducing an academic tracking system for second and fifth year students where students are asked to set their own targets for improvement across all subject areas. This will be a key driver in affecting change in this area.

It is recommended that a whole-school multi-faceted approach be adopted in relation to raising expectations and improving students' academic performance. Academic tracking should be maintained and the school should continue to discourage students from dropping levels. Teachers should have high expectations of students. Subject departments should set targets to improve or maintain the number of students studying courses at higher level and agree actions to reach and sustain those targets. The school should consider the effect that early setting of students into ability groupings in some subject areas may have on the attitude, self-esteem and motivation of students in the mid-ability range. The school is advised to set up a working group to research the topic, reflect on existing practices and make proposals to management and staff. Finally, the school should consider what initiatives they could adopt to communicate to parents and students the important role that the study of subjects to higher level has in enhancing students' ability to undertake lifelong learning and for those who undertake third level education, expanding the range of third level choices available to them.

Leadership of students

The school is open and welcoming to students in line with the distinctive Marist ethos which was evident across all areas of school life. Relations in the school are very good and mutual respect between students and teachers was evident.

The school offers a very broad range of subjects to students including, at the time of the evaluation, all three business and all three science subjects at leaving certificate level. The school also offer the full range of programmes to cater for the wide range of students' abilities and aptitudes. For example, the school offers the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) as well as the traditional certificate programmes. These programmes are very well-coordinated and students interviewed indicated that their experience of them was very positive. Timetabling for subjects is generally good.

The school provides 28 hours instruction time per week as recommended in Circular M28/95. However, the school year falls short of the required 167 days instruction time. There is also a staggered start to the school year for some students. This compliance issue should be addressed.

With regard to student leadership, a prefect system is in place. Prefects play an important role in the induction of first year students and are available to help at school events. They

have had good training for their role. A group styled the student council meets weekly. However these students, in the main, are not representative of their year group as elections have not been held for a number of years. It was noted that only a small minority of students surveyed felt that they had a say in how to make the school a better place. It is recommended that elections take place in the next school year so that a representative school council may be formed through which students may have a voice in the affairs of the school.

The school has very good links with its feeder schools and transition from primary to post-primary is well handled. Daily registration with the class teacher is used to monitor attendance, check journals and affirm students' efforts. An award system in the school further enhances the systems in place to support student achievement.

Student care systems of a very high quality are in place. Well-organised guidance and learning support programmes give good support to students. The care team meets weekly to coordinate support for students. One example of this coordinated approach is the simple system used to ensure a high level of staff awareness of students who may be experiencing difficulty while always respecting the sensitive and confidential nature of such information. The role of the South Clondalkin School Completion Programme (SCP) which works with the school to support families is noteworthy. Parent interviews and surveys indicated a high level of satisfaction amongst parents with the level of care in the school. Learning support hours allocated by the department are used for their designated purposes and individual education plans have been prepared, where relevant. The model of support offered is, in the main, withdrawal. It is recommended that the school considers more widespread use of team-teaching as a support for students.

Classes are generally mixed ability with setting taking place in some subject areas. One JCSP class has been formed in each year group for students who need additional support. It is positive that members of this class group have full access to optional subjects and subject levels. There are three JCSP team meetings per week and there is some duplication of function between these meetings and the care team meeting. The number of weekly JCSP meetings should be reviewed and some of the resources presently allocated to meeting times should be targeted at supporting JCSP students in the classroom. Student profiling meetings should take place regularly and parent participation in celebrating the achievements of JCSP students should be encouraged.

There is a good focus on literacy and numeracy in the school. Maths week is celebrated and each first year class has a library period once per week. A number of literacy initiatives, for example, *Word Millionaire*, encourage students to read for pleasure and good student progress is evident.

The code of behaviour was reviewed in 2011. Members of the school community reported a significant improvement in student behaviour over the last few years. This is a tribute to the efforts of present and previous management to inculcate an atmosphere of mutual respect and order. The role of the class teacher and the Year Head in supporting positive behaviour deserves to be acknowledged. Student behaviour was generally very good over the course of the evaluation. A significant majority of parents surveyed indicated that discipline is good in the school and that there is a good atmosphere in the school. Student responses to similar questions were mixed. It is recommended that the school carries out further research in this area so that they have more information to allow them to target areas of concern.

A broad range of extra and co-curricular activities across a range of areas is available to students, including lunchtime activities. Students are encouraged to become involved in a number of community and fund-raising activities, for example, the school's annual Pink Day. A homework club and after-school study offers good support to students.

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 situated on extensive grounds and is very well kept. There are very good facilities in the school including sporting facilities, a school library and a canteen. A high degree of satisfaction with the quality and range of facilities was evident in parent and student surveys. A five year information and communications technology (ICT) plan has recently concluded and there are excellent ICT facilities in the school.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

Twenty four lessons from a variety of subjects and programmes were observed over the course of the evaluation. The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons observed. There were a small number of lessons in which there was significant scope for improvement.

Where teaching was very good, teachers introduced the proposed learning outcomes of the lesson at the start and incorporated a review at the end of the lesson. A variety of methodologies were used to support student learning, including directed differentiated questioning, and there was a good balance between teacher talk and student activity. In these lessons teachers presented the material clearly and planned well for the full range of student abilities.

In a few lessons, guided discussion or cooperative learning strategies such as pair work or group work meant that all students had the opportunity to contribute to the lesson in a meaningful way. This is commended. However, in a number of lessons the teacher voice dominated and student input was limited to a brief response such as one-word or one-line answers. It is recommended that students are encouraged to participate actively in lessons through the wider use of active learning methodologies, in order that they may demonstrate and direct their own learning and develop their oral language skills.

Good assessment strategies are in use. Regular testing takes place across the school. In many cases, common testing across year groups takes place but this is an area for development in some subject areas. In a few cases, good self-assessment strategies were evident. Homework is given frequently and checked for completion. In some instances very good use was made of *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) strategies where teachers gave students formative feedback on their work. However this is an area for development in the school. Sharing, clarifying and understanding learning intentions are central to *Assessment for Learning*. By asking students to review their own progress they are enabled to develop the capacity to become independent learners. These AfL practices should be extended.

In general, good planning and preparation for lessons was evident. Teachers had prepared a range of resources to support the lesson including very good use of information and communications technology (ICT) resources. For example, teachers made good use of short film clips to support teaching and learning in a number of lessons observed.

A stimulating learning environment has been created in all classrooms with many examples of student work and other educational material such as key words evident.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

Very good implementation of previous recommendations was evident. Substantial upgrading of the ICT facilities in the school has taken place. Timetabling recommendations have been attended to. Subject department planning has progressed well. However, the recommendation to open up the LCVP to a greater number of students by the provision of a modern European language module should be given active consideration.

3.2 Learning and teaching

A number of areas were selected by the inspection team from previous published inspection reports to monitor whether developments and improvements recommended in one subject area are shared with and influence improvements in other subject areas. Good use of ICT to support teaching and learning was evident across the subject range. With regard to AfL strategies the proposed learning outcomes of lessons were introduced in the majority of lessons observed but review of learning only took place in a few lessons and the use of formative feedback was evident in only about half the classrooms visited. Good teacher use of the target language was evident in language classes but student use of the target language was an area for development in the modern European language classes observed.

The outcomes of subject and other inspection reports should be discussed in detail and a more consistent approach should be adopted where recommendations that have implications for more than one subject area are communicated to other subject departments.

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

It is evident from meetings with the board, senior management team and staff that a reflective approach to school planning and improvement is in place. The school has taken a research-based approach to school self-evaluation. This is commended. For example, a survey of staff, parents and students into attitudes to Marist and Catholic identity was being conducted at the time of the evaluation. Other surveys have also taken place.

The culture of school improvement that exists in Moyle Park College is exemplified in the school motto *"Respice Finem"* (look to the outcome). The commitment, drive and energy of school management and the shared desire of all to maximise outcomes for students is evident. The school has shown that it has a very good capacity to engage with the school self-evaluation process and to progress a programme of school improvement.

Published September 2013

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The report offers a fair and balanced perspective on where Moyle Park College currently stands as a school. The WSE/MLL report is an important milestone in the development of the college. It provides us with an analysis of our strengths and areas for improvement and in so doing points the way towards how the college may improve in the near future.

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

A key finding was the fact that in a number of subject areas we are below the national average in terms of the uptake of higher learning at Leaving Cert level. It will be our task during the coming three years to reach the national average for each subject area.

As a school community we intend to follow up on the report by doing the following:

1. Each set of examination results will be analysed by subject departments and benchmarked against the national average.
2. A report outlining the above analysis will be submitted to the Principal and Board of Management. The Board will seek to direct the future academic direction of the college in consultation with the management and staff of the college in the light of its analysis of examination results.
3. We will endeavour to share our goals for improvement with parents and students.
4. We will endeavour to be more proactive in identifying those students who can study at higher level and ensuring that they remain committed to higher level study.
5. Teachers will endeavour to incorporate assessment for learning strategies in subject planning.
6. It is intended to re-launch the Student Council in September 2013, notwithstanding the loss of the relevant postholder due to retirement.
7. The schedule of remaining posts of responsibility has been examined and some postholders have undertaken to take on extra responsibilities or entirely new ones. Other staff members have volunteered for duties normally carried out by holders of posts of responsibility.