An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Follow-Through Inspection REPORT

St Mary's Secondary School
New Ross
Roll number: 63620L

Date of inspection: 19 April 2016

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
INSPECTORATE

Date of original inspection[1]	7 February 2014	Type of original report	WSE-MLL	Date of FT inspection	19 April 2016
Report published	Yes				

Follow-through inspection activities

The following activities took place in the course of the follow-through inspection:
Meeting with senior management team
Meeting with members of the in-school management team
Meeting with relevant teachers
Observation of teaching and learning
Interaction with pupils/students

Recommendation in original inspection report	Progress achieved to date on implementation of recommendation
The board should adopt a greater leadership role in articulating the long-term vision for the school in conjunction with the senior management.	**Very good progress** Senior management reported that the board of management is much more active than heretofore. There is a greater sense of ownership in relation to school matters, and meetings are more purposeful, focused and positive. Significant work has been achieved since the WSE-MLL evaluation in reviewing and updating policies and the board is more confident in relation to its school governance remit. Members are willing to embrace change as well as new initiatives that will lead to overall school improvement.
Assistant principals should work towards further developing their integral role in the in-school management structure.	**Very good progress** There is a new team of assistant principals (APs). Year Heads have attended training regarding their roles and have shown very good willingness to embrace change. While the year head role is still evolving, APs are more involved in the overall management of students. They have also been given greater autonomy by senior management and they meet very regularly on an informal basis. Plans are in place for formal meetings with senior management to be held more regularly.
Provision for learning support and resource teaching should be reviewed in favour of strategies such as team teaching which would allow for students to continue with their full range of subjects.	**Good progress** Senior management reported that retirements in the learning support and resource department have impacted on the level of progress achieved. However the practice of students who require additional support having to take fewer subjects is being phased out. While team teaching has not, as yet, been integrated into the learning support programme, the presence of a student pursuing the Post-Graduate Masters in Education in the school has facilitated the implementation of team teaching in Mathematics
A centralised system of tracking and monitoring academic progress should be considered to help ensure that all students reach their full learning potential.	**Partial progress,** The school is still at the planning stage in regard to this recommendation. However, the introduction of new software systems for tracking students should facilitate its implementation in the near future. It is hoped that this work will become part of year head duties.
Students should be further challenged and encouraged to take greater responsibility in the learning process.	**Good progress** A meeting with a focus group of students indicated that, in general, good progress has been made in encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their work. Students reported that they are encouraged to participate more actively in lessons and more opportunities for independent learning and the sharing of ideas and opinions are facilitated. Students are invited to make their own notes, to interpret information and to form their own opinions. In the lessons observed, however, teacher instruction dominated and students while compliant were not active participants in the learning process. Greater use of formative feedback is also recommended to inform

[1] Date on cover of original inspection report

	students of their strengths and areas for improvement.

Summary of findings

Overall there has been very good progress in the implementation of recommendations, in the area of leadership and management of staff. There is still some scope for development in aspects of teaching and learning.

Recommendations

All teachers should review their methodologies to ensure that they facilitate active student engagement and learning. They should also develop the practice of providing students with formative feedback to support their academic progress. The academic tracking initiative should be progressed in a timely manner.

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.

Published September 2016

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Secondary School, New Ross welcomes the very positive MLL Follow Through Inspection report. The report affirms the commitment of the Board of Management, staff and school community to the evaluation process, the openness to respond to recommendations and the dedication to improve the high quality of teaching and learning and management practices that permeate all aspects of our school culture.

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

- The Board is pleased that work undertaken by the new Board and the work of the Assistant Principals have been recognised by indication of 'Very Good Progress'.

- The review of strategies in provision for learning support indicated 'Good Progress' and this area has been targeted for further progress this year with a review of the cohort of students, their needs and utilisation of available resources.

- Partial progress was indicated in relation to the centralised system of tracking and monitoring academic progress. Initiatives to improve this area have been agreed including a regular meeting structure, increased familiarity with the VSWare system and updated support on analysing student data.

- A PDST full-staff workshop on Assessment for Learning has been completed to help address the issue of challenging the students to take greater responsibility in the learning process. Elements of this will include student working in groups, self-assessment and peer assessment.

- The Board lauds the school management team, staff, students and whole school community for their efforts in continuing to improve St. Mary's Secondary School.