An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Patrick's Classical School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Moatlands Navan County Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64350N

Date of Evaluation: 11-05-2018

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
4. The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Date of inspection	11-05-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with board of management • Meetings with principal and deputy principal • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus-group interview	• Meeting with parents • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Saint Patrick's Classical School is a secondary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. The school has an enrolment of 913 boys, drawn from the feeder schools located in the Diocese of Meath. The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate programmes.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of school management and leadership is good, with some very effective practice evident; the deployment of some teaching resources merits review.
- A broad range of subjects and other learning experiences is provided; planning processes to ensure strategic curriculum change-management needs development.
- School management and staff are strongly committed to providing a supportive learning environment; high expectations are set for student achievement but systems to track attainment need to be formalised.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed in lessons was good, with some very good practice observed; differentiation and formative assessment practices need development.
- The overall implementation of recommendations from previous inspections is good, with some very good progress noted.
- While the school has a very good capacity for school improvement, the potential of the formal school self-evaluation (SSE) process is not yet fully realised.

Recommendations

- A curriculum advisory group should be established to oversee strategic action planning for future curriculum provision in the school.
- A formal system for tracking student attainment that involves input from year heads, subject teams and the students themselves should implemented.
- The deployment of teaching resources for special educational needs (SEN) should be revised in accordance with circular letter 0070/2014.
- Formal systems to share and embed effective classroom practice in differentiation and formative assessment should be established; the potential of the SSE process, in supporting this work should be fully realised.
- Subject teams should review their programme plans to facilitate the impending introduction of one-hour lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality school management and leadership is good, with some very effective practices evident.

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership for learning and teaching is good. School management endeavours to provide a broad range of learning opportunities, with a commendable emphasis placed on providing for learners' holistic development. Staff are enabled to be innovative in curriculum design. This innovation is evident in areas such as the design of the TY programme and Information Technology (IT) in first year. Students have access to a very good range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Staff are commended for their efforts and commitment in providing these opportunities.

While a broad range of subjects is provided, there is scope to extend the range of Leaving Certificate programmes on offer. Past consideration has been given to providing additional Leaving Certificate programmes but there was insufficient demand. Given the profile of the student cohort, the feasibility of re-introducing the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) should be actively considered.

The overall quality of curriculum planning is good. However, a more cohesive, collaborative and strategic approach to managing curriculum-related change is needed. While planning for teaching the revised junior-cycle subject specifications is underway, planning for whole-school implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework is underdeveloped. The school reported that this is as a result of the now ceased industrial action.

Staff decided recently to move to one-hour lessons. However, further consideration needs to be given to the overall design of the school's revised junior-cycle programme in advance of and to inform this timetable change. A curriculum advisory group, led by a member of the senior management team, should be established to oversee strategic action planning for future junior-cycle curriculum provision. Areas such the number of subjects studied for examination purposes, the provision of short courses, access to optional subjects and the operation of a taster programme, as well as providing for Wellbeing, all need further consideration.

The TY programme provides a very good range of learning experiences. While selection criteria for entry to the programme are clear, it would be beneficial to review the weighting under each criterion in the scoring system. The feasibility of providing additional student places in TY also merits consideration.

There is a positive culture of professional learning among staff which is supported by school management. However, a more strategic approach to sharing practice from continuing professional development (CPD) is needed. The recently formed teaching-and-learning team should harness learning from the range of CPD undertaken and use the school's SSE process to embed effective practice in key pedagogical priorities.

High expectations are set for student achievement. Students are encouraged to take subjects to higher level with some positive learner outcomes noted. However, school management and staff recognise the need to use school attendance and attainment data more systematically to assist students to reach their full potential. This should be a key developmental priority. Some very good work is underway in devising a school student-tracking system. A formal system for tracking student attainment that involves input from year heads, subject teams and the students themselves should be progressed and implemented. School procedures that inform parents of their child's progress could also be reviewed as part of this process.

The school is committed to supporting students with special educational needs (SEN). A core team of specialist staff oversees planning for specific groups of students. This team meets regularly and is very committed to providing high-quality support. Student profiles have been developed and it is very good practice that parents and students are involved in the development of these plans.

The management of aspects of SEN provision needs review. A proportion of the hours allocated for designated SEN support is used for mainstream curricular provision. There is an over-reliance on small-group withdrawal and there is a very large team of teachers delivering support. This makes co-ordination and review of specific supports difficult. It is recommended that deployment of additional teaching resources for SEN be revised to align fully with the principles of the revised resource allocation model, as outlined in circular letter 0070/2014. The core SEN team should be consolidated to make best use of the internal staff expertise. The upcoming CPD should inform a wider roll-out of team teaching as an additional-model of support.

The school provides a number of interventions to support Wellbeing. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is provided in junior cycle, TY and fifth year. Senior-cycle Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is provided as part of Religious Education (RE). Questionnaire data highlights inconsistencies in the provision of the RSE and SPHE programmes. To facilitate highly effective learner experiences, the role of the SPHE teacher should be decoupled from the role of class tutor and a core team of appropriately trained staff, with an expressed interested in SPHE, should be formed.

The school is part of the Health Promoting Schools network and is actively involved in promoting positive mental health. The planned establishment of a core team to develop the wellbeing programme is a commendable initiative.

Provision for Leaving Certificate Physical Education (PE) is not optimal and should be revised in accordance with the *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools*.

The quality of student care is very good; all staff play a key role in supporting students' needs. Parents and students were complementary about the school procedures to assist students to settle into school life. Prefects provide valuable mentoring to first-year students.

A student-support team provides an effective forum for dealing with students' issues. Relevant staff have been actively engaged with CPD and this has impacted very positively on the operation of the care team.

Year heads and class tutors act as a key support structure for students. However, the absence of dedicated tutor time is impacting negatively on consistent implementation of tutor duties. Consideration should be given to providing dedicated tutor time as part of the revised wellbeing programme.

Managing the organisation

The board of management has a very good level of shared expertise. The board, which is well supported by the trustees, works diligently and constructively to address school needs. Priorities for further development have been identified.

School management makes deliberate efforts to cultivate positive professional relationships with all stakeholders and has worked effectively with the students' council and parents' association to progress various projects. It is good practice that the board issues an agreed report after meetings. However, questionnaire data indicate a need to review the effectiveness of communication mechanisms with all relevant stakeholders.

The board oversees the development and implementation of policies which inform the day-to-day running of the school. Priority should now be given to ratifying and updating policies in RSE and SEN.

As a diocesan school, Saint Patrick's is committed to welcoming students from all feeder schools in the Dioceses of Meath. The school is significantly over-subscribed and the admissions policy includes clear procedures for managing over-subscription. Notwithstanding the clarity of the policy, it would be worthwhile for the board to examine closely the capacity of the selection criteria to address fully the growing diversity of population in the Diocese.

Student behaviour was exemplary during the evaluation, with a very good rapport evident between students and staff. While there is a clear understanding of the school rules, questionnaire data indicate a need to review the finer details of implementation of the code of behaviour. The Tusla (NEWB) guidelines *Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools* should inform a collaborative review of the code. It is commendable that student achievement is acknowledged through regular awards ceremonies. Good use is made of the positive-comment section in the students' journal to affirm effort.

The principal and two deputy principals operate as a very effective senior management team. Their complementary skill set provides an effective synergy that serves the school very well. The team recognises the need for a sharper focus on collaborative evidence-based action planning to support on-going developments in teaching and learning. Given that the senior management team will comprise one principal and three deputy principals from September 2018, the respective roles of each member of the expanded team should now be re-considered to provide sufficient time for this strategic leadership function.

Good staff deployment practice is evident and a holistic approach is taken to supporting staff needs. The school's participation in Droichead with effect from September 2018 should provide an additional support framework for new teachers.

School management maintains the buildings and grounds to a very high standard. Commendably, provision for students' wellbeing has informed the development of facilities such as the canteen and the first-year locker spaces. Planning for the school extension should be informed by the proposed strategic curriculum review.

Leading school development

There are many examples of effective strategic planning in areas relating to infrastructure, curriculum and student support. However, there is a lack of cohesion between the various initiatives due to absence of an overarching strategic plan. The school plan reviewed during the evaluation is outdated and there is an absence of a developmental action plan. The board, in collaboration with the school community, should prepare an updated plan that includes a strategic development section. Questionnaire findings indicate a need to enhance systems for garnering the views of parents, students and staff in this process.

Developing leadership capacity

Leadership roles are distributed at middle-management level and very good commitment is evident in the carrying out of post-of-responsibility duties. A review of the posts of responsibility is underway and post-holders will be required to report annually to the board. This should ensure that the duties assigned continue to meet school needs.

Meetings between senior management and post-holders, such as assistant principals and year heads, are infrequent. Regular year-head meetings should be introduced to facilitate the implementation of a consistent approach to the assigned disciplinary and pastoral roles.

Staff members are very enthusiastic and committed to their work; a high level of volunteerism is apparent. Senior management empowers staff to take on leadership roles and staff welcome these opportunities.

Student leadership is fostered through the prefect system and the students' council. Both structures are well organised and are supported by a designated liaison teacher. The students' council should be facilitated to access training to support its expanding role in the school.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with some very good practice observed in a significant minority of lessons. Satisfactory practice was noted in a few lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Learning intentions were shared with the students, in almost all lessons. This strategy proved particularly effective in focusing students' attention and in facilitating purposeful learner engagement. Highly effective learner outcomes were supported when the learning intentions were differentiated appropriately, phrased simply, and built on prior students' knowledge.

Very high levels of motivation were apparent when the planned learning intentions were discussed with students; and where lessons moved at a purposeful pace. In some lessons, there was insufficient consolidation and assessment of students' actual progress. Learning intentions should be sufficiently differentiated and revisited during lessons to assess progress and facilitate student reflection.

The quality of classroom interactions among students, and between students and their teachers was very positive and respectful. Students presented as eager to learn and contributed very positively to classroom discussions, when challenged to do so. In some classrooms, it was apparent from the range of work displayed that the students themselves took responsibility and ownership for creating the vibrant learning environment. This is commendable practice.

In the majority of lessons, deliberate efforts were made to encourage active learning. Highly effective learning was noted when the task assigned was meaningful and sufficiently challenging, and where sufficient time was given to plenary session. In these instances, students demonstrated very high levels of interest in their learning and were well able to discuss progress, summarise and assess information with their peers.

In some lessons, there was scope to enhance the quality of learner experiences by providing additional opportunities for student discussion and avoiding an over-reliance on teacher input. Sufficient time should be allowed in all lessons for activities that encourage students to reflect on, discuss and apply their learning.

Highly effective learner experiences were apparent in lessons where students were supported in making meaningful connections between the lesson content and its relevance for life-long learning. In a few lessons, there was an over-emphasis on students learning facts. On occasion, examination techniques featured too prominently and the value of learning was subsumed to the requirements of the examination paper.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Preparation for teaching was very good in the majority of lessons. Highly effective planning was noted when the chosen teaching approaches closely aligned to the planned learning intentions and where the lesson structure supported developmental learning.

Teachers had high expectations for students' work. Some very effective use of additional resources, was noted to clarify difficult concepts and support learning. Teachers should share their expertise in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a learning tool.

In the planning and delivery of language lessons, some teachers integrated all four language skills skilfully. This integrated approach to language teaching should be shared across language departments.

Learning was of a very high quality in lessons where teachers had an acute awareness of their students' needs and adapted the teaching approaches accordingly. In many lessons, however, a whole-class approach to teaching and learning prevailed, with the same content delivered to all students in the same way. In planning their lessons, teachers should differentiate learning opportunities to accommodate all students.

A good focus on developing students' understanding of subject-specific terminology was observed. Further work is needed in supporting relevant evidence-based literacy and numeracy targets at classroom and subject-department levels.

Some good formative assessment practice was observed. Questioning was a frequently used assessment strategy. High-quality learning was apparent when students were challenged to provide well-developed answers. Some good use was made of *placemat* activities, *exit tickets*, *traffic lights* and success criteria. In some lessons, there were missed opportunities to assess and provide feedback on learning. Some very good use of formative written feedback was noted in student copybooks, but there is significant scope to extend this type of monitoring.

To build on the very good practice noted in lessons, it is recommended that formal strategies for teachers to share effective practice in differentiation and formative assessment should be established. The potential of the SSE process in supporting this work should be fully realised.

Teachers' collaborative practice is well established. Subject teams review trends in student attainment but there is scope to use this data further to inform key pedagogical practice at subject-department level and to inform subject-specific targets and actions to support student learning.

Commendably, subject teams develop common programme plans. However, significant collaborative work is needed to prepare for the impending change to one-hour lessons. Once the revised timetabled provision for subjects is finalised, programme plans should be reviewed to ensure high-quality learner outcomes and experiences are adequately facilitated.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

The overall quality of implementation of recommendations from previous inspections is good, with some very good progress evident.

Leadership and Management

The progress made in implementing previous recommendations in the area of leadership and management is very good. School management and subject teams have used previous inspections effectively to inform school planning and management issues. Matters relating to class organisation and curriculum planning have all been addressed.

Teaching and Learning

Good progress has been made in implementing previous teaching and learning recommendations. However, opportunities should be created for teachers to share the outcomes of inspections with colleagues. It was noted that one subject team devised an action plan based on the recommendations in a previous report. This very good practice should be extended and a system of checking for the success of the implementation of recommendations should be established.

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

While the school has a very good capacity for school improvement, the potential of the formal school self-evaluation (SSE) process is not yet fully realised.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The overall quality of formal school self-evaluation (SSE) procedures to support teaching and learning is satisfactory. A school improvement plan 2016-17 has been prepared and in line with good practice, a summary report has been prepared for the school community. Staff have promoted initiatives in literacy, numeracy and formative assessment. However, a more strategic, evidence-based approach to sharing practice and planning for improvements in teaching and learning is needed. In this context, the potential of the six-step SSE process needs to be fully realised.

A SSE co-ordinator has been appointed recently to lead a teaching-and-learning team. Recently-conducted school surveys of students and teachers provide a rich evidence base for establishing targets. This team should use a robust SSE process to lead a whole-school adoption of key identified pedagogical practices.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has a very good capacity for, and commitment to, improvement. School management and staff show a pride in their work, a strong commitment to the school, and are focused clearly on maintaining a learning environment where students flourish and achieve their potential. Parents and students are highly committed to the school. These key enablers should facilitate effective collaborative practice in implementing any school improvement agenda.

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	*Very good* applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is *outstanding* and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	*Good* applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	*Satisfactory* applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	*Fair* applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	*Weak* applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;