

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	53 St Stephen's Green Dublin 2
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60820E

Date of Evaluation: 17-11-2016



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make 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 of the school 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

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	17-11-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with Board of Management• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group meetings• Meeting with parent nominee from board of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning in twenty-two lessons• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Loreto College, St Stephen's Green is an all-girls' fee-charging school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school provides a six year programme which includes the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of leadership and management was very good and human resources are well managed for the most part.
- The quality of leadership for learning was very good overall and the senior management team and board are receptive to innovation; there is scope to develop clearer long term priorities.
- The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons was very good or good with some exemplary practice noted: in a few lessons, a greater focus on student participation in their learning with appropriately challenging learning intentions was possible.
- The promotion and facilitation of the student voice, student participation and student leadership is highly developed.
- Learning support is efficiently managed with a large team of teachers providing additional tuition to students: while no member of staff holds a special needs teaching qualification at present, this deficit is being addressed.
- There is a high level of engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and the school's engagement with SSE permeates all levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school's implementation of job-sharing arrangements should be reviewed to ensure alignment with Department regulations.
- The board should identify immediate and longer-term priorities for the school with a particular focus on what can be reasonably achieved in its three-year term of office.
- The structures and approaches for delivering special educational needs (SEN) support should be reviewed.
- To further develop the good teaching and learning practices observed, teachers should ensure that they are offering an appropriately high level of challenge to all students at all times.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management:

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The recently appointed board of management is appropriately constituted and at the time of the evaluation one formal meeting of the new board had taken place. In line with good practice, the board has received training from the Joint Managerial Body (JMB). The trustee nominees have continued to serve on the board ensuring continued expertise, commitment and continuity of vision. The board has a very good awareness of its role and brings an educational focus to its oversight of all the areas for which it is responsible.

A comprehensive range of policies has been developed in a consultative manner with the stakeholders. The board intends to review a number of school policies to ensure that they are current and relevant. The board should draw up a clear timetable for a systematic review of school policies. To support this review, the policy checklist on the Department's school self-evaluation website could be used.

One of the school's policies deals with job-sharing arrangements. The school's implementation of job-sharing arrangements should be reviewed to ensure alignment with Department regulations.

The admissions and enrolment policy reflects the characteristic spirit of the school. The board is currently reviewing the admissions policy and has identified the need for certain amendments. This review should also clarify the six-year curriculum and the status of transition year, and should reconsider the wording related to the admission of students with SEN to reflect the 'lived practice' of the school.

There are very good links between the board and the senior management team. The board is kept well informed about school life. The board is committed to ensuring that financial resources are directed towards supporting teaching and learning, for example through employing additional teachers and paying additional posts-of-responsibility. As a next step, the board should identify immediate and longer-term priorities for the school with a particular focus on what can be reasonably achieved in their three-year term of office.

The senior management team has been in place since September 2015. As a relatively new team, the principal and deputy principal divide their duties as appropriate to agreed areas of responsibility and expertise. They are committed to these roles, reflect on how they are carrying them out and are continuing to develop their leadership capacity. They have established a very good line of communication with the board and trustees. While regularly touching base during the school week they have not yet established fixed formal meeting time. It is advisable to establish this practice to give time for shared reflection and the shaping of a shared vision for the school as well as dealing with immediate issues.

There is a very active and committed parents' association in the school. Parent representatives for each class group meet on a monthly basis. They are involved in numerous events such as organising a careers evening for senior students. Parents are expected to play a part in the spiritual formation of the students and are involved in the end-of-year mass. It is therefore noteworthy that survey responses indicated that parents did not feel informed or active partners in a number of areas. The school should investigate further these findings.

The promotion and facilitation of the student voice, student participation and student leadership have been developed to a very high degree. The operation of the student council, the prefect and senior prefect system, the student leadership committee and a multitude of other student teams is exemplary. Student participation in various meetings with the inspectors was highly impressive. Students are viewed and see themselves as partners and stakeholders.

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The quality of leadership for learning was very good overall. The school has undergone significant change in personnel in recent years and this has been well managed and led. The senior management team effectively manages the planning and implementation of a broad academic curriculum. Teachers are deployed appropriately and deliberate efforts are made to meet the needs of students.

Both the senior management team and board are very supportive of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). There is a commendably high level of engagement of staff in a range of CPD areas, and a commitment to sharing expertise, most notably in relation to eLearning, and through peer observation. Lesson observations showed a direct link between the professional development of teachers and enhanced classroom practice and engagement of students.

The senior management team and the board are receptive to innovation and empower teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning through the distribution of responsibilities. All staff members recognise that continuous innovation is necessary to respond to educational change and evolving student needs. It is good practice that the principal meets staff annually on a one-to-one basis to review work and their professional development.

The middle-leadership team has a developmental leadership role providing advice to the senior management team and support to enable students to progress as well as possible in school. The year head role is diligently carried out and encompasses the behavioural, pastoral and academic monitoring of students.

There is a combination of Department and board-funded special duties post-holders. These post-holders have been enabled to lead significant teaching, learning and assessment initiatives. It is advised that a regular review of posts of responsibility is conducted to ensure their continuing relevance as the needs of the school evolve.

Outside of the post structure, teachers commendably have taken on a range of additional responsibilities which provide for and support a wide educational experience for students.

While incoming first-years choose optional subjects in advance they are assured of being able to take whatever combination of subjects they wish. As a focus group of junior cycle students expressed their interest in actually experiencing the range of subjects available, some form of sampling programme might be considered in the context of SSE. The TY programme has a subject sampling layer and students get advice and information from teachers when choosing Leaving Certificate subjects. In addition to these supports students are facilitated to make a change of subject, where it is advisable.

New subject specifications of the revised Junior Cycle for English, Business and Science are being implemented. However, teachers have not conducted classroom based assessments in accordance with the advice in the English specification and as required by Circular 0024/2016. In addition, no subject learning and assessment review meetings have taken place. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action. Teachers should implement all aspects of the new specifications including the

assessment components. Furthermore, teachers should engage in subject learning and assessment review meetings in order to build a common understanding of the quality of students' learning.

The TY programme takes a holistic view of the learner and learning. A co-ordinator and core team have created an impressive programme which is well structured to deliver the Department's stated aims for TY. In addition, the programme facilitates students to follow their own interests and use their own initiative. Assessment of TY is through the use of an electronic portfolio which empowers students to engage in reflection and self-evaluation. Commendably, a major review of the TY programme is conducted every five years involving parents, teachers and all senior cycle students.

The school provides Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) through a cross-curricular model. The current review of this model should be informed by parent and student questionnaire responses.

It is commendable that the rationale for the code of behaviour is shared with students and clearly understood by them. This type of code correlates well with high standards of behaviour. Staff have identified a need to review the code of behaviour to reflect current issues such as the use of electronic technology during school.

Among the student representatives and leaders who met with the inspectors during the evaluation, their clear articulation and understanding of the school's vision and how they have embraced this vision was noteworthy. Students knew and could explain the holistic nature of the education they were experiencing, and cited a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities of a sporting, musical, artistic and social nature available to them.

There are highly effective support structures in place to provide for students' well-being, learning and individual educational needs. Regular meetings and strong lines of communication between the senior management, year heads, chaplaincy and guidance services provide a very visible support structure which students themselves appreciate. There was a striking level of awareness of the centrality of the chaplaincy service amongst students and a pro-active approach among staff to supporting and enhancing student well-being. A very comprehensive whole-school guidance plan is in place. It reflects a highly co-ordinated approach to delivering the personal, educational and vocational guidance to students.

Designated hours for students in need of additional support are used for their intended purpose. The school also benefits from the services of a number of special needs assistants (SNA). The co-ordination of learning support is efficiently managed and it is good practice that there is a weekly formal meeting of the SEN co-ordinator and principal. There is at present no staff member with a special needs teaching qualification, however, a teacher is currently engaged in an appropriate course. While a rationale for the large number of teachers delivering support was offered, it is advisable to ensure that the number of teachers involved allows for appropriate monitoring and feedback regarding student progress. Furthermore, the structures and approaches for delivering SEN support should be reviewed, as subject teachers require the guidance and direction of a special needs teacher to ensure the delivery of optimal support to all students with SEN.

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 overall management of facilities is very good. The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard to enable their optimal use. Very dedicated auxiliary staff play a key role in this.

The school environment is promoted through green school activities. There are very good displays of students' work, projects and achievements in classrooms, on corridors and on notice boards throughout the school. Additionally, the library, with its two dedicated librarians, is a very good resource centre and learning space.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

During the evaluation twenty-two lessons were observed. These covered all years and programmes, and included core, practical, optional and non-examination subjects. The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons was very good or good with some exemplary practice noted. In a few lessons a greater focus on students' participation in their learning with appropriately challenging learning intentions was recommended.

Throughout the evaluation students showed an exemplary attitude to their own learning. While they approached their work seriously a level of enjoyment was also evident.

In almost all lessons students' learning was supported by an effective sequence of learning activities and resources suitable for the specific learning intentions of the lessons. In the majority of lessons the learning intentions were shared with students at the outset and used to structure the lesson. Best practice was observed in a few lessons where teachers reviewed these learning intentions at the end to assess progress and to consolidate learning.

Interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful and positive. Very good collaborative learning was observed where students worked in pairs and small groups in a very purposeful and productive manner. This methodology was most effective when the classroom was appropriately organised.

Throughout the lesson observations a range of teaching approaches was observed. There was an evident alignment between the approaches chosen, the learning intentions and an awareness of where students are in their learning in the majority of lessons. It was evident in these lessons that teachers expected students to engage with the learning, apply themselves and to ask questions in order to clarify learning. Notwithstanding this very good practice, in a few lessons, teachers should consider the level of challenge appropriate to such diligent and able students and ensure that they are offering an appropriately high level of challenge at all times.

An integrated approach to the development of the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing was the hallmark of the very good practice observed in many of the language lessons. The very good materials prepared, including electronic resources, clarified the topic of the lesson, supported students' engagement with the language and reinforced new learning. In all instances teachers modelled very good use of the target language. It was noteworthy, in most instances, that students were very willing to 'have a go' with new vocabulary and language constructions. To capitalise on this willingness and to build confidence where necessary, teachers should optimise opportunities for students to extend oral language use.

It was evident that students feel able to ask questions and contribute their opinions to class discussions. There was a consistent use of teacher questioning to check students' understanding and, at a more probing level, to deepen and broaden their knowledge. Teachers need to be careful of the over use of global questioning to ascertain students' understanding as students in difficulty may be reluctant to respond. At its best, questioning was used in a stimulating way in a range of subject areas to encourage student enquiry. To extend the very good practice observed, teachers should be attentive to the balance between the more procedural use of questioning and its use to engage higher-order thinking.

In practical lessons, students received clear instructions, explanations and demonstrations of procedures. Strategic pairing to facilitate peer tutoring where appropriate was noted in a few lessons. The judicious use of this approach could be a further means of in-class support.

Students had a clear sense of ownership of their work. From reviewing student copybooks there is evidence of teacher monitoring of student written work, and formative comments were noted. The most helpful of these gave directional advice to enable students to make improvements, and support learner autonomy. In a number of lessons peer correction was observed. It was effective in promoting students to work cooperatively to identify errors and make the necessary corrections. In line with the school's commitment to good assessment for learning practices, this approach merits more widespread use.

Tablet devices are used with all junior cycle students and a set is available for use by all other year groups. The school has made great strides with the use of technology as a learning, investigating and recording tool. The classroom practice observed showed the extent to which the eLearning initiative has been embedded as a tool to support student learning.

Subject planning is well established and minutes of meetings show a good balance between a focus on teaching and learning and organisational aspects of departments. Very good collaborative plans and common schemes of work are available electronically. It is good practice that schemes of work reflect a developmental and incremental approach to progressing student learning. Teachers have diligently aligned learning outcomes, methodologies, resources, literacy and numeracy and assessment that relate to each topic. Commendably, it was noted that a few departments use these schemes as working documents to reflect on the programme implementation and record changes as they progress through the term. In feedback discussions and other meetings, there was evidence of a reflective mind-set amongst teachers. Teachers are encouraged to formulate and record collective reflections in the context of subject-meetings to identify progress and areas for further development.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1. Management

School management has addressed all recommendations made in previous inspections and all have been implemented.

3.2. Learning and teaching

The subject departments and teachers involved have made very good progress in addressing recommendations regarding teaching and learning. However, the area of higher-order questioning

was recommended previously and was noted in some lessons as an area for further development. This could be an area of focus as part of the practice of peer observation by teachers.

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

There is a high level of engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and acute awareness of its value as an engine to drive continuing development and improvement. The school's engagement with SSE permeates all levels: from the board of management, which engages in a strategy day to identify priorities; the senior management team's engagement with relevant professional development; evidence of teachers' reflective practice; and students encouraged to reflect on their learning.

Literacy and numeracy strategies are well underway and are being implemented in almost all lessons. The area of assessment for learning has been identified as the third SSE strand and a school improvement plan is in place with a particular focus on upskilling teachers in this area.

To enhance outcomes in the next cycle of SSE the school is advised to follow through fully with the planned measures for monitoring progress. The board of management should communicate progress in SSE, in an accessible way, to the school community.

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 Loreto College, St. Stephen's Green, on behalf of the stakeholders, wishes to acknowledge receipt of the WSE/MLL inspection report. The WSE-MLL was an affirming experience that further developed the existing self-evaluation procedures within the school. We are pleased that the report affirms many of the very good practices in existence in the school, the positive endorsement of the high standards of leadership and management, teaching and learning and school self-evaluation by the stakeholders. We are pleased that "Students knew and could explain the holistic nature of the education they were experiencing, and cited a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities of a sporting, musical, artistic and social nature available to them" reflecting the Loreto vision of education, was highlighted by the Inspectorate. The Board wishes to congratulate and thank the whole school community for its contribution to this outcome and is particularly happy that the exemplary behaviour of the students was commended and that the mutually respectful interactions between staff and students was noted.

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 fully committed to the implementation of the recommendations and suggestions in this report, all of which will be addressed over the coming year.

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 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;