

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Jesus & Mary Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Gortnor Abbey Crossmolina County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64630T

Date of Evaluation: 21-11-2018



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 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.

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

Dates of inspection	21-11-2018
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 interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Gortnor Abbey is a co-educational voluntary secondary school committed to providing a holistic education in the Jesus and Mary tradition. The school offers the Junior Cycle (JC) programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate to its 556 students. A new senior management team (SMT) was appointed from within the staff in September 2018.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of school management and leadership is good in all areas; the formal distribution of leadership opportunities through core teams, guided by a whole-school strategic plan, is now needed.
- Students and parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school in general and most students agreed that they feel safe and well cared for; the involvement of students in decision-making about key areas of school life is an area for further exploration.
- The quality of teaching was very good in general, ranging from satisfactory in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons, including a few instances of excellent practice; subject department collective agreements in relation to feedback-focused formative assessment practices now need to be developed.
- The quality of student learning was good overall, ranging from satisfactory in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons; there is scope for digital technology to be integrated into lessons more consistently.
- There has been a good level of progress in the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.
- Engagement with school self-evaluation (SSE) in the first cycle has been good; the extensive survey data which has been gathered has the potential to inform a more strategic approach to target setting.

Recommendations

- The board of management should arrange for the collaborative development of one strategic school plan based on the current and future needs of the school; mechanisms for the proactive and systematic review of the implementation of the plan will be essential to inculcate a whole-school approach.
- The delegation of leadership responsibility to post-holders and teachers should be continued through the empowerment of core teams in key areas such as student care, special educational needs (SEN), SSE and digital technology.

- A collaborative review of student representation in the school should be undertaken in order to ensure that students are facilitated in playing a more central leadership role.
- The strategic development of practices in relation to formative feedback for improvement, peer-assessment, self-assessment and the integration of digital technology should be undertaken.
- Future engagements with the SSE process should include more robust mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies; the outcomes of this regular review should be shared with all school partners.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the quality of school management and leadership is good, encompassing board, senior and middle management, student support, curriculum and facilities; to move the school's capacity for improvement from good to highly effective, it is now necessary to agree and implement a strategic plan for the leadership of learning and teaching for the coming years, underpinned by targets, team structures and evaluation procedures.

Leading learning and teaching

The principal and deputy principal work well together and are committed to the ongoing development of the school. The promotion of excellence in teaching and learning is a key priority for the team.

The board of management, established in the current year, has maintained continuity with previous boards. The board monitors teaching and learning through the discussion of state examination results, inspection reports and the principal's report. In order to augment such discussions, the board should be provided with regular detailed progress reports on the implementation and review of SSE targets as well as annual progress reports from subject departments and post-holders. The board should also ratify the school improvement plan on an annual basis. The four domains in the document *Looking at Our School (LAOS) 2016; A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools* should frame the teaching and learning section of the annual report provided by the principal to the board.

Demand-led timetabling, to meet changing student preferences from year to year, is offered on entry to first year and fifth year and there is considerable breadth in the range of subjects offered at both junior and senior cycle. TY is the only other programme being offered on a successful and sustained basis. LCVP is provided in the current school year with twelve students following the programme. Five years have elapsed since LCVP was previously offered. As recommended in the whole-school evaluation (WSE) in 2007, school management should explore ways of raising the profile of LCVP in the school.

Implementation of the JC programme is ongoing and is well co-ordinated. An Advisory Board of Studies was recently re-established to co-ordinate curricular developments over the next number of years. The JC co-ordinator should be included on this team.

A high level of commitment to the care, support and wellbeing of students was evident during the evaluation, through questionnaire responses and through interviews with students, teachers and parents. Year heads play a pivotal role in the student-support structures and are supported by a voluntary class tutor system for junior cycle students, re-established in 2017. Junior and senior support teams are in place and each team meets formally twice per term. This is a long time span between meetings and, in the context of increasing enrolment and the addition of two new year heads, consideration should be given to having more regular meetings, as outlined in the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) publication *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools*.

It will be necessary to finalise the critical incident management policy and to ensure that team members are trained.

The role and responsibilities of the guidance service are presented in very good detail in the whole-school guidance plan. There are good supports in place for students and parents at times of transition. A team of teachers, including the guidance counsellor, introduced an academic tracking and mentoring system for Leaving Certificate students in 2017. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this support has impacted positively on student attainment. The further development of this tracking system is encouraged.

Support for students with SEN is very well organised and is supported by in-school management. Whole-staff continuing professional development (CPD) was provided on the new SEN resource allocation model. Students are supported through various interventions such as team teaching, small-group withdrawal and on a one-to-one basis. While senior management is pursuing opportunities to up-skill additional staff members, currently only the co-ordinator has a full qualification in SEN. Almost half of the teachers are involved in the delivery of the supports to students. It is recommended that the number of teachers deployed to provide the majority of SEN support be reduced to a core team and that this team be facilitated in meeting on a regular basis.

In keeping with the school's commitment to inclusion, an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit has been established. Students in the unit are integrated into mainstream classes where possible and teachers showed a high degree of awareness of and support for students with SEN.

The code of behaviour adopts a *Reform-not-Blame* restorative focus. A strong emphasis on respect for the rights and responsibilities of the individual underpin the code. A clear ladder of interventions is detailed and the role of each stakeholder in the management of the code is clearly set out. Teachers, parents and students reported that behaviour is good in the school and that interactions between students and teachers are fair and respectful.

Managing the organisation

Senior management works closely with relevant staff in the effective management and day-to-day operation of the school. Members of the SMT maintain a high visibility on corridors and staff and parents commented on their approachable management style.

Educational expertise, strong community links, and long-serving commitment are key features of the board's membership. The board has developed a range of policies, through a consultative process, with the school community. The board should sign off on the SSE policy checklist on an annual basis; this will ensure that all mandatory policies are ratified.

Physical and financial resources are well managed and the buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard. A number of additional infrastructural needs have been identified and initial enquires have been made to address these.

Good systems are in place to support internal and external communications. Staff meetings are convened regularly and, notwithstanding the time afforded to discussion, more time could be made available if some information was disseminated prior to staff meetings. Such an approach would allow for the strengthening of the collective collaborative input of staff to whole-school decision making and would free up time for subcommittees to meet or to facilitate workshops.

The school has a strong sense of community and is very welcoming of parents. The recently elected parents' association (PA) is well informed, proud of the school and members feel consulted as part of the school community. Members of the PA demonstrate high capacity to support school developments into the future. Areas for improvement identified through feedback from parents include improved communication channels between the PA and other stakeholders within the school community.

The school community prides itself on its range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities focusing on a range of sports, musical recitals and productions, the sciences, the arts, debating, drama and languages. The spirit of collegiality and volunteerism demonstrated by teachers is commended.

Leading school development

A range of developmental priorities has been identified by the school in a five-year plan 2015-2020, which includes a number of targets for SSE 2016-2020. To support the management of change, the board should oversee the development of one strategic time-bound plan to lead teaching and learning over the coming years. Good-quality survey data on teaching and learning has been gathered from all stakeholders. This data should be analysed and used to generate specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets. Mechanisms to track and monitor progress on an ongoing basis should also be developed. Senior management should ring-fence time to fully lead and manage action planning for improvement.

A very good programme for whole-staff CPD, delivered by external facilitators, is organised each year. The strategic plan, recommended above, will provide a useful reference point for planning CPD themes over the coming years. Considering the high rate of participation by teachers at external CPD, as well as the many teachers who hold post-graduate qualifications, a CPD model to facilitate the sharing of in-house expertise between staff should be established. Senior management is very affirming and supportive of teachers and frequently holds informal discussions with teachers on learner outcomes. There is scope to formalise this.

Developing leadership capacity

The middle management team of assistant principals takes responsibility for a range of pastoral, administrative and co-ordination roles which assist in the effective operation of the school and enhance student outcomes. A comprehensive whole-staff review of the middle management posts was carried out recently and posts are now categorised according to the four domains of LAOS set out in Circular 0003/2018. Descriptors detailing the roles and responsibilities attached to each post should be agreed. Such descriptors should be sufficiently robust so as to build leadership capacity, to facilitate self-reflection and provide a framework for reporting to senior management and the board. Members of the SMT should also document and make available an overview of their roles using the four domains of LAOS.

The post of coordinator of programmes should be developed to allow for greater oversight of all curricular programmes. In addition, a core team to support the planning and evaluation of curricular programmes should be established.

It is commendable that, independent of the post structure, a number of subcommittees have been formed recently to encourage staff to take on leadership roles. It will be necessary to align the areas of focus of these subcommittees with the strategic plan and revised leadership responsibilities.

There are good opportunities for student leadership including the student council, the Green-Schools committee and student mentors. There are also many leadership opportunities during TY and through participation in co- and extra-curricular activities. It is commended that the student council delivers an annual report to the board. Notwithstanding such positive initiatives, the students feel that there is need to enhance their say in how things are done in the school. In particular, they perceive a need to engage with the PA and to increase their current engagement with the board. The increased incorporation of the student voice into life in the school should be explored further.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learner outcomes and experiences

The quality of student learning was good overall, ranging from satisfactory in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons.

Students were confident and demonstrated very good levels of knowledge and a positive approach to learning. In many instances, students were given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning through reflective engagement with assigned tasks.

A stimulating learning environment has been created throughout the school. Most classrooms visited were laid out to facilitate collaborative learning in line with the teaching approaches promoted in the JC programme. Commendably, displays in many classrooms and corridors showcased students' work.

In some lessons, teachers set very high expectations for students' achievement and students responded well. In these lessons, students were highly motivated and the teachers' high expectations were reflected in the high standards that students set for themselves. The development of skills and knowledge, in the context of real world issues and problems, provided opportunities to develop students' learning beyond the curriculum. This is very good practice.

The school-wide implementation of classroom practices such as the effective use of learning intentions to frame and structure lessons gave very good clarity to the way in which lessons were organised. Where best practice was seen, the learning intentions were revisited during and at the end of the lesson. This enabled the teacher to assess students' learning throughout the lesson and to reflectively consider how the planned teaching should be progressed.

Digital technology was used in the majority of lessons, primarily as a presentation tool. In a few lessons, video and audio resources were also used to enhance the learning experience for students. Students were encouraged to use the internet to research homework topics and, in some instances, digital technology is used to submit and monitor homework assignments. Opportunities for more dynamic use and greater integration of digital technologies should be identified and incorporated into lessons.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The quality of teaching was very good in general, ranging from satisfactory in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons, including a few instances of excellent practice.

Lessons were very well planned and organised. Good strategies, such as using roll call responses to practice topical vocabulary in language lessons, were used at the start of lessons to elicit and build upon existing knowledge and understanding. Such approaches served to enhance students' engagement with the topic being taught and eliminated the need to re-visit content that was already well understood.

A range of active learning methodologies was observed and teachers demonstrated a very high level of capacity to engage in innovative classroom practices. Students were given many opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and groups. In the best lessons, task based activities were well structured, activities were timed and, consequently, resulted in purposeful engagement. In some language lessons, specific grammatical points that required focused teaching were integrated successfully into the overall lesson plan. In a few instances, there was a need for more scaffolding and consolidation of learning to enable all students to experience success.

Differentiation in lessons was very effective and seamless. Teachers provided differentiated tasks, worksheets and homework to challenge and support all students. In one lesson, an example of excellent team teaching was observed. The teachers' complementary roles and tasks had been planned carefully in advance, and a very well-balanced lesson provided positive learning experiences

for all students. Students in the class reported a very sophisticated appreciation of the benefit of the combined inputs of the two teachers.

A number of whole-school teaching and learning practices with a focus on the continuing development of literacy and numeracy were evident. Keyword strategies were used to support comprehension and learning intentions were communicated clearly. Numeracy was supported through a *spot the maths* approach with first-year students using Venn diagrams very effectively to support comparative work in English. These shared practices provided evidence of teachers working collaboratively to improve the learning experience for all students. Further whole-school collaboration could focus on whole-school approaches to supporting skills that are common to all subjects.

Very good-quality assessment practices were observed in many lessons. Questions were very well distributed with excellent use of wait-time and the appropriate use of higher-order and lower-order questions. Teachers utilised questioning purposefully to assess learning, to develop understanding and to determine how the teaching of the topic should be progressed. Some very effective examples of students assessing their own learning were observed where students were encouraged to describe learning and gaps in learning on exit passes and show-me boards. Good-quality formative feedback was seen in some students' work, with very good practice observed in a few cases. The strategic development of practices around formative feedback for improvement, in particular in relation to peer-assessment and self-assessment, should be addressed in the current review of the assessment policy.

Homework was assigned at the end of the majority of lessons and, typically, teachers checked the completion of homework at the start of the lesson. In discussion, students reported that homework that consolidates and reinforces the lesson's learning intentions was most beneficial. Examination of students' journals showed that homework is not recorded consistently. Monitoring of journals to ensure that homework is recorded and completed should be undertaken regularly.

The quality of the subject department plans that were examined during the inspection ranged from very good to fair. The best plans showed evidence of extensive personal and collaborative reflection and thoughtful engagement with the development of the subject. Meeting minutes identified clear actions and timelines. Schemes of work were comprehensive and supported the teaching of the subject at a detailed level with specific assessment tasks and success criteria described for each learning outcome. Other plans lacked detail and did not show evidence of collaborative planning. All subject departments should collaboratively develop subject plans in line with JC programme requirements.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Good progress has been made in implementing the management-related recommendations from previous evaluations. However, the documentation of the roles of senior management, the frequency of care team meetings and the development of the profile of LCVP are areas that still need further attention.

Teaching and Learning

Very good progress was noted in relation to in the use of differentiated approaches and active learning methodologies.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school's engagement with SSE has been good and many good whole-school developments have occurred. These include literacy and numeracy initiatives, the effective use of learning intentions, questioning strategies and differentiated practices.

Leadership of SSE was prioritised by staff for inclusion within the revised leadership responsibilities. This is a positive acknowledgement of its importance in school development.

Wellbeing, teaching and learning and digital literacy are the areas of focus for the current SSE cycle. Noted improvements in this iteration of SSE include the gathering of baseline data from all school partners. Overall, SSE should be maintained as a more focused, rigorous and continuous process and the formation of a core team will be necessary to support this development.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

Senior management is supported by a team of teachers who work diligently and earnestly and who demonstrate considerable expertise; their collective capacity for improvement is very good.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

Since our previous WSE in 2007, the board of management takes enormous pride in the fact that the Inspectorate has again acknowledged our school's core ethos, "Caring is at the heart of all we do"; a core value of our congregation's foundress, Claudine Thevenet. The emphasis on student wellbeing is evident in the positive account provided in relation to the provision of SEN and Guidance to support student engagement and inclusion. We concur that the Senior Management Team's accessibility, working relationship, engagement with student voice and commitment to the ongoing development of the school are all positive findings. We appreciate the report's recognition of the demand-led, broad range curriculum on offer, the excellent quality of facilities available and the overall cleanliness and maintenance of the school grounds and building. The comments regarding the dedicated commitment of the teaching staff with the description of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment practices as being predominately in the higher end of the Inspectorate's Quality Continuum are warmly welcomed.

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 report notes that Gortnor Abbey has conscientiously endeavoured to adopt the findings of all previous subject and WSE Inspections. Addressing the recommendations of the WSE/MLL 2018 the board wishes to note:

- At the time of the WSE/MLL the school had recently appointed a new Senior Management Team (SMT);
- Newly elected a board of management;
- Conducted a full Post of Responsibility (POR) review, resulting in the advertisement of four AP II positions.
- The appointment and reassignment of both existing and new AP I & II positions will provide opportunity for the delegation of leadership responsibility.
- The commended level of volunteerism by staff also ensures the continued commitment of non-postholders to extra-curricular activities and committees essential to developing leadership capacity for students and staff
- The board feels that the range of existing opportunities for student engagement, such as policy focus groups, mentors, student nominated awards, etc., have not been reflected in the report. In keeping with existing established practices not overtly acknowledged in the report, the board continues to invite representatives of the student council to meetings and to attend the Annual Le Cheile Conference. The SMT meets with the Student Council on a monthly basis and discussions are ongoing with the Student Council to increase their visibility in the school and to facilitate increased student engagement in school life. Additionally, the SMT invited two members of the student body to share their school experience with prospective students and their parents on Open Night. Furthermore, the SMT has arranged a meeting between the PA and the Student Council. Developing opportunities for student leadership and participation has also been identified in the POR schedule.
- The board challenges the report's observation that Student Support Team Meetings are not convened with suitable regularity. The board is of the opinion that the NEPS Guidelines regarding Student Support is fulfilled through both formal and informal means and is imbedded in our schools ethos.
- The new PORs schedule will address the workload of the Year Heads and voluntary capacity of the class tutors in supporting student wellbeing.
- The streamlining of the existing School Development Plan is a priority for the board.
- The area of SSE has been identified in the POR needs analysis. The appointment of an SSE Coordinator is imminent.
- The initial SSE targets are being revised to incorporate the continued focus on written formative feedback.
- The prospective enrolment for the next five years has been researched.
- A Board of Studies for curriculum planning purposes, which includes the JCT Coordinator, has been established.
- The scheduling and accessibility of LCVP within the curriculum is currently being evaluated as planning for 2019/2020 is ongoing.

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	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;