

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | St. Kilian's Community School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Ballywaltrim Bray Co. Wicklow |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 91376L |

Date of Evaluation: 14-03-2019



**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, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

School planning documentation did not indicate full provision for RSE in the senior cycle at the time of the evaluation, and so did not meet the requirement for check 7 above. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence that it is making full provision for RSE, and is now compliant with this requirement.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

| Dates of inspection | 12, 13, 14 March 2019 |
|---|---|
| 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

St Kilian's Community School was established in 1981 to serve Bray and the surrounding area. The school is under the joint trusteeship of the Franciscan Order, the Marist Sisters and Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board. It is the only post-primary school in Bray that participates in DEIS, the Department's action plan to provide equality of opportunity in schools. The school offers a wide choice of programmes and subjects to its 249 male and 201 female students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Leadership and management in the school is highly effective overall; policy development and review of posts are works in progress.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall; teachers are committed to doing the best for their students.
- Students engaged very well in their learning, generally showing high levels of motivation and enjoyment.
- Action to implement previous recommendations has been good overall.
- There is a high level of engagement in reflection and self-evaluation, and DEIS planning has a clear focus on teaching and learning involving whole-staff participation.
- There is very good capacity to lead and manage improvement.

Recommendations

- The cyclical process of policy development, implementation and review should be more clearly structured, with appropriate involvement of all stakeholders.
- The process of post review should be continued, to support the effective rebalancing and distribution of leadership responsibilities and to acknowledge and develop the leadership capacity that exists within the school.
- The teaching resource hours should be deployed with sufficient flexibility to provide both ongoing support and intensive interventions where required.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school is highly effective overall, creating a well-ordered, dynamic and supportive learning environment. School leaders have identified aspects of the school's work that require development, and have the capacity to plan and implement the necessary actions.

Leading learning and teaching

Leadership of learning and teaching is very good. The school's educational vision is articulated in its mission statement: 'learning for excellence, for life, for all'. The board of management, principal and deputy principal, and teachers display a clear commitment to realising this vision in their work.

The inclusive ethos of the school embraces the entire spectrum of students, and values the diversity of students' backgrounds and cultures. There is a notable focus on challenging and supporting both highly able students and those with learning difficulties. Various models of co-operative teaching are used to provide in-class support and challenge to students in an inclusive learning environment.

The curriculum provided is broad and balanced overall. The core junior cycle curriculum makes very good provision for the development of key skills including literacy and numeracy, and supports Wellbeing as an essential area of learning. The first-year timetable includes library skills, digital learning and behaviour for learning, all of which deliver on the junior cycle principle of Learning to Learn. A good range of optional subjects is available.

The designated class taking the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) is offered a specific curriculum with the same core subjects. Its focus on skills development is commendable, but JCSP students are not given a choice of subjects. It would be worth considering how access to some optional subjects might be provided in JCSP, perhaps through concurrent timetabling.

The school's inclusive Transition Year (TY) programme is strongly promoted to students and parents, as a bridge between junior cycle and Leaving Certificate. All students, including JCSP students, are facilitated to do TY. The admirable aims and principles in the TY plan should be used as a reference point in evaluating the implementation of the programme, both in and beyond the classroom.

The established Leaving Certificate programme makes very good provision for a wide range of subjects, though provision for Physical Education requires improvement. Senior cycle students in the focus group were generally happy about option arrangements, which follow a best-fit model, though questionnaire responses on subject choices merit investigation. Some students pursue the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and the programme offered is stimulating and supportive.

Highly effective student support structures and systems are in place. A multi-disciplinary care team meets weekly to identify and arrange for the supports required by individual students. Exemplary communication and record-keeping practices are in place so that collective expertise is harnessed and students' ongoing or exceptional needs are carefully tracked and monitored.

Students' talents and interests are fostered through the provision of extended learning opportunities in many subject areas, for example, supervised access to specialist rooms after school. A strong commitment to providing equality of opportunity beyond the curriculum is demonstrated through seeking and participating in partnerships that extend students' learning.

Managing the organisation

The school is an orderly, well-functioning, well-maintained learning environment. The smooth day-to-day operation is achieved through very good communication, adherence to effective routines, and fostering respectful interactions within the school community. Students, parents and teachers agreed that the school is well run.

The board is experienced, conscientious, and very committed to the school. It supports the principal and maintains careful oversight of the school's financial and physical resources. The board's financial support for teachers' professional development is praiseworthy. Staff presentations to the board on developments in teaching and learning would be mutually beneficial.

Key policies are in place, including the enrolment policy and the code of behaviour, which are inclusive and fair. Some policies have been re-ratified without changes and others are being reviewed and updated. The cyclical process of policy development, implementation and review should be more clearly structured, with board oversight, direction from senior management, delegation as appropriate to other school leaders, and the involvement of all staff, and of parents and students where relevant.

The principal and deputy principal form a highly effective senior management team, and are deeply committed to the school and its students. They approach their respective roles co-operatively, drawing on complementary strengths. The principal plays a central role on the board of management, and is the key driver of school vision and development. The deputy principal contributes greatly to the school's orderly functioning, and has developed and maintains systems for the management of students and resources. However, their present workload is not sustainable.

The school has a large number of assistant principal (AP) posts, including seven AP1 posts. Traditionally, these have been identified with the year head role. This practice is being reviewed, in response both to smaller year groups and the new leadership and management criteria set out in the Department's circular 0003/2018. The review, which has already introduced new leadership responsibilities at AP1 level and will also bring changes to AP2 responsibilities, is timely and commendable, and a post structure based on distributed leadership to respond to identified needs is emerging. This will offer greater scope to middle leaders, and will rebalance the senior management team's workload.

The sizable allocation of teaching resource hours for students with additional educational needs is deployed to provide in-class support, support lessons for identified students, and programmes to strengthen students' gateway skills and behaviour for learning. Its use is effective, but productively timetabling the full resource throughout the year is a challenge. It is therefore recommended that the school combine fixed and flexible models of provision, to give continuing support as appropriate, and also to offer intensive interventions to meet identified, specific needs. The capacity for strategic planning and co-ordination that this blended model requires exists already within the school.

Very good systems and routines are in place to ensure the effective and responsive management of students. These involve year head and class tutor teams, the behaviour for learning service, the care team, and all teachers working in close co-operation.

Leading school development

The leadership of school development is one of the school's growing strengths, benefiting greatly from the recent whole-staff review of priorities and responsibilities. There is a high and increasing level of awareness of educational change, and leadership and management of change is effective. In the context of DEIS and the school's commitment to excellence, a significant emphasis has been placed on action planning for improvement to enhance learner experiences and outcomes.

The self-evaluation process is used very effectively to identify priorities and to implement actions leading to improvements for students. The explicit commitment to measure the impact of actions is especially commendable. A current initiative that is proving successful in improving punctuality and attendance exemplifies the purposeful gathering, analysis, and monitoring of data required in action planning for improvement. The same process could be very fruitfully applied to the priority area of student progress and attainment.

The quality of communication with parents about their children is very good on both an individual and year group basis. The school's practice of parent-student-teacher meetings, where students' progress is reported and reviewed and realistic goals are set, supports parental involvement and student accountability.

The parents' association is active and is valued by school management. There is scope to increase parents' formal involvement in aspects of policy development, and the board should consider how to support this.

The school has forged excellent links with partners in the community, industry, and third-level education, to extend learning opportunities and experiences for students.

Developing leadership capacity

The senior management team recognises the importance of sustainable leadership and of developing leadership capacity through existing and emerging structures. The process of post review leading to reassigning of roles should be continued, to support the effective distribution of leadership responsibilities and to acknowledge and develop the leadership capacity that exists within the school. It is noteworthy that teachers, whether post-holders or not, see themselves as leaders of learning, and are proactive in developing their leadership capacity.

There is very good engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) to enhance teaching and learning practices. Teachers recognise the value of CPD as both process and content learning. Its impact on the core work of the school has been greatly enhanced by systems for the sharing and extending of effective and innovative practices. The senior management team's nurturing of this growth mindset among teachers is highly commendable.

Students have many opportunities to develop leadership skills. These include the student council, the prefect and head student roles, student mentors, the green school and yellow flag committees, and mental health promotion through initiatives such as 'Mind your mind'. Students are aware of these opportunities, and showed willingness to take on further leadership roles that would integrate them further into the decision-making process in areas where their input would be relevant. School leaders should consider how student voice could be further harnessed to support school development and students' own development as leaders.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Twenty-one lessons were observed. The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good. In a small number of instances, improvement was needed in aspects of teaching and learning.

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of learner outcomes and experiences was very good. Students experienced a very high quality environment for learning, in which they were very well known as individuals for their abilities, needs and interests. They received very warm welcome to lessons and ongoing affirmation for their contributions, the quality of their work and their classroom behaviours.

Students displayed very good classroom routines including punctuality, listening, working together and respectful interaction. Motivation was generally high and, in almost all instances, they clearly enjoyed their lessons. They were interested in learning, seeing the relevance to their everyday lives and their futures.

Students' engagement throughout the lessons was very good overall. They demonstrated a very positive attitude to work and applied themselves productively to all tasks. During collaborative work,

they eagerly and capably shared their thoughts, decisions, solutions and opinions. Their verbal engagement in lessons was often supported by the teacher's good modelling of the language of the subject. Students often demonstrated confidence in using new terms and in communicating their understanding to the whole class. In a few lessons, students could have vocalised their learning more; this aspect of student voice is worth further development.

Students generally experienced very good skills development, appropriate to the relevant curricular programme and their stage of learning. In junior cycle, key skills were to the forefront in many lessons. This is commendable and worth extending. They were also confident in using digital technology to present work such as classroom based assessments. In LCA lessons, students demonstrated high levels of responsibility, self-knowledge and decision making.

During tasks, students in the full spectrum of ability, including the highly able and those with learning difficulties, experienced good levels of both challenge and support. In the highly effective lessons, learning was deepened when students recognised the relevance of the task and were prompted to think about the purpose of the work.

Learner outcomes were greatly enhanced in certain settings by the responsive work of a team teacher and the secure presence of a special needs assistant. The co-operative teaching observed was particularly beneficial in supporting students to articulate their understanding and produce good-quality written work, including good sentence construction. This model merits wider use where students with specific needs could be supported through short-term focused interventions.

Students worked in very well-resourced settings. The very good layout of desks accommodated collaborative work and enabled good teacher circulation. Classrooms were visually vibrant, filled with reference charts and subject-specific materials that supported learning. Modern ICT equipment and white boards used by teachers provided further stimulus and support for learning.

A very wide range of high quality students' work, including written projects and artefacts, is purposefully displayed throughout the school. The work showcases very good learning processes as well as outcomes, and the pieces manifest students' skills in managing information and thinking, being creative and communicating. These displays communicate the value given to student work and provide a valuable benchmark for incoming students to aspire to. Future displays could also include some evaluative comments from teachers so that students can see how success criteria are applied.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teachers demonstrated enthusiasm for their subject and their lessons. They made lessons interesting and enjoyable. Teachers' interactions with students were highly supportive and affirming. They very effectively modelled good classroom behaviours and positive interactions, and exercised very well-judged classroom management.

Teachers prepared lessons very well and this often included a range of resources that supported learning. In all lessons, teachers prepared tasks that provided students with opportunities to develop skills as well as knowledge. The resources prepared to help students with learning difficulties were very useful. This included templates and learning frames that scaffolded writing.

At the outset of lessons, the intended activities of the lesson were clearly outlined. Best practice was observed when the purpose of the expected work, as well as the sequence and the steps in the task, was explicitly explained. This helped to deepen the learning for many learners.

Teachers managed time well to allow for productive interaction with individual learners, assessing their progress. Generally, when working with individual students or groups of students, teachers struck a very good balance between challenge and support for the work in hand.

During tasks, teachers reinforced the processes required, either with the whole class or individual learners. Where new or challenging material was delivered, teachers made new terms accessible and clear for students. Teachers also provided students with many opportunities to practise and apply the new learning during the lesson and in the homework set.

In most lessons, teachers placed very good emphasis on students' verbal expression. Teachers gave students meaningful opportunities to express their understanding during lessons and expected such inputs. This greatly supported the development of thinking. In a few instances, students' voice was limited by teachers talking too much, and in some language lessons the teacher's use of the target language did not lead to the students using it. These practices should be addressed.

In some lessons, teachers placed very good emphasis on the importance of students producing good quality writing. At times, there were mixed standards in the content and presentation of written work; more time or explicit guidance was required. Very good practices included teachers modelling good writing on the board, expecting students to produce full sentences, and using the school's writing checklist, *FEWS (focus, evidence, writing, spelling)*, productively to enhance quality. These practices are worth extending to all lessons.

Generally, teachers radiated high expectations and ambitions for students. Highly effective practice was observed when students were expected to take responsibility for their own learning, including taking action to improve the quality of their work. Very good use of success criteria, features of quality and formative feedback on written work, as observed in some lessons, greatly helped students to achieve a good level of independence. This merits extension as, while learners were hardworking, they could in some instances have been more independent.

Collectively, teachers can extend the full impact of the very good practice observed in lessons through further effective collaboration and extension of good teaching practice. Throughout the evaluation, teachers were highly professional, very open to ideas and eager to accept suggestions.

The quality of collective curriculum planning is very good. An exemplary subject planning template, which refers to whole-school implementation of improvement plans in literacy, numeracy and aspects of wellbeing, has been developed for use across the school. Within subject plans, teachers have given consideration to how Junior Cycle and DEIS actions will be implemented. In some subject areas, there was a high degree of collaboration among the subject teachers in action planning for their subjects. Excellent examples of reflection and evaluation were evident in some subject plans. These practices should be shared and extended.

Overall, teachers are highly committed to doing the best for their students. A great many teachers regularly provide additional lessons for students, supporting curricular and extra-curricular learning. Their commitment is greatly appreciated by students who derive considerable benefit from the additional time in school. It is praiseworthy that teachers routinely correct 'mock' examinations. This very important work provides for deep assessment of student performance and progress.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Evaluations in Science, Business, and French, and a follow-through in Science, have taken place in the last three years. An evaluation of DEIS action planning for improvement took place in 2014. Good progress has been made overall in addressing recommendations.

Leadership and Management

There were few recommendations under this heading in previous reports. Leadership of DEIS action planning has seen significant development. School management should examine recommendations

in previous inspections to assist in identifying areas to be included in action planning for improvement.

Teaching and Learning

Greater use of active learning approaches and better collaborative subject planning were recurring themes in subject inspection reports. Good progress has been made in both areas, and further strengthening and sharing of effective practice should be aimed for. Teachers have taken greater ownership of DEIS action planning for improvement, especially in areas which have a direct relevance to teaching, learning and assessment practices.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

Reflective and self-evaluative practice is now embedded in the culture of the school. There is clear evidence of very good and ongoing engagement in purposeful action planning for improvement within DEIS planning and in other areas. Reflective practice focused on development and improvement is evident in a number of current initiatives. Excellent examples of reflection and evaluation were noted in some subject plans. These show the way for all subject departments, especially in the context of implementation of curriculum change.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

At a whole-school level, the dominant driver is students' wellbeing and progress in learning. The school has very good capacity to deliver on these commitments and bring about any necessary improvements in its practices.

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; |

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 warmly welcomes this extremely positive report and its acknowledgement of the school's commitment to its mission of fostering 'Learning for Excellence, for Life, for All'. The report affirms the Board's belief that, under the stewardship of a highly committed senior management team supported by a dynamic teaching staff, the school is well positioned to continue to provide a progressive, high quality, inclusive and relevant educational experience for its students. In particular, the Board welcomes the following findings:

- The school's inclusive ethos and its focus on challenging and supporting both highly able students and those with learning difficulties.
- The school's culture of respectful interactions and good communication.
- The particular strength that is the work of the school's Care Team.
- That the overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good; in particular, the high quality of learner engagement, outcomes and experiences.
- The emphasis on students becoming self-directed learners and the growing opportunities for 'student voice'.
- Teachers' high expectations for their students, and their demonstration of highly effective practice and their enthusiasm for their work.
- The recognition of the high quality of collective curriculum planning by school's 'exemplary subject planning template'.
- The fact that reflective and self-evaluative practice is embedded in the culture of the school, notably in DEIS planning.

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

Policy Development

- The Board of Management has appointed one of its members to work with the Principal, as Secretary, in prioritising and scheduling policies for inclusion on board meeting agendas
- Through the continuing post of responsibility review, the Principal will ensure that middle leaders, working collaboratively will create required structures and oversee the process at school level.
- Existing good practice around collaborative planning, will be extended to ensure input from all stakeholders.
- The school's existing digital Platform will be utilised to enable efficient surveying, data analysis and collaborative practice.
- The Board will explore opportunities for involving teacher, student and parent voice at board meetings, particularly in relation to their roles in School development planning.

Distributed Leadership

- The Board remains committed to the School Needs and Priorities, established through a consultative process and adopted by the Board in June 2018.
- The Board recognises the need to rebalance the senior management team's workload, and will work with the Principal towards the development of a distributed model of leadership in the school.
- The review and redistribution of AP roles and responsibilities will continue, under the terms of DES Circular 03/2018, and with reference to the School Needs and Priorities.
- The Board will continue to encourage and support the potential and professional development of the teaching staff.

Resource Hours

- The Board fully supports the continued implementation of the Continuum of Support model, supporting Students through both classroom-based interventions and more intensive and "Individualised support, including Personal Pupil Plans, as laid out in the Guidelines for Teachers.
- In future, school management will timetable a combination of fixed and flexible teaching resource hours to allow for the provision of both ongoing support and intensive interventions where required.
- A restructuring process has begun in the area of planning for and management Of SEN provision in the school. A new Special Education Team (SET) has been formed, which now incorporates the Behaviour for Learning teacher.
- The SET has already organised and received two NCSE in-school support sessions, with particular emphasis on (i) planning and restructuring and (ii) the development of effective identification, referral, communication and record-keeping systems required to support the new inclusive model.