

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	School of the Divine Child (Scoil An Linbh Íosa)
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Lavanagh Centre, Ballintemple, Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18483W

Date of Evaluation: 23-09-2016

Date of issue of report: 09-02-2017



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

The inspector evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Support for pupils' wellbeing
3. School leadership and management

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 accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	23-09-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal and deputy principal• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupil focus-group interview• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to senior management team and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

The School of the Divine Child is a co-educational special school located in Cork City. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. The school provides for students with physical and complex needs aged from four to eighteen years. It serves a wide catchment area encompassing Cork city and county. There are currently thirty-two pupils on roll. Enrolment has been rising in recent years. The staffing schedule includes an administrative principal, six class teachers, three part-time teachers and eight special needs assistants (SNAs). The school shares its location with Enable Ireland which provides a range of multi-disciplinary services to the majority of students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Students in this school are welcoming, good-humoured and well behaved.
- High quality leadership facilitates the provision of a very good educational service to the school population.
- The overall quality of teaching in lessons was good with some very good practice observed.
- The quality of pupils' learning achievements is good throughout the school.
- There is scope for developing practice in student assessment and in the tracking of individual student progress.
- The support for students' well-being is of a very high quality and there is a strong commitment to meeting the holistic needs of all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board is encouraged to further develop its strategic plan for the future accommodation needs of the school.
- Given the diverse range of student needs, the school should develop a broad suite of assessment tools to monitor and track students' achievement as they progress through the school.
- The structure of individual education plans (IEPs) should be further developed to include specific measurable targets, success criteria and dates of acquisition of these targets.
- Students in the school should be afforded further opportunities to experience aspects of the Irish language and culture, in line with their capabilities.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

- Good student learning was in evidence in the classrooms throughout the school. Students engaged positively across a broad range of curricular areas and due emphasis is placed on the development of personal and communication skills. Students are welcoming, good-humoured and well behaved.
- Many students, at all levels, have developed skills and confidence in speaking, listening, reading and writing at their own individual pace. They participate well in discussions and they engage in a variety of reading and writing activities appropriate to their stage of development.
- Students engage positively in numeracy activities and practise their mathematical skills. Extensive opportunities are provided to use concrete and visual materials and, in some classrooms, good linkages between mathematical activities and students' own experiences were in evidence. In addition, opportunities to link social mathematics to daily living are successfully provided to senior students. Initiatives such as the school shop and focused visits to specific venues in the local community consolidate this work.
- The active participation of the students in their learning across the range of curriculum areas, at both the primary and post-primary stages, is praiseworthy. The school places commendable emphasis on the Visual Arts, Music and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). All students should be afforded further opportunities to experience aspects of the Irish language and culture, in line with their capabilities.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching in lessons was good with some very good practice observed. There is a strong commitment to the provision of a holistic education to students and teachers demonstrated flexibility and adaptability when necessary. *Aistear*, the Primary School Curriculum, the Junior Cycle and Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) materials provide the basis for the programmes undertaken in classrooms. Part-time teachers make appropriate provision for students in Home Economics, Physical Education (PE) / swimming.
- Students' changing learning needs are identified and positive, supportive learning environments are cultivated. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that students are enabled to progress at their own pace and to participate meaningfully in the learning activities. Classrooms are well-structured and carefully organised to support pupils' learning. A good variety of teaching strategies designed to cater for individual needs are employed in all classrooms. There is a commendable emphasis on the development of skills and the linking of lesson content to the interests and previous experience of the students. The promotion of independence and life-skills are fundamental elements of the school's provision.
- A good range of educational resources is available, including the effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and tablet technology in classrooms.
- A range of assessment approaches is in place in individual classrooms, including, portfolios, photographic records and checklists. Given the diverse range of student needs, the school should develop a broad suite of assessment tools to further monitor and track the students' achievement as they progress through the school.

- Overall, the quality of IEPs is good. Some IEPs have very specific targets based on identified strengths and needs of students. The use of IEPs in the school should be further developed to include specific measurable targets, success criteria and dates of acquisition of these targets. The practice whereby IEPs are reviewed annually should be revised to a biannual review.
- At the student focus group and in questionnaires completed by students, all participants responded very positively regarding their teachers and their schoolwork.

4. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- The support for students' wellbeing is of a very high quality. The majority of parents agree that their children are well supported. The school liaises productively with agencies providing a range of supports. The current building dates from the 1970s and scope for development in the physical environment of the school was noted.
- High levels of awareness and understanding of the complex needs of the students are demonstrated by both teachers and SNAs. This ensures that a very good level of care is provided for all students. The school secretary and transport escorts contribute to the smooth daily operation of the school. In addition, the nursing, caretaking, cleaning and other support staff provided by Enable Ireland assist in supporting the student population.
- Strong links have been forged with local mainstream schools and a range of inclusive practices have been adopted.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- High quality leadership facilitates the provision of a very good educational service to the school population.
- The board of management is properly constituted, has a broad skillset and operates in a very effective manner. The board is concerned about the current condition of the building and facilities in the school. The refurbishment and development of the school is a key priority for the board. The board is encouraged to further develop its strategic plan for the future accommodation needs of the school.
- The principal and the deputy principal have a deep understanding of the needs of the students. They collaborate successfully in leading and managing the school. A very comprehensive suite of administrative policies guides the smooth day-to day running of the school. Building on existing good work in the development of curricular policies, a number of specific areas should be identified annually for review and development.
- The school is committed to building strong relationships with parents and supporting them. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their own child's education and the school actively facilitates this practice. Feedback from parents suggests high levels of satisfaction with the school and the education that is provided.

- 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*.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has engaged successfully with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and has focussed on identified elements of literacy and numeracy. Effective planning has been undertaken on a whole-school basis. Specific targets have been identified in the school improvement plan and work is ongoing in relation to their implementation.

CONCLUSION

The effective management of the school and the work undertaken by the staff team demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement in the provision for the pupils in its care.

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 <i>very good</i> 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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of Management, on behalf of the entire School Community, welcomes the positive WSE report on Management, Leadership and Learning in our School. It highlights the quality of pupils' learning achievements and attention to their general wellbeing. We are proud of the way staff collaborate in maintaining high educational standards and ensuring that pupils actively participate in their learning. The Board is particularly pleased that the report recognises the high standard of leadership which facilitates the provision of a very good educational service to the school population.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board of Management and staff acknowledge and accept the recommendations of the report. The School is currently engaged in planning for and developing all recommendations.

To date:

- The Board of Management had made an application for funding to improve the current School Building and is making regular progress reports to its community.
- The creation of a broad suite of assessment tools for each pupil has commenced.
- The IEP policy and protocol is under review.
- A review of the School's Irish language and culture programme has commenced.