An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Bishopstown Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Bishopstown Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91397T

Date of Evaluation: 08-02-2018

What is whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning?

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

How to read this report

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

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

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	06, 07, 08-02-2018
Inspection activities undertaken - Meeting with Board of Management - Meetings with principal and deputy principal - Meetings with key staff - Review of relevant documents - Student focus-group interview	- Meeting with parents - Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires - Observation of teaching and learning - Examination of students' work - Interaction with students - Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Bishopstown Community School is a co-educational post-primary school which opened in 1979. It currently has an enrolment of 308 students. The inclusive school community provides access to the curriculum for a student cohort that includes students for whom English is an additional language and students who attend the Deaf Unit in the school. The school offers the Junior Cycle programmes, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the Leaving Certificate. The school is part of the Delivering Equality of Education in Schools (DEIS) action plan to combat educational disadvantage.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of leadership for learning and teaching is very good in the school.
- The board of management provides appropriate support to the senior leadership team and to the school, although new ways for the board to mediate curricular opportunities and change could be explored.
- The school leadership team, in conjunction with the board of management, effectively lead development in the school; a re-visiting of the school's mission and vision statement would usefully inform this work in planning for the future.
- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching was very good in the lessons observed.
- The school has successfully implemented recommendations from previous evaluations.
- DEIS planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) is of a very high quality but would benefit from greater linkage with the different programmes in the school.

Recommendations

- In light of the increased number of curricular decisions that need to be made by the school, the board of management should consider how its decision making processes can be best informed about curriculum opportunities and initiatives.
- So as to clarify, consolidate and re-align the school's development path for the next five years, the school should revisit its vision into the future.
- DEIS planning and SSE should now focus on linking and integrating the targets contained in the DEIS programme, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the new junior cycle and TY.
- Subject departments should also explore how classroom practice could be modified in order to fully realise the targets that have been set by the DEIS steering committee.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of school leadership and management is good in the school.

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership for learning and teaching is very good in the school. The principal and deputy principal work together as a very effective leadership team. Together, the senior leadership team have created a context within which learning can take place for all students. Through the development and consolidation of a culture of collaboration and collegiality, staff are leading learning in their classrooms. Teachers reported that they felt consulted, informed and valued, while quality relationships have become the basis of all activities. Most parents who were surveyed agreed that the school is well run and that their child enjoyed going to school. All teachers who were surveyed agreed that the school is well run, and almost all teachers agreed that their views were valued in the decision-making processes in the school.

A broad curriculum is provided, with a wide range of subjects on offer to students within the programmes provided. In first year, timetabling is arranged using a carousel model which allows students to experience a wide range of subjects before choosing their final subject options for the junior cycle. In Transition Year, students can choose from a range of subjects and learning activities and students report very positively on their experiences as being an important stage in their preparation for senior cycle. Staff members also provide a comprehensive programme of co-curricular and extracurricular activities, many of which are provided by teachers on a voluntary basis. Effective middle leadership structures are in place and are based on a class-teacher and year-head model. The DEIS steering committee plays a central role in curricular planning and in supporting learning and teaching in the school. The provision of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is in accordance with Department of Education and Skills requirements. A wellbeing programme at junior cycle is under development.

The school's admissions, transition and induction procedures are very thorough, and are well supported by a home-school-community liaison teacher and a school completion professional. Provision for student support, which is of a very good quality, is spearheaded by the representative guidance team which also includes the school chaplain and the senior leadership team. Guidance provision is prioritised in the school and the approach is balanced in terms of seeking to accommodate and support the varying needs which students have at particular times in their school careers. Very good guidance and counselling structures are in place and a high level of support for parents and students is facilitated by strong links between home and school. A school guidance planning task group has been set up to review and modify the whole-school guidance plan, the work of which is informed by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) guidelines. The *Behaviour for Learning* programme and supports for English as an Additional Language (EAL) are also well-embedded within the support structures which have developed over time in the school. There are good levels of communication between all of the key actors in the area of student support. In a real sense, every teacher is involved in student support. The staff survey indicated that all teachers agreed that there were good student support systems in place. Attendance and retention are very well monitored and there are strategies in place as part of DEIS planning to maximise attendance and retention.

Very good cooperation and integration exists between the special education needs (SEN) department and the Deaf Unit which was re-introduced in the school in 2010. This partnership reflects the inclusive character of the school. Communication and support procedures from the SEN department to the rest of the teaching staff are very effective. A booklet for staff, which provides advice on teaching students with hearing impairment, has been produced internally. All first-year students are encouraged to learn Irish Sign Language (ISL), while a large number of teachers on staff have also learned ISL. Team-teaching and in-class support models are frequently used by the SEN team. There has been progress to date in reducing the numbers of teachers who work in the core SEN team in the school. Circular 0014/2017, which outlines the new resource allocation model for SEN, would assist the school in consolidating the SEN core team into the future. The school has developed excellent links with external organisations and agencies in the areas of student support, mental health and wellbeing.

Managing the organisation

The board of management provides appropriate support to the senior leadership team and to the school, which underpins the positive learning environment that is apparent in the school. The priorities reported by the board include: extra classroom space to accommodate growing student numbers; the development of a new middle leadership structure within the context of Circular 03/2018; the development of information and communications technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool throughout the school; review of school policies; and ways of effectively capturing student and parent voice. The board meets regularly, is properly and democratically constituted and members have a good understanding of the role and responsibilities of a board. The board is aware of its statutory obligations in respect to child protection and anti-bullying and appropriate procedures are in place. All mandatory policies have been adopted with an appropriate level of stakeholder involvement. The school should accelerate the process of policy review and development and create an accurate and updated policy register. The school also needs to consider publishing the main school policies on the school website.

Good communication structures are in place and include a student journal, a general text messaging service, news-letter and school website. However, results from the surveys of students and parents suggest that communication and feedback, to and from various stakeholders, could be strengthened. This might be done within the process of developing an overall vision of how ICT might be integrated in the school into the areas of learning, teaching, collaboration and communication. The accommodation and facilities available to the school are good and specialist rooms are available in all subjects.

Leading school development

The school leadership team, in conjunction with the board of management, effectively lead development in the school. Subject department planning is well established, with plans offering much detail in terms of subject provision and good planning for teaching and learning. The school is participating in the Droichead Induction Framework for new teachers which is another example of how the school sees itself as a learning organisation. The school has forged many links with its local community through providing an adult education programme and also by working with the Tomar Trust, University College Cork and the Cork Institute of Technology. A small, newly formed and active parents' association is in place and senior leadership values this partnership as it grows into the future.

The school is currently experiencing an upward trend in student and staff numbers. As a result of another school, which co-occupied the school building, moving to another site, it is hoped that new classroom spaces will become available in September 2018. Also, the school will celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 2019. It would now seem to be an appropriate time to re-visit the school's mission and vision statement so as to clarify, consolidate and re-align the school's development path

for the next five years. A representative strategic development planning group should be formed with a focus on re-aligning the school's vision and its sustainability into the future. In light of the increased number of curricular decisions that need to be made by the school, the board of management should consider creating a representative sub-committee which would inform the board about curriculum opportunities and initiatives. This sub-committee could be comprised of some board members, senior and middle leadership, teachers and students. A parallel learning and teaching group could be created at staff level which would inform the various pedagogies and strategies which would operationalise curricular innovation and learning experience in the classroom, and build on the important work already done by the DEIS steering group in this area.

Developing leadership capacity

Leadership capacity is effectively developed at a number of levels within the school. There is a strong tradition and culture of distributed leadership in the school and the senior leadership team appreciates the importance of building leadership capacity within staff. Regular staff meetings are held and responsibilities are delegated to individuals and groups by a senior leadership team which trusts its staff. Teachers are strongly committed to their assigned roles and responsibilities, and carry out their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner. Staff reported that they felt trusted and empowered when fulfilling their leadership and management functions. A tradition of volunteerism among staff is a significant strength which exists in the school.

A very active student council is engaged in a number of projects, while it also plays an increasingly important role in school policy development. The school provides leadership opportunities to the council, and initiatives such as the 'school spirit officer' role are noteworthy. Recently, the council has been involved in an ISL National Anthem initiative which will hopefully see an official ISL version of the National Anthem adopted by the Oireachtas in the near future. Students' participation and achievement are openly celebrated through the school newsletter and website.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Overall, the quality of learning was very good in the lessons observed. In the majority of lessons, teachers communicated their high expectations for students very effectively, most frequently through the encouraging and supportive language used during the lesson in both one-to-one and whole-class interactions. High teacher expectations were also communicated through challenging activities which were experienced by students within lessons. The atmosphere in all lessons observed was inclusive, warm, friendly, and conducive to learning. Classroom behaviour was good in all lessons visited.

While the majority of lessons had learning intentions explicitly stated or, in some cases, written on the board, these intentions could be used to a greater extent to structure and maximise student learning and engagement. In lessons where very good practice was observed, teachers clearly explained the intentions to the students and linked the purpose of the chosen activity to the achievement of the learning intention, either explicitly or sometimes through whole-class discussion. Best practice in this area provided opportunities throughout a lesson, and particularly at the end of a lesson for students to assess how much progress they had made in their understanding of a topic or in a skill that they were developing. In lessons where co-operative learning was facilitated, meaningful and productive collaboration was characterised by the teacher providing clear

participation guidelines and when the teacher monitored student engagement, giving support and advice as appropriate. In these lessons, students were encouraged to input into subsequent whole-class discussion where key learning points were identified and explored upon completion of the particular learning task. While a selection of effective literacy strategies was observed in some lessons, these strategies need to be embedded in all lessons, which might be best achieved through a whole-school approach which underpins the DEIS framework. The school should consider using a classroom layout which could better facilitate collaborative learning strategies, especially in the context of the new junior cycle. The amount of whiteboard writing space should be maximised in classrooms where possible.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Overall, the quality of teaching was very good in the lessons observed. Most lessons were well structured with a variety of learning activities used throughout the lesson. High quality questioning, that challenged and supported students as appropriate, was a key feature of effective lessons. In a minority of lessons where this was absent, the learner experience was observed to be more passive, requiring less engagement and less progress was made. Where best practice was observed, the judicious selection and use of resources was accompanied by clear, consistent instructions and allowed for optimal balance between teacher and student input. Having been given appropriate independent time to work and discuss together, the students' input was valued and, in highly effective lessons, was used to co-construct and progress the lesson. This approach was seen to build the students' confidence as learners. Some of the lessons visited employed team teaching strategies that were created and expertly delivered by skilled teachers, who were able to maximise the learning opportunities available for all students in the lesson. Teachers have collectively developed a new homework policy which could form one element of a future assessment policy. Class correction of homework was often utilised as a tool to assess previous learning. In almost all lessons, homework was designed to consolidate existing learning or to provide a basis for further learning. A review of a sample of student copybooks indicates that many teachers regularly monitor students' written work. However the increased use of formative comment on students' written work is recommended.

As part of the educational attainment DEIS strand, the school outsources the data analysis of their examination attainment, so that subject departments can focus on utilising the information to inform practice. This initiative is at an early stage of development but could provide a rich source of evidence for the impact which any changes in teaching and learning strategies are having, particularly those implemented at a whole-school level. Subject departments use a colour code on their subject plans to indicate which DEIS targets their own objectives serve. The departments should now explore how classroom practice could be modified in order to fully realise the targets that have been set by the DEIS steering committee. This process could then lead to further consultation, agreement and implementation of whole-school teaching and learning strategies that would further impact on student experiences and learning. It is also important that the various teams that coordinate programmes such as JCSP, TY and new junior cycle are clear on how these programs continue to contribute to the achievement of the DEIS targets, as set by the steering committee.

ICT was used appropriately in the majority of lessons observed. Teachers and management use a number of platforms to share resources and information. A staff share application is used by teachers to share resources. All classrooms are equipped with a computer and a data projector, while some visualisers are also available. In some lessons, opportunities provided by ICT, particularly through the use of the visualiser, were not exploited. Use of the visualiser in these instances would have supported the further development of literacy skills and enhanced the experience of all learners. It is suggested that the use of visualisers could be enhanced when used in a lesson to capture co-created learning content through the recording functions of the device. A number of

teachers are experimenting with different learning platforms to support student learning. The school has set up a digital strategy group to plan for ICT development into the future. The school should now create a vision for ICT which supports the areas of learning, teaching and communication. An ICT audit would consolidate what ICT resources the school already has at its disposal. Digital learning framework and planning resources for post-primary schools have recently been developed and are available from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). In planning towards this vision for ICT, the school should consider the advantages that mobile, tablet technologies and a school-wide learning platform, might give when supporting student learning. Continuing professional development (CPD) in this area should focus on how ICT might add value to student learning.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

The school has successfully implemented recommendations from previous evaluations.

Leadership and Management

Strategies are in place to ensure recommendations from inspection reports inform practice across all subject areas. This good practice is led by the board, the senior leadership team and subject departments and results in discussion at staff meetings. A student council has been re-established in recent years and now plays an important and significant role in the life of the school.

Teaching and Learning

Team teaching has become a regular and successful part of SEN provision and was observed in a number of lesson visits. The issues around the timetabling of Geography and History at junior cycle level have been addressed. An electronic shared folder, Staff Share, has been created for all subject departments.

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

DEIS planning and school self-evaluation is of a very high quality and the school has a very good capacity to manage and promote school improvement.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The key driver of improvement in the school is its DEIS planning, which is well-organised and is supported by SSE processes. Planning is systematically coordinated by a steering committee that meets on a weekly basis. The DEIS committee monitors the actions set out in the plan and is conscious of the need for regular review of progress. An innovative DEIS calendar is used by staff to plan and track the substantial programme of activities that take place throughout the year. Clear targets, both qualitative and quantitative, with associated actions are set out in the plan. Responsibility for each action is assigned to individuals or specific staff groups. The steering committee should now ensure, in consultation with the staff, that the plan also targets student experience in the classroom. Going forward, DEIS planning should also focus on linking and integrating the targets contained in the DEIS programme, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the new junior cycle and TY.

A new cycle of DEIS planning is underway in the current school year, with the focus on wellbeing and student voice. In order to fully comply with the requirements of SSE, the board should ensure that a report on the progress of the school in meeting targets is provided to the school community and parents at the end of every school year.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

Tangible improvements, such as increased retention, have accrued from both the commitment to DEIS planning and a willingness to make complex and difficult curricular decisions. In light of the organised and systematic approach taken to DEIS and SSE, and the commitment evident in the work of senior management and staff, the school has a very good capacity to manage and promote school improvement in the coming years.

5. CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

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

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

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

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