

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Our Lady's School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Templeogue Road Terenure Dublin 6W
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60860Q

Date of Evaluation: 09-05-2019



**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.

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	7 – 9 May 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with board of management• Meetings with principal and deputy principals• Meetings with teachers• 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

Our Lady's School is a Catholic voluntary secondary school for girls, under the patronage of the Le Chéile Schools Trust, with a current enrolment of 768 students. The school provides Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate programmes.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of school leadership and management is very good; school leaders foster a culture in which learning is prioritised, leading the school community to continuously strive for excellence.
- Some areas for development were noted in terms of reviewing posts of responsibility and appropriate curricular usage of the fully equipped technology room.
- Students' holistic development is fostered through a house system, which enables students of different year groups to collaborate, and through the provision of a very broad range of co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities.
- Teaching and learning was highly effective or effective in most of the lessons observed, with development needed in a significant minority of lessons.
- Written assessment practices and approaches to differentiation varied in the lessons observed, with scope for development in most lessons.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) processes are used very effectively to manage the school's response to changing needs; the school has a high capacity for improvement.

Recommendations

- Assistant principal II (APII) posts should be reviewed to ensure that the priority needs of the school are met in a balanced way and to ensure parity in distribution of time allocation and responsibility.
- To further increase STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) provision in the school and to fully utilise the school's technology room, the school should raise awareness among the school community of the benefits of Technology with the view to introducing Technology or a related subject into the curriculum.
- Teachers should extend their differentiation practices to ensure that all students are adequately supported or challenged to enable them to reach their potential.
- To guide improvement, all teachers should provide written formative feedback to students; if feedback is provided orally, students should be encouraged to note it on their work.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

There is a culture of learning in the school. The principal, deputy principals and other leaders in the school promote improvement. An education committee has been established and a culture of collaboration and discussion of teaching and learning is being actively developed. Staff regularly share their expertise at staff meetings and teachers meet regularly to share good practice. It is praiseworthy that the collaborative peer observation of lessons has commenced.

Highly effective policies and practices to promote students' personal, social, educational and career development are in place. It is positive that second-year students participate in the Friends for Life resilience building programme, while first-year students are assisted in making a successful transition supported by the New Beginnings induction programme. Commendably, the whole-school guidance plan is collaboratively planned; there is a very good guidance programme for both junior and senior cycle students.

SPHE (Social Personal and Health Education) and RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) are provided in line with guidelines, although parent and student questionnaires reveal uncertainty regarding the provision of RSE. It is recommended that teachers keep a record of the dates RSE modules are delivered to each year group and take attendance.

The special education teaching (SET) team has developed an inclusive model of support in line with the revised SET model. A range of student supports are in place, including team teaching. It is advised that teachers receive continuing professional development (CPD) in team teaching to maximise the benefits to students. Two of the three main SET teachers have postgraduate qualifications in SET and this expertise is used to provide effective support and monitoring systems for students. Currently, nineteen other staff also provide SET support. It is welcomed that SET provision in the school is currently under review and that a core SET team is being developed. It is recommended that this review include the reduction of the overall number of teachers delivering SET.

The school has recently introduced an academic monitoring system. This system is driven by year heads and form teachers and has been successful in identifying students who may be struggling academically and enabling appropriate support structures to be put in place. It is suggested that this system be further developed so that subject teachers can easily access information regarding students in their classes.

The board of management and the senior management team foster students' holistic development by providing a very broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities. This is further supported through the school's house system which focuses on student collaboration and wellbeing. One period a fortnight is devoted to fostering house relationships and this was reported to be very successful in promoting wellbeing by both students and teachers. In addition, there is one period a fortnight and five minutes daily provided by form teachers dedicated to pastoral care. A broad plan has been developed for this provision. Feedback from students and teachers indicate that the learning outcomes of these sessions are not always clear. To ensure that all students are in receipt of the minimum 28 hours instruction time, the house and form, and year group lessons should contain clear instructional elements, with clearly stated learning intentions and related learning activities.

The board and senior management ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of students. Emergent student needs are identified and valuable learning experiences are extended with the introduction of new programmes and curriculum subjects, for example the recently introduced LCA programme, as well as Accounting and Business.

The school provides a very successful TY programme which is compulsory. A wide variety of curricular modules are offered to students, in addition to many innovative non-curricular modules, such as forensic science, film-making and journalism. The programme is enriched by a range of trips and co-curricular activities. Students undertake work placements in the community in addition to work experience. Many students also participate in the Gaisce award scheme. Feedback from students was very positive about the range of learning experiences available in TY.

The school's LCA programme was recently introduced to cater for the diverse needs of the students enrolled. Students and parents are advised on the senior cycle programme most suited to their needs. The SET team works in close collaboration with the LCA team to maximise learner experiences. Feedback from LCA students regarding their learning experiences was very positive.

The principal expects and facilitates teachers to critically analyse and evaluate their own practice in a culture of collaborative review of teaching and learning practices and outcomes. This is good practice. Teacher CPD is actively encouraged by the board of management and the principal. The principal and deputy principals have identified the needs of the school and maximise professional development opportunities to improve student learning. Many teachers have availed of CPD opportunities and share their learning with their colleagues. Teachers have also given presentations to the board regarding their learning.

The school is to be commended for liaising with teacher-training bodies and regularly hosting student teachers. Newly qualified teachers are supported through participation in the Droichead programme and experienced teachers have attended Droichead training and act as mentors.

Managing the organisation

The board of management and the principal are fully aware of their statutory obligations, and ensure timely compliance with all legislative and policy requirements. Most aspects of school governance are highly effective. The board of management is highly committed, benefits from a wide breadth of experience and all board members have received training. In the past, continuity has been provided through the reappointment of some board members. Considering that many of these long-standing board members are due to leave at the end of this year, it is suggested that the board discuss ways to transfer their knowledge and experience to the next board. There are very good links between the board and the trustee body.

The board has overseen the creation of an effective school plan. While strategic planning for the future is taking place, the school plan does not currently include a development section. It is recommended that strategic planning be documented in a development section to include a medium and longer term action plan that identifies areas of focus and outlines those responsible, actions required and success criteria.

The board of management and the principal ensure that the values of the school enshrine equality, fairness and justice for all students and staff, and these are clearly enunciated in most policies. It is noteworthy that the board committed to immediately review the wording of the school's enrolment policy to remove any possible perceived barriers to inclusion of students with additional needs. Commendably, a list of policies is maintained which states dates ratified and dates due for review.

The principal and deputy principals manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school very effectively. They are a highly committed and dedicated team who work very well together. They have divided their roles and responsibilities very effectively and meet twice weekly to discuss current tasks as well as strategic planning for improvement. Senior management meet regularly with some assistant principals. Feedback from some post-holders indicated that they did not feel empowered as leaders and would like to meet more regularly as a group with senior management.

Currently, five APII posts are allocated to head of house duties. As a result of this allocation, the senior management team is responsible for areas that should be delegated to post holders. This is not the most effective use of resources and should be addressed. While the house system is praiseworthy, allocation of APII posts should be reviewed to align with *Circular 03/2018* and *Looking At Our School 2016*, to ensure the priority needs of the school are met in a balanced way and to ensure parity in distribution of time allocation and responsibility.

Overall, the principal and deputy principals manage human resources very effectively to ensure the maximum impact on student learning. Overall, teachers are deployed strategically to make the best use of their specific strengths and skills. However, currently form teachers have contact with students for 25 minutes out of the 40 minutes allocated to tutor periods. This should be addressed.

Overall, the use of physical resources is very well managed. However, currently, the fully equipped technology room is not being used for its intended purpose. To fully utilise this valuable resource and to enhance STEM provision in the school in line with the *STEM Education Policy Statement 2017–2026*, the board should raise awareness among the school community of the benefits of Technology with the view to introducing Technology or a related subject into the curriculum.

Leading school development

The patron, board of management and principal have established a guiding vision for the school. To further strengthen this vision and the sense of community and belonging in the school and to further develop the Wellbeing indicators of Connectedness and Respect, the school should consider integrating the house value system into the school's guiding vision in consultation with the whole school community.

Those in leadership and management roles keep abreast of thinking, developments and changes in the broader educational environment and use this information positively for the benefit of the school. They demonstrate a clear understanding of change processes and approach the management of change in a collaborative, flexible and sensitive manner.

The school values and supports partnership with parents as a means of supporting students' learning and wellbeing. They build and maintain very constructive relationships with parents. The principal builds and maintains this process through effective and regular communication with all school partners using a range of media, including the recently introduced school app. Surveys are used regularly to get feedback from staff, parents and students.

Very effective links have been established with feeder schools. Enrolled students are invited to the school prior to entry, a hockey camp is offered for incoming first years and a successful induction programme is in place.

Developing leadership capacity

The principal encourages teamwork in all aspects of school life and staff teams and working groups are in place to lead developments in key areas. Teachers are supported to embrace new initiatives, thus building their leadership capacity.

Those in leadership and management roles recognise students as stakeholders, value their views, and ensure their involvement in the operation of the school. They support students in taking leadership roles by facilitating relevant training and providing opportunities to lead school initiatives.

The student council is democratically elected and representative, and has instigated change, for example with the establishment of the school canteen and the school's healthy eating policy. Members of the council meet with senior management and have presented to the board of management on projects they have been involved in. It is praiseworthy that the student council are involved in reviewing school policies, where appropriate. Sixth year students are given the opportunity to take on leadership responsibilities through the house system. Senior students are actively involved in planning house activities and regularly address parents' evenings. Students may also take on leadership roles as class captains. Student questionnaire responses indicate that not all students are aware of the opportunities available to them to express their voice. This should be investigated.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learner outcomes and experiences

The quality of teaching and learning was highly effective or effective in most lessons, with improvement needed in a few lessons.

In all lessons observed, interactions among students, and between students and teachers, were very respectful and student behaviour was exemplary. Learning environments were positive and supportive. The school's emphasis on wellbeing and the positive affirmation of students' efforts were apparent, this was a key strength observed. Students displayed effective collaborative skills, and an eagerness to learn with and from each other. Students' organisation, production and maintenance of work was very good.

In the majority of lessons observed, the student voice was to the fore. Students identified themselves as learners, and displayed a deep engagement with learning. Students were aware of teacher expectations, and in turn displayed high expectations for their own learning. They were confident in answering and asking questions and were willing to take risks. Teachers encouraged students to take ownership and responsibility for their learning through the skilful deployment of peer assessment and self-assessment activities. They were encouraged to reflect on their learning, through the use of reflective diaries and by creating their own notes. These good practices should be shared and implemented in all lessons.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Overall planning and preparation for lessons was good, with some very good practice noted.

In the highly effective lessons, teachers modelled enthusiasm and passion for their subject, and demonstrated very good subject knowledge; this created a supportive yet challenging learning environment which was conducive to learning. In most lessons, teacher's prepared effective resources, many of these were well tailored to the needs of the students, and included effective strategies for revision and new learning. The majority of classrooms were configured to encourage collaborative learning and these layouts supported effective active learning. In almost all lessons observed, teachers facilitated effective individual and group work. Teachers successfully created opportunities for discussion, supporting students in making links to learning outside the classroom, and encouraging them to apply and develop key skills during tasks.

Information and communications technology (ICT) was skilfully deployed in some lessons to enhance learning and to stimulate interest, however, there is scope for improvement in the creative use of ICT to support learning across the school. Homework was assigned in almost all lessons, and was mostly purposeful and relevant to the area of study.

In most lessons, students were motivated to learn and had a clear understanding of the work they were undertaking, this was linked to the delivery of clear learning intentions and the effective sharing and sometimes the co-creation of success criteria. This good practice should be extended to all lessons. In some lessons, teacher questioning was used very effectively to prompt students towards a deeper understanding of the topic. Effective questioning strategies should be shared and implemented in all lessons.

In the highly effective lessons, teachers achieved a good balance of support and challenge for their students by differentiating the learning intentions, lesson tasks, and in some cases the homework assignments. However, in the majority of lessons, this was identified as an area for development. Teachers should ensure that all students are given the appropriate levels of support and challenge required so that they can reach their potential as learners. The school should consider providing further CPD and peer observation opportunities to share the very good practice observed in a few lessons.

Overall, teachers provided effective oral feedback to students in lessons, however, there was scope to increase the provision of written formative feedback on student's work to progress their learning. To guide improvement, all teachers should provide written formative feedback to students; if feedback is provided orally, students should be encouraged to note it on their work.

Teachers' collective practices are of a high standard in the school, with regular subject department meetings, common assessments and the use of digital platforms to share resources. To further develop these practices, it is suggested that senior management set a common teaching and learning agenda for subject departments to reflect on during their meetings. Teachers' collaborative practices are very well developed within the school. Many teachers view themselves as leaders of learning. To this end, they are actively engaged in constructive collaborative practices such as the school's education committee, sharing their expertise and discussing effective approaches to facilitate better student learning.

The quality of collaborative planning in the subject plans reviewed varied. Some plans were driven by textbooks with little reference to teaching methodologies or additional resources. Highly effective active planning, designed to support and enhance teaching and learning, was evident in some subject department curricular plans. These highly effective plans also used collaborative reviews of practice and the analysis of the results of state examinations to inform future planning. These very good practices should be extended to all subject plans and further developed to incorporate thematic links to the digital banks of resources collaboratively developed by subject departments.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Very good progress has been made in the previous recommendations in this area. TY students now have access to a weekly guidance lesson. The junior cycle guidance programme has developed significantly through additional inputs for first-year students, career exploration for second-year students, together with increased use of formative assessment and reporting to parents regarding progress in guidance-related learning. The school's subject planning structures have been reviewed

and there are now regular subject department meetings. There is now a core team of SPHE teachers, and they have all received training in SPHE and RSE.

Teaching and Learning

In most of the lessons observed, there was very good progress in the teaching and learning recommendations from previous inspections: student voice was raised through the provision of further opportunities for student discussion; collaborative learning and active participation of students in lessons was evident; and teachers used a wide variety of resources. However, there was scope to further develop the use of ICT and written formative feedback in many lessons.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The principal and those leading SSE use the SSE process very effectively to manage the school's response to changing needs. An assistant principal with responsibility for SSE has recently been appointed. The six-step SSE process is integrated into the reflective approach taken to teaching and learning throughout the school. The comprehensive school improvement plan describes current time-bound SSE targets, actions needed, and those responsible for achieving them. It is recommended that specific teaching and learning actions related to the SSE targets be agreed for teachers to carry out in every lesson, every day.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has a high capacity for improvement. Systems are in place to continue to embed a culture of improvement throughout the school.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board congratulates and thanks all school staff for their work and commitment which is mentioned so favourably throughout the report. They welcome this extremely positive report which affirms the highly effective practices at board, senior management and teacher level.

The Board is pleased with recognition of the following:

- The Principal and Deputy Principals oversee the running of the school very effectively and continuously promote improvement.
- School leaders keep abreast of educational developments, understanding and managing change processes effectively.
- Teaching and learning is identified as highly effective or effective.
- School leaders foster a culture where learning is prioritised leading the school community to continuously strive for excellence.
- The positive and supportive learning environment is affirmed.
- The school's self-evaluation processes very effectively manage the school's response to changing needs.
- School leaders value and recognise students as stakeholders and involve them in the operation of the school.
- Students are motivated to learn and displayed a deep engagement with learning.
- Student voice is to the fore and student behaviour is exemplary.
- The school's emphasis on wellbeing and the positive affirmation of students' efforts are identified as key strengths.
- The school values and maintains very constructive relationships with parents.

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

Follow up actions since the completion of the inspection

- A consultation process has been initiated to review the allocation of posts.
- The SIP for 2019-2020 includes a focus on extending differentiation practices and teachers providing written formative feedback.
- A review is taking place of year and house lessons and planning has been put in place to ensure clear instructional elements.
- Form tutors now have contact with students for 40 minutes of their tutorial time.
- The enrolment policy has been reworded in line with Inspection advice.
- The school will raise awareness among the school community of the benefits of technology.

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;