

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 Grove Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Our Lady's Grove Goatstown Road Dublin 14
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60891E

Date of Evaluation: 05-12-2019



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, 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	3 - 5 December 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with Board of Management• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meeting(s) 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

Our Lady's Grove is a well-established secondary school for girls under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust. It offers the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year programme, and the established Leaving Certificate. Current enrolment stands at 307.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good; the senior leadership team, the board of management and the middle leadership team work together to lead a strong learning community.
- The provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) requires improvement; just over half of the hours allocated to the school to support students with SEN are currently deployed in line with circular 14/2017 and despite some positive efforts, planning to meet students' needs requires development.
- The principal and deputy principal model a strong culture of mutual trust, respect, shared accountability and reflective practice.
- Teaching and learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons where high quality learner outcomes and experiences were noted; clarity of learning intentions, targeted differentiation and appropriate levels of challenge were lacking in some instances.
- A culture of school improvement is evident in the very good school self-evaluation (SSE) process and ongoing monitoring of impact.
- Action to implement previous recommendations has been very good overall.

Recommendations

- The board of management, together with the senior leadership team, should ensure that the full teaching allocation for students with special educational needs (SEN) is deployed for its intended purpose so that a core SEN team can be established and the needs of students with SEN can be fully addressed; to this end practice should comply with circular 14/2017 and its associated *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.
- Teachers should collaborate in order to extend the highly effective practice noted, so that clarity of learning intentions, targeted differentiation and appropriate levels of challenge are further developed across all lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school is very good overall, creating a welcoming, well-ordered and mostly progressive learning environment; nonetheless the deployment of additional teaching hours provided to the school to support students with SEN requires improvement so that students' individual needs can be fully addressed.

Leading learning and teaching

Overall, the leadership of learning and teaching is highly effective. The principal, supported by the board of management, leads a cohesive learning community in which meaningful and authentic improvements to teaching and learning practices are prioritised and actively progressed. A strong learning culture is evident in the implementation of the new junior cycle curriculum, the progressive approach to assessment practices and the ongoing focus on monitoring the impact of changes to practice.

A strong culture of school improvement is also evident in the embedded school self-evaluation process. This is led by middle leaders, well supported by senior leadership and overseen by the board. Reflective practice is led by the principal, is promoted throughout the community and is informed by regular surveying of students, parents and teachers.

The senior leadership team is proactive in encouraging staff to attend CPD, and teachers share their learning formally at staff meetings. The board of management supports staff in pursuing professional learning and more than half of the staff have attended training in the Magenta Principles. CPD for the whole staff on differentiation and on co-operative teaching is planned for 2020. The senior leadership team also encourages teachers to engage with professional networks such as the Le Chéile networks, Junior Cycle for Teachers Support Service and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.

The principal and deputy principal are committed to ensuring that the school curriculum is implemented in a way that provides valuable learning experiences and are working to that end. Innovation in teaching, learning and assessment practices is encouraged. The school intranet provides a platform for teachers to collaborate on planning and share resources and ideas, and some lesson study and peer observation has been initiated within one subject department. This practice should be extended across all subject departments. Digital learning is promoted and there is training and in-house support for teachers so that technologies are used to enhance learning outcomes and experiences.

A broad, mainly academic curriculum is provided with some interesting recent additions including Theory of Knowledge, Enterprise Education and Theatre & Drama Studies for transition year students. At junior cycle, Music and Classics are included as core subjects and almost all students study Chinese as well as French or Spanish. The Chinese programme offers all students the opportunity to study Mandarin and exams in this are externally accredited under the Youth Chinese Test (YCT) system. The school achieved Confucius Classroom status in 2014 and is one of only 200 schools worldwide to attain this level. The Leaving Certificate programme makes very good provision for a wide range of subjects and option subjects follow a best-fit model.

Highly effective student care structures include daily contact with class tutors, a timetabled weekly pastoral care session, and weekly care team meetings attended by senior leadership, the guidance counsellor, the SEN co-ordinator, and year heads. A wellbeing committee made up of seven teachers supports students in leading various events including a fun and very inclusive 'Create Week'. Most parents, students and teachers reported that students feel safe and well cared for in the school. A comprehensive guidance plan is in place.

Very good commitment to the holistic development of students is also evident in the inclusive policies and practices which support the full integration of students from diverse backgrounds. A wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities is provided for students and facilities to support these have been greatly enhanced in recent years.

Commendable efforts have been made to transition to the new model of provision for students with special educational needs; some co-teaching and some individualised plans are in place for junior but not for senior students. However, there is currently no staff member with a qualification in SEN. There is a need to build capacity amongst staff and establish a core SEN team so that timetabling of supports and targeted planning can be driven by the individual needs of students with SEN. Individualised planning will enable all teachers to consider students' priority learning needs and targets when planning lessons. This will require the appropriate deployment of all of the hours allocated to the school to provide for students with SEN. Currently just under half of these hours are being used to provide smaller class groups in core subjects. The board of management and senior leadership should seek to rectify this situation as a matter of urgency.

The school has recently assigned a post of responsibility to induction and this staff member oversees the effective induction of newly qualified teachers. Commendably, the school participates in the Droichead programme and welcomes student teachers pursuing a Professional Masters in Education.

Managing the organisation

The quality of school governance is very high; the principal and the board of management work to create and maintain a highly effective learning organisation that is warm, welcoming and supportive of high quality learning experiences. Fully informed by the principal, the board exercises good oversight of policy development, resources and facilities, staff development, recruitment, middle leadership, school self-evaluation, child protection issues and the school plan.

There is very significant ongoing policy development to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff; a comprehensive suite of policies is in place and these inform daily practice. Policies are systematically reviewed and ratified by the board in consultation with the school community, the student council and the parents' association.

There is a highly effective working relationship between the board of management and school staff. Board members work with staff to progress aspects of the school plan. The board of management regularly surveys the views of teachers and parents to inform decisions about implementation of the plan. A board member nominated by the patron recently gave a presentation on the ethos of the school and this was very well received by the staff.

The principal and deputy principal work as a highly effective team in managing the smooth day-to-day running of the school. They operate an open door policy, facilitate good communications and oversee effective routines, while also encouraging respectful interactions at all levels within the community. Together, they model a strong culture of mutual trust, respect, shared accountability and reflective practice. They hold regular meetings with key staff teams and with the parents' association and they meet with student representatives weekly. Annually, teachers are surveyed for their perceptions of the principal's performance and the results inform the principal's own reflection on school organisation and development. Middle leaders are also asked to reflect on their roles and progress in advance of review meetings with senior leadership.

The structure of the school day has been the focus of much discussion and review. Currently, there are two very short breaks during the day. The senior leadership team has sought to extend these for a number of reasons, but a survey of student views indicated that students did not want to start earlier in the morning nor finish later in the afternoon. As a result no changes were made. However,

the current situation raises concerns about the wellbeing of both staff and students. Senior leadership and the board are encouraged to revisit this in order to ensure that there is adequate break-time for all.

The senior leadership team works hard to build and maintain good communications with parents. The principal meets with all parents before entry, there are regular surveys of parent views during parent-teacher meetings and the active parents' association produces a regular newsletter, meets with senior leadership and arranges regular talks for parents which take place after the parent-teacher meetings.

Leading school development

The school's vision and mission statement enshrine the values of respect, justice and responsibility and capture the shared goal of a learning community: '...encouraging the school community to develop to its fullest potential cognisant of all talents and skills'. This goal and mission is very much in evidence in the lived experiences of the staff and students.

There is a commendable focus by senior leadership on three core strands: enhancing teaching and learning, the capital investment strategy, and promotion and enrolment. Teaching and learning is progressed through the work of the boards of study, through the school self-evaluation process, through on-going CPD and sharing of expertise. Every teacher is on one board of study and participates in the development process.

Substantial capital investment continues to bring about many significant enhancements to the learning environment including enhanced digital architecture and substantially improved sports facilities. Commendably, students, staff and parents have been involved in working on some aspects of development and this has added to the sense of community and partnership.

School leaders build and maintain very productive relationships. Strategies to improve school recognition and increase enrolment are in place. There are very good links with feeder schools: student-led open days, linked programmes with the main feeder school, and an intergenerational programme building relationships between students and the sisters of the patron religious community.

STEM subjects are well supported within the school. Open-lab days are attended by primary school pupils, the school regularly participates in the BT Young Scientists Exhibition and the Scifest, and all students attend Transition Year taster modules in three science subjects.

Developing leadership capacity

There is very good development of leadership capacity. The principal understands the potential for building leadership capacity and encourages the formation of teams to address school priorities. All teachers are on one of three boards of study: Digital Learning, Teaching, Learning and Assessment and Wellbeing. It is very positive that when appropriate, there is overlapping teamwork between these groups.

A review of posts of responsibility has taken place and the roles and responsibilities of the middle leaders reflect the developing needs of the school. Senior leadership meets with middle leaders individually to review progress and informs the board of management of these reviews. The principal meets with middle leaders as a group twice yearly. There is scope to further develop the role of this middle leadership team in decision-making. Senior leadership should consider delegating some responsibility for decision-making to this group.

There is a range of very good opportunities for students to develop leadership skills including a well-supported student council which meets every two weeks. A very inclusive and effective mentorship

programme involves fifth-year students providing valuable support to first-year students. Some mentors go on to become prefects in sixth year, after a fun process in which they teach a dance routine to a class, developing leadership skills as they go. Participation and student voice is encouraged throughout, the head girl and deputy head girl meet with the senior leadership team once weekly, and open days for prospective students are led by fifth year students. Students present to the board of management regularly, informing them about extra-curricular activities such as overseas trips and sporting events.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons and examples of exemplary teaching, learning and assessment practices were observed in some of the highly effective lessons; clarity of learning intentions, targeted differentiation and appropriate levels of challenge were lacking in some instances.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Overall, high quality learner outcomes and experiences were noted. In all of the lessons observed interactions were encouraging, affirming and respectful and the atmosphere was conducive to learning.

In most lessons positive learner experiences were enhanced by well planned, purposeful and interesting tasks which challenged students to think independently and students were observed asking questions with confidence.

In the most effective lessons learning intentions were clearly stated in a way that enhanced engagement and facilitated reflection. In one exemplary lesson careful planning and clear learning intentions enabled students to devise the success criteria themselves and they clearly enjoyed working towards achieving the agreed goals as the lesson progressed.

Generally, teachers supported students' varying levels of attainment effectively, by using differentiated questioning techniques and providing good in-class support. However, in a significant minority of lessons students were either not sufficiently supported or they were not adequately challenged by the set tasks. It is recommended that teachers share ideas in order to further develop differentiation strategies so that all learners experience appropriate levels of challenge and success in their classwork and homework assignments. Differentiation practices should include teachers setting appropriate learning intentions, and sufficiently challenging tasks for all students.

There were very few instances of students being given independent research tasks to complete either within or between lessons and at times there were missed opportunities to build in structured tasks which could encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning.

It is commendable that a number of teaching and learning initiatives including literacy development, collaborative learning and the use of information and communications technology have become embedded practice across all subjects. In almost all lessons students were provided with opportunities to work in groups or pairs and were observed skilfully using their electronic devices in ways that added to their confidence, motivation and engagement in learning.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teachers have created a very positive learning environment with many exemplars of student work on display throughout the school. It is commendable that many teachers modelled enthusiasm for their subjects, bringing energy and knowledge of relevant current issues into the fabric of lessons.

Teachers made very good use of real life and cross-curricular examples to enhance student learning and develop understanding. In the main, teacher instruction was clear and well-informed.

In most lessons teachers very effectively planned and prepared lessons using a valuable range of support materials and visual stimuli to encourage student participation and engagement with the topics. While teachers successfully used affirmation and encouragement to progress student learning, there was scope for more formative developmental feedback in a significant majority of lessons. Teachers should indicate areas for improvement and clear strategies on how students can improve their work.

The majority of teachers effectively used targeted individual questioning and assessment for learning techniques to assess both individual and whole-class progress, but in a significant number of lessons individual student voice and assessment of whole-class progress were lacking. At times there were insufficient opportunities for students to answer questions, to voice their opinions, to practise speaking another language or to contribute to a group discussion. Teachers should plan lessons to incorporate opportunities for every student to develop oral literacy skills and assessment of their individual learning, linked to clear learning intentions.

Teachers collaborate effectively using an online sharing platform and regular subject department team meetings. It is highly commendable that teachers who have implemented the Magenta Principles contribute to an evolving booklet which provides detailed exemplars of these principles in action across a number of subject areas. In some subject department folders there was evidence of significant sharing of resources and teaching methodologies. Subject planning is varied; a number of subject departments have highly developed live subject department plans, including analysis of attainment, while other department plans are in the early stages of development.

It is positive that all subject departments are working towards a teaching and learning plan that matches learning outcomes with detailed and specific learning intentions. It is also commendable that this developmental work has become part of the current school self-evaluation process and the regular surveying of students' learning experiences helps to inform decisions.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Overall, there has been very good progress on implementing recommendations from previous evaluations.

Leadership and Management

The significant recommendations made in a 2009 WSE on whole school review, strategic planning, campus development and review of the structure of the school day have all been successfully implemented. Nonetheless, the review of the structure of the school day warrants further attention.

Teaching and Learning

Very good progress has been made on recommendations from previous evaluations on the use of co-operative learning strategies and on providing opportunities for student discussion. However, a recommendation on promoting independent learning and research opportunities remains as an area for development.

It is very positive that a recent recommendation regarding the articulation of learning intentions has been addressed by all subject departments and has become a key focus of the school self-evaluation process.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school community has adopted a collaborative approach which gathers evidence to monitor the impact of changes and reflect on progress. The school self-evaluation process is well embedded and has evolved through a number of iterations. The initial focus on literacy and numeracy continues to be evident in lessons. The current focus on assessment practices is progressive and involves all teachers. Since November 2017 the school has been piloting formal formative assessment, and the current twinned focus on learning intentions is helping teachers and subject departments to focus constructively on key elements of learner outcomes and experiences.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school's capacity for improvement is of a very high standard. The teamwork, commitment and reflective processes evident within the school indicate a culture of continuous improvement which has meaningful ongoing benefits for the learning community.

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 congratulates the leadership, teaching and administrative staff for their successful parts in the recent WSE MLL Inspection which took place in November 2019. We welcome the hugely positive report which shines a light on the wonderful meaningful practice demonstrated in our school community every day.

The Board is specifically proud of the following which were identified in the report:

- The overall quality of leadership and management was afforded the highest descriptor possible on the *Inspectorate's Quality Continuum*.
- Teaching and learning being rated very good and good overall with examples of exemplary teaching, learning and assessment practices in some of the highly effective lessons.
- Senior leadership being commended for their strong culture of mutual trust, respect, shared accountability and reflective practice.
- The acknowledgement of a very good **School Self-Evaluation** process with a culture of continuous improvement.
- That actions to address previous recommendations from earlier inspections were rated as very good.
- Our school's student care structures are considered highly effective.
- Our commitment to the holistic development of students is deemed to be very good.
- Senior leadership's work on promoting positive relationships with parents is commended.
- Commendation of our activities to promote the school and our work in the local community.
- Our very good opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and to have their voice heard is lauded.
- It was observed that in most lessons positive learning experiences were enhanced by well planned, purposeful and interesting tasks.
- It was commended that a number of teaching and learning initiatives including literacy development, collaborative learning and the use of digital technology are embedded in school practice.
- Highly commended learning environment which has received substantial sustained capital investment over recent years, and which proudly displays evidence of student attainment.

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, led by the middle-leadership team, to review the allocation of posts.
- Renewed efforts have been made to recruit internally for SEN development opportunities.
- The internal professional learning process has a continued focus on articulating the explicit learning purpose for the learners through unpacking the relevant learning outcomes.
- The SSE team are currently reviewing the efforts undertaken so far with plans to introduce video of highly effective practice to support colleagues in the clarity of learning intentions improvement process.

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;