

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Errigal College |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Windyhall Letterkenny Co Donegal |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 712001 |

Date of Evaluation: 11-04-2019



**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 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 did not fully meet the requirements in relation to 1 and 3 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

| Dates of inspection | 11-04-2019 |
|---|---|
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with Board of Management• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with parents• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers |

School context

Errigal College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Students of the school come from a range of ethnic and social backgrounds, and there are a proportion for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The school offers all programmes, including an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

The school has been approved for an extension that will allow it to cater for up to 750 students. The school currently has a post-primary student population of 267, in addition to 113 adult learners in its Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) College. While the school's senior management team and teachers are responsible for the operation of the PLC College, the PLC College was not included in this evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of school management and leadership is satisfactory; aspects of DEIS planning, timetable provision, including the allocation of resources for students with special educational needs (SEN) and the effectiveness of the in-school management system are some of the areas that need to be addressed.
- There is a very strong commitment to student care, teacher professional development, and continuous improvement of the learner experience in the school; however, the code of behaviour is not being implemented consistently by all staff.
- Students have a variety of leadership opportunities; however, the student council is not operating as effectively as it should be.
- The overall quality of teaching was good with some examples of highly effective practice evident.
- Overall, the level of engagement with the recommendations from previous evaluations is satisfactory.
- There has been good work undertaken in respect of the school self-evaluation process and evidence of good capacity for school improvement.

Recommendations

- The board should exercise a greater oversight role in all areas; particular attention should be given to oversight of the targets associated with DEIS planning.

- Timetabling, including the deployment of supports for special educational needs (SEN), should be reviewed to ensure optimum and appropriate use of all the resources allocated to the school.
- A review of middle management structures and their effectiveness should be undertaken to ensure that the roles and responsibilities sufficiently meet the needs of the school as required in Circular 03/2018.
- Senior management and staff should develop a whole-school approach to the consistent implementation of the Code of Behaviour.
- In order to improve the student voice in the school, the effectiveness of the student council should be strengthened.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall quality of leadership and management, comprising the work of the Board of Management, senior management and middle management is satisfactory.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The school has experienced many changes of deputy principals in the past number of years. However, the current senior management team, established in August 2018, has complementary skills and is already proving to be effective. Both the principal and deputy principal have engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) relevant to their roles and are very committed to the development of the school.

The school provides the full range of available curricular programmes and a wide variety of subjects is offered to students. The senior management team effectively manages curriculum-related planning. However the timetabled allocation for some subjects merits review. For example, Spanish is timetabled in second year as two single lessons on the same day. In addition, Physical Education (PE) is timetabled as a two single classes on different days for the majority of year groups and students in sixth year are only timetabled for a single period of PE.

It is very good that senior management considers timetabling for learning support during the creation of the whole-school timetable. However, care should be taken to ensure that the support provided is sufficiently aligned with the individual identified needs of the students. Currently, students receive support through withdrawal from Irish lessons or from non-examination subjects such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and PE. The school should consider additional methods of delivering learning support such as team teaching and in-class support to minimise the withdrawal of students from non-examination subjects that support student wellbeing.

Year heads take responsibility for monitoring the assessment and attainment of the students in their year group. While this is to be commended, there is no systematic method in place to ensure attainment trends are identified and targeted support is provided. Year heads should take a more active leadership role in terms of monitoring assessment and attainment, so that there is greater consistency in this regard.

The quality of support for students with SEN is good. Significant progress has been achieved by members of the SEN team in building up student support files guided by the continuum of support model. The SEN co-ordinator has engaged in significant continuing professional development to develop school systems in this regard. Senior management has also facilitated the broadening of the existing SEN team; it meets weekly and includes teacher co-ordinators for EAL and behaviour for learning. In keeping with the school's ethos of care, an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) unit which contains two classes has been established to cater for the needs of students in the locality.

The implementation of very good student-centred planning, based on the resource allocation model, is praiseworthy. It is good that some students with ASD are integrated into mainstream lessons, where appropriate. These students are being facilitated to follow a combination of Level 3 subjects and Level 2 Learning Programmes depending on their strengths and needs. However, a number of matters relating to the deployment by the school of the SEN teaching resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills, for the organisation of SEN provision require attention. At the time of the inspection, approximately 100 hours were being used to create small class groups and provide additional mainstream subject teaching; this is not in line with the provisions of Circular 14/2017. The school should ensure that the full allocation of hours provided to support students

with SEN is deployed for its intended purpose and complies with Circular Letter 0014/2017, to serve the needs of SEN students effectively.

Provision for guidance is good; the Guidance Counsellor provides timetabled guidance to third year, TY, fifth year and sixth-year students. Students in first and second year have access to guidance and counselling services. In addition, an external counsellor provides extra counselling services to the school. In questionnaire returns, a majority of students and parents were positive regarding the level of information given to them when choosing subjects.

SPHE is provided in junior cycle and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is provided for senior-cycle students in line with curricular requirements. However, responses to questionnaires indicate that a small number of students and parents were not aware if aspects of drugs, alcohol and relationships and sexuality had been delivered as part of the SPHE curriculum.

Managing the organisation

The quality of school governance is good. The board is appropriately constituted and has received training for its role including training in child safeguarding matters. The board meets regularly and is aware of its statutory obligations. Minutes of meetings indicate that Child Protection Oversight Reports have been included in recent meetings. Board members are very committed to the school. The board has demonstrated strong leadership and management capacity in its dealing with specific matters over the past while.

There is a DEIS plan in place and some targets have been set. However, whole-school awareness of the plan is lacking and the plan does not impact adequately on teaching and learning. Oversight and reporting on DEIS planning have not featured as items for discussion at board or staff meetings to an appropriate extent. The board needs to ensure that there is full and proper oversight of the implementation of all DEIS targets. To strengthen communications with the wider school community an agreed report should be shared with all stakeholders following all board meetings.

A very effective student support team, which meets on a weekly basis, is in place. There is a clear system of referral and the use of an identification system for students in need of support ensures that all staff members are kept up to date with relevant information. Through the school completion programme, an attendance tracker is allocated to tracking and analysing students' attendance trends. During the evaluation, it was evident that student attendance was an issue, and several incidents of late arrival and poor timekeeping by students were noted. School records returned to TUSLA show very high levels of absenteeism over the past two years. A renewed focus on improving attendance is required to address the high levels of absenteeism with a view to improving student outcomes.

The year head and voluntary tutor system is a key support for the care of students in the school. Tutors have a pastoral role in terms of the implementation of the Code of Behaviour. Evidence gathered during meetings with students and teachers indicated a concern about student behaviour and the inconsistent implementation of the code of behaviour. Almost half of the students surveyed as part of the evaluation indicated they did not know if the behaviour of students was good in their school. It is imperative for the whole-school community to develop a shared understanding of the code of behaviour.

The school building is well maintained and a variety of displays celebrating student achievement and various aspects of school life are exhibited. However, personal protective equipment signage was absent from the practical rooms visited. In addition, senior management reported that a fire drill had not taken place in the current school year; this was reported to be due to the recent building works. The board and senior management should ensure that they adopt good practices and procedures in relation to health and safety.

Leading school development

The Board has identified a number of priorities for the coming years. Following confirmation that the school has been approved for a new extension to cater for 750 students the Board plans to promote the school to the wider community. It has aspirations to raise student expectations and improve student outcomes. Specific targets and actions to achieve these aims have not yet been identified.

The school has established strong links in the community with neighbouring primary and secondary schools and local businesses. The engagement of the school in initiatives through cross border bodies, the Centre for School Leadership and the School Excellence Fund is commendable. These initiatives are addressing identified student needs and adding value to the student experience.

Senior management is very encouraging of CPD and has supported staff to engage in programmes such as Instructional Leadership, Restorative Practice, and the content sharing group in operation within DETB. The school also provides support for new teachers through the Droichead programme. The school reported that it regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, students and the teacher education institutions.

The parents' association is very committed to supporting the school and has been consulted on the development of recent school policies. As a representative body, it was very positive in its discussion with the inspection team about the school. In particular, it commended the level of openness fostered between senior management and parents. The data from parents' surveys indicated very high levels of satisfaction across a range of aspects of school life.

Policy development is effectively supported by DETB and all mandatory policies are in place; some policies are in need of updating. The board should complete an annual policy and legislative checklist as a support to their ongoing process of policy development and review.

Developing leadership capacity

A recent review of posts has been undertaken. However no changes have taken place as a result of this review. Responses to the teacher questionnaire indicated that the majority believe that the current in-school management system is not effective. There was evidence that despite some oversight by the principal, not all post holders were fulfilling their duties effectively. Further whole-school discussion regarding middle management structures and their effectiveness is required. In addition, the board should review the proposed schedule of duties to ensure that they address the current and future needs of the school as required by Circular 03/2018.

In keeping with good practice, regular meetings are held by year heads, the student support team and assistant principals. Assistant Principals are expected to report key findings of these meetings to staff but there is no formal mechanism for this. In addition, responses to staff surveys indicate that half of the staff feel the views of teachers are not valued in the decision-making processes in the school. This is an area that requires further exploration by management.

Students are provided with leadership opportunities through their involvement in the student council, the prefect system and as school ambassadors. In the past, the student council has previously met with the board; however, this good practice has not happened in the current school year. Members of the student council reported feeling undervalued due to lack of profile in the school and a lack of training. Responses to student surveys also indicated that a majority of students do not feel they have a say in how the school is run. There is a scope to improve the leadership potential of students and define the various roles and duties more clearly.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in observed lessons was good with elements of highly effective practice observed.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In all lessons observed, a very positive rapport between students and teachers was noted. Teachers created positive learning environments where students could participate without fear of failure. Students' contributions were acknowledged and affirmed and an atmosphere of mutual respect prevailed.

In very good lessons, students were given opportunities to engage in collaborative learning which was effectively structured, facilitating active participation. Students were provided with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, critically evaluate information and articulate well-supported opinions. An inquiry-based approach was observed in a small number of lessons where students were encouraged to speculate on a variety of possible outcomes with regard to the topic being studied. They were also afforded opportunities to reflect and provide feedback on their work, demonstrating ownership of their learning. Particularly good practice was evident when peer-assessment occurred in a manner that was supportive yet challenging and consequently led to improvements in the quality of learner outcomes. In many lessons, teachers provided additional support and differentiated learning outcomes as necessary.

In a significant minority of lessons, students' learning experiences were either satisfactory or fair as a predominantly teacher-led style prevailed. In the small number of lessons where teaching was just fair, students were passive, disengaged and were not enabled to assume responsibility for their learning. Expectations of students' abilities were underestimated.

Poor practice was evident in one instance when the specific needs of a targeted cohort of students were not sufficiently addressed. The absence of planning suggests the supports provided were not sufficiently aligned to the needs of students.

Homework was set at the beginning of or during the lessons in some cases. This provided an additional focus to the lesson. A review of student diaries indicated inconsistency in the recording of homework; teachers should identify and establish more effective systems to support the recording of homework.

In the language lessons observed, very good practice was evident when the target language was continually used by both teachers and students and where questioning strategies facilitated active student participation. Meticulous attention was given to students' oral linguistic accuracy and student recognition and correction of pronunciation errors, guided by the teacher, enabled student autonomy. However, there were instances where the target language was not used optimally and an over reliance on translation was noted. It is important that lessons transact through the target language and that the very good practice noted in this regard should be shared among all language departments.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

A range of subject department and programme plans was reviewed. The quality of subject planning varied. Exemplary practice was noted where the plan was closely aligned to the junior cycle framework and was developed in a collaborative manner. However, some plans indicated a high level of individual rather than collaborative input which may inhibit cohesive planning. It is good that

subject departments are analysing state examination data. In some cases, targets to improve student outcomes have been established but appropriate mechanisms have not been developed to indicate how these targets might be achieved. The identification of measurable actions is essential for driving realisable improvements in learning outcomes.

Subject departments meet on a regular basis and are actively engaged in embedding the junior cycle framework. The availability of a digital platform to share resources is a significant strength. Collaborative professional practice is good, but relies heavily on informal conversations; a more formalised system of collaboration would benefit the school as its numbers grow.

The majority of lessons were well planned. Those lessons that were very effective were well structured and facilitated a high level of student engagement in activity based learning. Teachers had prepared a range of materials and tasks to cater for the varying needs of the learners. In lessons where instructions were clearly articulated, this facilitated a focussed learning environment as students knew what was expected of them.

Students' progress was assessed at regular intervals throughout the lessons and, in many cases, also at the end of the lesson. The sharing of success criteria with students would enhance the effectiveness of this practice, allowing students to accurately evaluate their progress.

In a few lessons, meticulous attention was paid to developing students' literacy and numeracy. In these lessons, explicit links with key subject terminology were communicated to students, enabling them to expand their vocabulary and to engage with requirements of the curriculum. Opportunities were missed in other lessons to support language development for all students and specifically for students whose first language is not English.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Overall, the level of engagement with the recommendations from previous evaluations is satisfactory.

Leadership and Management

Senior management places a high level of trust in the integrity and professionalism of teachers and has established expectations that teachers will implement recommendations from previous evaluations. However, the recommendation for DEIS planning to be improved which was made in the previous WSE-MLL in 2011 remains an area for development. Formal structures that support a whole-school approach to following through on inspection recommendations need to be established.

Teaching and Learning

Subject departments have addressed some of the recommendations made in previous subject inspections. In many of the lessons observed, active methodologies and a range of teaching strategies were deployed and an improved balance between teacher and student input was evident. Peer assessment opportunities were also provided to students. However, in the subjects that had been inspected more recently, subject plans did not reference how they would address the recommendations. Recommendations that were made about planning, such as the planning of units of work, were implemented.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The SSE process was used previously to develop the DEIS plan for 2012 – 2016; in keeping with good practice, teachers, students and parents were consulted as part of the data gathering process. This data was used to identify targets for the DEIS plan. However, the current DEIS plan is underdeveloped. Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART) targets have not been identified for all areas, and the actions to improve outcomes are very generic. While there is reference to DEIS targets in some subject department plans, this should be further developed and extended to all subjects.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school demonstrates good capacity for improvement. Looking toward the future, DEIS teams for each strand of the DEIS plan need to be re-established. Responsibility for each strand should be shared with the team to ensure continuity and whole-school ownership of the process. Members of teaching staff, the middle management team, senior management and the board should all play their part in areas such as academic monitoring, analysis of results, policy development and DEIS planning as they lead the school in a process of continuous self-evaluation to improve student outcomes.

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 welcomes this report as it affirms the Board's belief that, under the leadership of a highly committed senior management team supported by a dynamic teaching staff, the school is well positioned to continue to provide a progressive, high quality, inclusive and relevant educational experience for its students. The Board welcomes the report at a time when it is making plans towards the extensive school refurbishment programme proposed to cater for a student population of 750.

The Board in particular welcomes the following findings:

- The school's inclusive ethos and its focus on challenging and supporting both highly able students and those with learning difficulties.
- There is a strong commitment to student care, teacher professional development and continuous behaviour improvement of the learner experience in the school.
- A very effective student support team.
- Parents and Students extremely happy about life in Errigal College. 95% of parents and 97% of students aware of school rules and code of behaviour. 90% on parents surveyed said they felt welcome in the school and 82% said the school was well run and happy with the school.
- The strong links between the school and the community.
- The fact that reflective and self-evaluative practice is embedded in the culture of the school, notably in DEIS planning.
- Students are provided with a variety of leadership opportunities through their involvement in student council, the prefect system and as school ambassadors. 85% of students said teachers encourage them to do well.

Part B: 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 advises that for the next school year the following actions will be included:

- The school will continue their partnership with the NCSE to support the evolving SEN Model.
- The DEIS plan will be developed incorporating all the relevant strands and reviewing SMART targets and will be promoted within the school community
- Timetable changes will be included as recommended.
- The board will publish a written summary report for staff in the staff room following each meeting
- The review of the posts of responsibility will be completed.
- A review of policies will be scheduled on an annual basis. The code of behaviour will be on the agenda for all staff meetings.
- The school will support the very positive rapport between students and teachers which fosters a positive learning environment, ensuring that students can participate without fear or failure.
- To promote the variety of leadership opportunities provided by the school, the Student Council will be scheduled to contribute at student assemblies. A Calendar for Student Council activities has been circulated.

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; |