

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	FCJ Secondary School
<b>School address</b>	Bunclody Co Wexford
<b>Roll number</b>	63550Q

**Date of Evaluation: 26-09-2018**



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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	24-26 September 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with board of management</li><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principals</li><li>• Meetings with key staff</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Student focus-group interview</li><li>• Meeting with parents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers</li></ul>

### School context

FCJ is a co-educational secondary school with an enrolment of 927 students. The school provides the junior cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme with admission criteria, the established Leaving Certificate and an optional Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- A positive learning environment is provided and the quality of care for students is very good, supported by and including well-developed in-school systems for student support, strategies for anti-bullying and health promotion.
- The quality of leadership and management is good, including the leadership of school development, although the involvement of student and parent voice in the improvement planning process merits extension.
- Leadership capacity is developing; the recent expansion of the senior management team and the review and reassignment of middle leadership in line with current school priorities is providing scope for leadership responsibilities to be re-prioritised and this is very positive, but student leadership could be further expanded.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good; most lessons observed were good or very good; students' learning would be further developed by giving them more opportunities to extend their independence and self-direction during lessons and through greater use of formative feedback.
- Some good progress has been made with many recommendations from previous inspections and there is a lot of informal and formal sharing of effective practice among teachers.
- The school has very good capacity for improvement, high value is placed on providing the best possible learner experiences and ongoing improvement, while school self-evaluation (SSE) could be maintained as a more rigorous and continuous process.

#### Recommendations

- The board and senior management should enhance the ways they enable students and parents to fulfil their partnership role, and regularly seek their views in school development.
- To further enhance distributed leadership, senior management should introduce a leadership mentoring programme for staff, formalise the systems that support professional responsibility and review, and establish further structures to facilitate student leadership.

- All teachers should further promote learner autonomy during lessons and make greater use of formative feedback as a means of encouraging students to reflect on and to improve the quality of their written work.
- Senior management should ensure that SSE is focused more on day-to-day teaching and learning practices in classrooms and communicate a summary of the SSE report and school improvement plan to parents and the community.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

#### Leading learning and teaching

With the support of the board, senior management purposefully promotes a culture of improvement in learning, teaching and assessment by encouraging teachers to develop their practice. Senior management enables the school to benefit from expertise within the staff by facilitating teachers in making professional development presentations at meetings. A recently-established teaching and learning team greatly supports the culture of learning through members' participation in professional courses and shared learning. There is a number of staff working groups developing a range of areas, including digital learning and wellbeing. Through the well-developed mentoring system for new teachers, staff engage in collaborative review of lessons. Good work in leading teaching and learning takes place within subject departments. Each of these is proving successful in enhancing learners' experiences.

The school provides placements for student teachers. This is a positive two-way learning experience for teachers. To further support good practice, protocols should be developed based on the Teaching Council *Guidelines on School Placement*. Senior management supports active participation in professional networks. In leading the implementation of the junior cycle, senior management forged beneficial links with another school to build staff capacity.

The senior management team place value on academic attainment as well as holistic education. Students' achievements in a range of areas are regularly acknowledged and celebrated. A broad range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided and a wide range of whole-school initiatives greatly supports students, including those that promote healthy lifestyles, fitness, mental health and support diversity. Responsibility has been given to deans and form teachers to monitor, mentor and report on students' holistic development, as well as educational attainment. The principal is examining how reporting, including the student progress reports can be developed.

The quality of care for students is very good, supported by and including well-developed in-school systems for student support. A student support team co-ordinates intervention and support strategies, including student mentoring, personal counselling and further referral. A comprehensive guidance programme supports transitions, decision-making and wellbeing. The guidance department provides personal, educational and career guidance for students. A recently formed whole-school guidance planning team, has begun to assess current practices and establish students' guidance needs. Very good practices were evident in the leadership of learning support. The recently developed nurture room, the inclusion policy, and the move to allocating more resources into team teaching are all very positive developments in catering for learners' needs. A number of teachers have qualifications in learning support and some are undertaking training in team teaching.

Senior management uses the new resource allocation model to provide resources to students with special educational needs (SEN). The resources are being directed towards learning priorities, but

some of the allocation is directed into mainstream teaching. Senior management should ensure the allocation is aligned with *Circular 14/2017* and the *Guidelines for supporting students with SEN*. While learning support lessons and team-teaching lessons were very well delivered, teachers should focus on developing planning for these lessons through enhanced prior liaison with the learning-support coordinator regarding the learning targets. In addition, the school should establish a communication and monitoring system for this.

The school provides a broad curriculum, including a balance of subjects and the LCVP and TY programmes. Recent changes to the curriculum included the introduction of Agricultural Science and junior cycle. Curricular provision for Guidance and for Physical Education (PE) is improving. From next year, all groups will have a PE lesson each week. It is a positive development that Music has been placed in the option bands for senior cycle; similar action could be taken in junior cycle. It is acknowledged that Music is provided after school.

There is recognition that the increased enrolment is leading to an expansion of learners' needs and, to meet this, the board is interested in introducing new subjects. To ensure the curriculum continues to be relevant and meeting the needs of all, it is recommended that those leading curricular planning conduct regular surveys of the views of students, parents and teachers.

It is positive that an increasing numbers of students wish to do TY. However, a significant number this year did not get to participate. Participation in the TY programme was universally recognised by teachers as greatly benefitting maturity, key skills and preparedness for the Leaving Certificate. In the interests of equality of opportunity, consideration should be given to expanding entry to TY. The option of introducing a Leaving Certificate Applied programme, which would meet the needs of a small cohort with different expectations, ought to be considered.

Provision is made for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE); however, SPHE is not timetabled weekly for third years, and instead delivered modularly. The board and senior management recognise that this is not ideal. The principal has taken positive steps to explain to parents how the SPHE curriculum, including RSE, is to be delivered this year and has already demonstrated how, through curricular planning, the situation will not arise again. Senior management is also taking action to ensure that the distinction that exists between curricular RSE and Religious Education (RE) is made clearer to students and parents and to build capacity amongst the staff to teach RSE and SPHE.

### **Managing the organisation**

The board is dedicated to the school community and ongoing school improvement. It is alert and responsive to changes in education. Board members are mindful of statutory obligations and work to ensure that legislative requirements are met. They have progressed recent building projects. There is scope to enhance the board's critical oversight of the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum. To achieve this, the board could afford those with leadership roles, including working groups, post holders and student groups the opportunity to periodically discuss their work.

School policies are reviewed and ratified regularly by the board. While parents, and to some extent students, have some involvement in policy development, the school should seek to enhance this partnership. A review of the admissions policy is timely given the revised resource allocation model for SEN. Procedures for admission to the TY and LCVP programmes should be included in the policy.

Senior management and deans place high value on maintaining a secure environment where good quality learning can occur. Students feel safe and they have a good understanding of anti-bullying and not hurting others. Their observed behaviour was excellent. Ubiquitous positive messages permeate the school. Management recognises the need to update the current code of behaviour to reflect actual practice in restorative-type approaches and to review how the code promotes positive behaviour.

Senior management oversees the smooth day-to-day running of the school; there were very positive responses from questionnaires on this. Communication is generally effective although possibilities for improvement exist in enabling all members of the school community to play their part.

The principal and deputy principals are very affirming and supportive of teachers. In promoting professional accountability, they frequently hold informal discussions with teachers on learner outcomes. There is scope to formalise this; the principal could meet teachers annually to discuss their work in the context of professional responsibility and to review their ongoing professional development requirements.

School management maintains the buildings to high standards. Facilities within classrooms include modern information and communications technology (ICT) resources which teachers use daily in lessons. The board is carefully deliberating the extension of digital technology for learner use.

### **Leading school development**

The board has identified a set of six key priorities for school development. One of these is to uphold the school mission and values. The values, which include the right to learn, to be yourself and to feel safe and happy, are well communicated and evident in day-to-day experiences. The board should reflect on how extending the opportunity to do the TY programme could be more consistent with the values. Similarly, and in leading junior cycle reform, the board should give consideration to full mixed ability grouping in first year.

The board's other priorities include developing middle leadership and using SSE to meet emerging needs of learners. In setting out the priorities for development, the board accurately recognises the school's areas for development. There is potential for the board's priorities to be more clearly communicated to parents, students and teachers.

In operating the school, senior management values and includes parents and students' views. Key staff members work collaboratively with parent and student councils. However, evidence accrued, including questionnaire findings, indicated that the systems for garnering the views of parents and students in the process of leading school development merit extension. The board and senior management should enhance the ways they enable students and parents to fulfil their partnership role, and regularly seek their views in school development. Senior management could consult with students on a wider range of issues through, for example, facilitating periodic focus-group meetings.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

Among the staff, leadership capacity is developing very positively. Recently, the senior management team has expanded and now comprises a principal and three deputy principals. In addition, middle management is expanding; the board is currently reviewing and reassigning a significant number of assistant principal posts. It is very positive that, as part of these processes, the principal engaged staff in reflecting and prioritising current school needs, and used the leadership standards in *Looking at Our School 2016* as a benchmark. Through these changes, leadership responsibilities are being re-prioritised and an enhanced model of distributed leadership is unfolding. All those in leadership should regularly identify their ongoing professional development needs. Consideration should be given to a leadership mentoring programme.

Senior management has provided a number of good opportunities to teachers to develop leadership capacity. Staff members rotate the leadership of subject departments, participate in staff working groups, conduct form teacher duties and organise extra-curricular events. The leadership role in mentoring newly appointed teachers was cited for its value and effectiveness. Staff members are committed to this work and welcome these opportunities.

Senior management demonstrates a willingness to continually develop effective leadership practice at all levels. They respond very well to pressing demands in running the school and leading staff and students. With the restructuring of roles, senior management could give more time to strategic leadership and to critique their own and others' professional practice.

Students are offered opportunities to develop leadership capacity including involvement with the student council, mentoring and a range of social justice initiatives. However, there is scope to further the leadership potential of students. Throughout the evaluation, students were very positive about their school, had strong motivation for their own personal development and demonstrated aspiration for leadership. School management could establish further structures to support the facilitation of student leadership and further promote the student voice. To optimise student voice, sub division of the council into a junior and senior council merits consideration in this large school context. Consideration could also be given to providing advanced training for the council. There may be opportunities to devolve the leadership of some school initiatives to students.

## **2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

During the evaluation, it was evident that students expect to achieve. They were well aware of the high expectations set for them with regard to their participation and learning. They responded very favourably to this. Almost always, they demonstrated a keen interest in the lessons and topics.

Students demonstrated high levels of readiness for lessons. They had very good rapport with teachers, worked well together and generally made very good contributions to tasks. Their engagement with learning was strongly evident. This arose from a sense that they were making good progress and that, in almost all instances, they were being appropriately challenged.

Students demonstrated accountability for their learning in many ways. They had a very positive approach to work. In some lessons, it was evident that students took responsibility for improving their written work through guidance and feedback from teachers. When given opportunities to verbalise their learning, students made very good responses, almost always demonstrating high levels of confidence and competence in communicating, and, when asked, could develop answers given. Overall, learning would be enhanced by extending their independence and self-direction during lessons. For example, student copybooks and folders contained a substantial volume of notes and it was evident that, at times, students copy these from ICT presentations. Additionally, lessons often included a plenary session or period of whole-class instruction when students listened and answered questions. Students could be explicitly expected to make notes on what they themselves select to be the key points from the activities. Note making is an area where there is scope to extend students' independence. This would help them record and consolidate their learning from each lesson, and serve to build learner autonomy.

Students demonstrated knowledge and skills appropriate to the curricular programme. They were observed to be attaining prescribed key skills, including working with others, managing information, and creativity. In a few instances, individuals could have been better supported in improving their written literacy. Overall, their attainment in summative examinations is very good. For a very small minority, attainment is not as good; this merits attention when reviewing the curriculum.

### **Teachers' individual and collective practice**

Teachers were very well prepared for lessons. They used a wide range of resources which supported learning. Often, clear learning intentions were outlined and these supported a developmental

approach to learning. Very effective practice was evident when teachers revisited the intentions during the conclusion phase and enabled students to reflect on the progress made.

Teachers modelled enthusiasm for their subjects and this motivated students to enjoy their learning. Positive relationships and affirmation generated co-operative and productive learning. Mostly, lessons were student-centred, with a good balance between teacher and student voice. During instruction, teachers made short clear inputs at a good pace for students to learn.

Teachers included opportunities for collaborative learning in most lessons. The outcomes of these were very positive with almost always high levels of student engagement. Teachers prepared students well for these activities including explicitly explaining the intended learning outcomes. In a few instances, the management and the composition of groups could have been better.

Effective and productive teacher circulation was observed in most lessons. On occasion, this was less effective. Mostly, lessons were challenging as well as being supportive. A few lessons were not as inclusive or challenging of all learners, and there was a need for further differentiation.

The majority of classrooms were teacher-based and mostly presented as very stimulating learning environments with lots of valuable subject-specific materials. Best practice was evident when classroom layouts were organised for collaborative learning and teacher circulation; this ought to be extended, wherever possible.

Homework is assigned regularly. Mostly, the homework given was varied and challenging. At times, it could have been more developmental. Generally, a good level of teacher monitoring of homework was noted. Some very good quality was observed in individual teacher's corrections. All teachers should, when correcting copies, make use of formative feedback as a means of encouraging students to reflect on and to improve the quality of their written work.

Very good collective practices are taking place; it is evident that there is a lot of informal and formal sharing of effective strategies among teachers, working groups and at whole-staff level. Subject departments use common approaches to implementing the curriculum. Teachers collaborate on strategies to integrate ICT productively. Continuation and extension of collective practices will further support learning. For example, in some lessons, teachers linked the assessment of tasks to success criteria enabling highly effective self-assessment and reflection on learning; sharing these formative assessment strategies will benefit all.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

#### **Leadership and Management**

Management addressed recommendations in the previous whole school evaluation including reconstituting the parents' council, reviewing certain policies, providing locker spaces and reviewing posts to give middle management a greater voice. The developments are commended. However, the progress made in re-instating PE in senior cycle and SPHE had to be reversed this year; it was reported that this was a consequence of reconstituting the timetable for the junior cycle. Management's commitment to restoring timetabling for PE and SPHE next year is acknowledged. The timetabling of study periods is still evident; ways of replacing this with tuition ought to be implemented. The recommended review of the formation of a 'top class' in junior cycle took place in-house, and its retention was upheld; however, it is timely to re-review this for first years, given the implementation of junior cycle, with mostly common level, and in light of recent feedback from students, including the view that those who don't get into the class don't feel as valued.

The board and senior management reported that good progress has taken place throughout subject departments following subject inspections, including developing curricular planning. The ongoing work within subject departments is commended.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Management shares the recommendations from inspections with staff for the purpose of integrating best practice and informing subject planning. This has proven effective. Evidence that good practice has spread across subjects was observed, including the use of learning intentions, better monitoring of students' written work and the facilitation of research. As noted in lessons, there were instances where there was scope to extend good practice in students note-making, differentiation and correcting copies. These are areas school leadership should consider targeting through SSE.

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

### **The School's Self-Evaluation Process**

Leadership of SSE was prioritised by staff for inclusion within the revised leadership responsibilities. This is a positive acknowledgement of its importance in school development.

In engaging in the SSE process, the school has identified areas for focus; school improvement plans (SIP) have been developed for numeracy, literacy and wellbeing. Within the SIPs, agreed actions are relevant to identified school needs. As the next area of focus, the school has selected to use the SSE process to review assessment and reporting in line with the changes in junior cycle. Through SSE, many good developments have occurred, including reading initiatives, supporting students' production of graphs, developing the library and a wellbeing survey. During lessons observed, there was some good practice in individual teacher's work including correcting students' written literacy, explicit vocabulary instruction and support for numerical calculations; however, there was inconsistent practice in this regard and the good actions observed could be extended.

Overall, SSE could be maintained as a more rigorous and continuous process. The potential of the process could be more fully realised by focusing more on day-to-day teaching and learning practices. The school should communicate a summary of the SSE report and SIP to parents and the community.

### **The School's Capacity for Improvement**

The school's capacity for improvement is very good. Recent developments in education have been managed effectively; the board and senior management place high value on providing the best possible learner experiences and seek ongoing improvement. The principal has successfully led a culture where professional development and collaboration are embraced. In achieving ongoing improvement, senior management is supported by hard-working, motivated teachers with considerable expertise.

## 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;

# **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, Senior Management and staff of FCJ Bunclody welcome this Whole School Evaluation — Management, Leadership and Learning report. The report recognises the very positive learning environment and companionship which underpins the characteristic spirit of our school. It also reports on the very high quality of: - care for students, teaching and learning, senior management and of development of leadership capacity among senior and middle management. The hard work and motivation of our dedicated team of teachers and the excellent behaviour of our students is rightly acknowledged. The Board welcomes the affirmation that the school is very well run, that discipline is very strong, that students feel safe and happy and that high quality teaching and learning take place in FCJ Bunclody.

## **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 welcomes the recommendation that the role of students and parents be enhanced with plans already in place to review the Student Council using the six step SSE model. Teachers have already begun to look at Assessment for Learning, to include formative feedback at whole —staff level and through the SSE model as recommended.

While Senior Management welcomes the concept of a leadership mentoring programme there is currently no model available nationally from which to draw support/guidance/expertise in the development of any such programme. Therefore, the Board and the Senior Management team await, and look forward to, the rolling out of any such programme and are willing to pilot any initiative that comes from the Inspectorate, The DES, the Centre of School Leadership or the Management Bodies in this regard.