An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Lusk Community College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Raheny Lane Rathmore Road Lusk
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	76213T
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	10-02-2023

What is a 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. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum, which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
Child Protection	*Anti-bullying*
1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.	2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the *Procedures*) since the previous report to the board.
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.	3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.
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.	4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.
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.	5. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's policy on anti-bullying and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for	

the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE). 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

Date of inspection	10-02-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with Board of Management • Meetings with principal and deputy principals • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus group	• 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

Lusk Community College is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). Established in 2013, the school has been rapidly growing in terms of student numbers and staff. The current enrolment is 873 students and the full range of curricular programmes are available. The school also has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit known as Iontas.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings
- The overall quality of leadership and management was very good; some procedures and systems need refinement in order to meet the needs of a growing school.
- The school is strongly committed to providing a holistic education, a vision that was espoused and highly valued among staff, parents and school management.
- The board of management demonstrated a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the school and were very supportive of the school's senior management team; DDLETB has provided a high level of support to management and staff.
- There was a culture of reflective practice and commitment to ongoing development in the school with very good capacity for ongoing improvement and self-evaluation.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall with some very good practice noted in some lessons.
- The quality of support for students' wellbeing was good with some very good practice evident.

Recommendations
- There was scope for the school to use its attendance and attainment data more systematically and a formal system for tracking student attainment that involves input from year heads, subject teams and the students themselves should be established to further inform pedagogical practice, targets and actions at subject department level.
- Given increasing enrolment, the effectiveness of in-school communication systems and operation of various in-school meetings should be reviewed and further developed.
- In the context of expanded senior and middle-management teams, the roles and responsibilities for each post of responsibility should be revisited to ensure that duties are sufficiently aligned to meet the school's priorities.

- Teaching and formative assessment approaches, which provide for deep learning, should be further developed and integrated into lessons; collaborative planning for team teaching needs to be further targeted to students' needs.
- The implementation of policies and operation of structures, which support student wellbeing should be reviewed to ensure optimal effectiveness in meeting the diverse needs of the growing school population.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of teaching and learning

Learner outcomes and experiences

The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall, with very good practice noted in some lessons. In the majority of lessons, there was scope to enhance the depth of students' learning through strategic use of a reflective approach to learning. An analysis of student questionnaires completed during the evaluation indicated the majority of students agreed that they are getting on well with their learning.

Overall, interactions among students and between students and teachers were respectful and positive, with a strong sense of community apparent. In almost all lessons, students remained purposeful and engaged with lesson content. Teacher-based rooms were developed into vibrant learning environments and in some lessons, teachers had carefully considered layout and seating arrangements, which proved very effective in optimising student engagement throughout the lesson.

Learning intentions were shared at the outset of all lessons. High-quality learning was noted in instances where the action verbs used in the planned intentions were used to inform the subsequent teaching and learning approaches chosen for the lesson. In only a small number of lessons was time taken to revisit the intentions and assess progress. It is recommended that intentions are revisited during lessons to enable students to reflect on their learning and support assessment of progress.

Learner outcomes were of a very high quality when the lesson content was clearly linked to students' prior knowledge. Most effective practice was evident where students were supported in making informed decisions and participated in meaningful discussions on how the decisions they make in life can impact on later life. Learning was optimal in lessons where the introduction of new content was appropriately scaffolded to meet the differentiated needs of students and challenged them to think deeply about the lesson concepts.

High-quality learning outcomes were also facilitated in instances where, the teacher demonstrated high quality work thus providing criteria for success. Some very good use was also made of success criteria to set expectations for learning.

The potential for formative assessment practice to support learner outcomes should be considered further by teachers. In many instances, there was an over-reliance on lower-order questions and scope to improve how questions were distributed among students. Teachers provided some very good levels of monitoring and oral feedback on students' work and over half of student responses to questionnaires indicated they receive helpful feedback on how to improve their learning. Consideration should be given as to how students are supported in making use of the feedback provided.

The quality of formative assessment on written work needs further development. Correction of in-class work was superficial in some lessons, with the focus placed on the completion, rather than on the quality of work. Some students reported that it is standard procedure to photograph completed work and submit it online through the school's virtual learning platform. The

effectiveness of this practice needs to be considered. Subject department teams should consider the development and use of correction codes to support students in their work.

The use of digital technologies underpinned learner experiences in Lusk Community College. The school's virtual learning platform was effectively used to create individual subject sites for each class group to facilitate shared access to class materials and resources.

There was some very good use of the school's electronic platform to support learning and homework outside of lessons. In these instances, students were provided with clear directions on how to access support materials, which would support them in producing high-quality work. Consideration should also be given to how students use their textbooks to support their work and how they store and record their learning, as classroom routines on maintaining notebooks, hardcopies of worksheets and work stored electronically varied considerably.

Teachers individual and collective practice

The overall quality of teaching was good, with some very good practice. There was evidence of advance planning and preparation for all lessons. Teachers had prepared and shared a range of relevant resources via the school's electronic platform. This practice proved beneficial in providing students with a repository of resources for further learning outside of class time. However, where students do not have access to a functioning device, additional supports need to be provided to enable those students fully engage with learning in the lesson.

Some teaching approaches allowed students to develop a deep understanding of lesson concepts. In the practical lessons observed, teachers provided a very good level of one-to-one support to students and some very good use was made of spot demonstrations to refine students' skills. In some lessons, students had insufficient opportunities to refine, articulate and collectively reflect on their learning. Sufficient time should be taken towards the end of lessons to enable students to consolidate and actively assess and reflect on their progress.

Some good practice was observed in supporting the differentiated needs of learners, using differentiated resources and questioning strategies. In a majority of lessons, a whole-class approach to teaching and learning prevailed, with the same content and tasks delivered to all students in the same way. Half of student responses to questionnaires agreed that teachers teach them in ways that they learn best. Further attention should be given to planning lessons, which are underpinned by the principles of universal design for learners.

Some exemplary group work was observed in lessons where group tasks were meaningfully linked to the learning intentions and facilitated learning which was incremental and differentiated. Sufficient time was provided to enable students reflect on and share their learning with the class. In responses to questionaires, the majority of students indicated that their teachers encourage them to do the best they can.

The learning needs and styles of students should guide the teaching, learning and assessment practices in lessons. During the evaluation, it was evident that staff were very reflective and committed to sharing practice and expertise. Systematic procedures that facilitate the sharing and evaluating of teaching and assessment approaches, which provide for highly effective learning should be further developed and integrated into lessons.

The quality of teachers' collaborative practice was very good overall. Almost all teachers agreed that the subject department structure supported teaching and learning in the school. The school's online platform was being developed as a collaborative space for subject teams. There is scope to review the structure and content of the subject department area to optimise its use as a shared space to facilitate high quality collaboration and reflection on teaching and learning at subject-department level.

There was some variation in the quality of the subject-planning documentation reviewed. Programme plans that demonstrated clear incremental progression in learning, and outlined specific teaching, learning and assessment strategies for each unit were illustrative of very good practice. Teachers need to further develop the programme plans by reducing the number of learning outcomes within units of learning and focusing on identifying the key learning and specific assessment approaches, which assess the depth of student learning.

A culture of reflective self-evaluative practice was emerging at subject department level. Subject teams analysed examination attainment outcomes but a deeper level of analysis of this data is required. Subject teams should use the outcomes of an analysis of a range of attainment data to develop subject-specific action plans that identify specific priorities and strategies, which will support student learning and negate any identified barriers to success.

2. Quality of school leadership and management

Leading learning and teaching

The overall quality of leadership and management was very good. Some procedures and systems were in need of refinement to meet the needs of a growing school. The trustees, management and staff of the school see the school as an integral and valued part of the growing community of Lusk.

The school curriculum offered a broad range of subjects and programmes and included an ASD unit, the Iontas centre. The curriculum included the Leaving Certificate Applied. Transition year programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied programme was reviewed regularly. New subjects such as Computer Science and Leaving Certificate PE were included. There is scope to review the provision of the short course in Coding provided to all students as it may be better placed as an optional subject.

It was apparent that high expectations were set for student achievement. A teacher-student mentoring programme for sixth year students was a commendable initiative in supporting students. There was scope for the school to use its attendance and attainment data more systematically to assist students to reach their full potential. A formal system for tracking student attainment that involves input from year heads, subject teams and students should be progressed and implemented.

The school was strongly committed to supporting students with special education needs. It is good that the school had introduced Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) as recommended in a recent evaluation of Special Education Needs (SEN). A small number of students will avail of this programme this year.

The resources received to support students with SEN were well managed. A core team of specialist staff led the provision of supports for students. While the core team met as required, it is recommended that future core team meetings be timetabled in order to facilitate attendance and planning. At staff meetings and periodically throughout the school year, the SEN co-ordinator provided teachers with information regarding strategies and suitable targets for students with SEN.

Systematic procedures were in place for the induction, assessment and support of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The EAL coordinator organised supports on a one-to-one and small group basis as well as team teaching.

A significant proportion of the SEN allocation was deployed for team teaching and the school's SSE process was well used to develop team teaching practices; however, teachers planning to support team teaching varied in quality. Very good practice was noted when the role of the team teacher was clearly defined and the lessons were planned to meet the specific needs of

the identified learners. Maximum use should also be made of the team-teaching model to support mainstream students who are identified on the school's provision plan as needing additional support. An audit of continuing professional development needs should be undertaken in order to support teachers to plan for team teaching more effectively.

Managing the organisation

The board of management demonstrated a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the school and members were very supportive of the school's senior management team.

There was a good level of awareness among board members of their role in policy development and good practices included a cycle of review, which included consultation with students, staff and parents. It was noteworthy that the admissions policy was recently reviewed and included procedures for admission to the Iontas centre as well as to curricular programmes. Covid-19 had impacted on the review of many policies and a number of mandatory policies needed updating or ratification. These policies should be progressed to ratification by the board.

As Lusk Community College is a newly established and rapidly growing school, the school has experienced a considerable turnover of staff, including successive senior management teams. The principal, appointed over four years ago has worked tirelessly to lead and develop a start-up school. The composition of the senior management team has settled and the team works very well together. There is scope however to distribute and delegate strategic leadership roles.

The quality of school communication was good overall. Parents, students and staff were familiar with the content of school policies and almost all parents who returned the survey agreed that they knew who to talk to in the school if there is a problem. However, middle management meetings did not form part of teacher timetables. Given the increasing size of the school, and the desire to develop leadership capacity and expertise among staff it is timely to review the effectiveness of in-school communication systems, including the scheduling and operation of various in-school meetings.

Management of the school's resources was very good and facilities were very well maintained. Risk assessments were developed for practical rooms and many classrooms had developed as vibrant learning environments.

Leading school development

A strong culture of reflective practice was apparent in the many meetings and discussions held in the school. The school has very good capacity for development and improvement. It was evident that staff were willing to reflect, share and develop their practice.

The school self-evaluation (SSE) process was used very effectively to support developments in areas such as teaching and learning, team teaching and the use of the virtual learning environment. The questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation can also be reviewed and included as part of the school's SSE process.

The school development plan is a comprehensive oversight document with a wide range of priorities identified. There is a need to streamline and focus on a smaller number of priorities. During meetings, it was recognised by staff that there was a need to link the work of the various groups together and some of this has already started. The SSE team was in the process of using this review year to identify pillars and streamline actions, which is good practice. The board should lead this review with a view to formalising the development plan.

Developing leadership capacity

The principal was clearly committed to ensuring that the leadership and management structures in the school continue to evolve to meet the needs of a growing school. It is highly commendable that staff were afforded opportunities to lead working groups in key areas of school life.

There was a strong commitment among school management to building a teaching team of specialist staff. Staff numbers have grown rapidly and a targeted approach was taken to recruiting staff with the appropriate qualifications to provide the school's broad curriculum.

A significant staff engagement with post-graduate opportunities resulted in the formation of specialist teams in areas such as SEN, and there is now scope to build specialist teams to support the implementation of high-quality taught programmes in areas such as SPHE, CSPE and Coding.

As Lusk Community College is a growing school with an increasing number of new staff there is a need to regularly monitor continuing professional development (CPD) needs. An audit of CPD needs should be undertaken to inform a systematic approach to upskilling.

A detailed needs analysis informed the current schedule of posts. The current responsibilities attached to each role were broad. In the context of expanded senior and middle-management teams, the roles and responsibilities for each post should be revisited to ensure that duties are sufficiently aligned to meet the school's priorities, and commensurate with the post.

3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

The quality of support for students' wellbeing was good with some very good practice evident. Students had many opportunities to get involved in projects and take on leadership roles and almost all who responded to questionnaires agreed that they understood the school rules. However, questionnaire data also indicated that there is scope to review the consistency of implementation of policies, such as the code of behaviour and anti-bullying policies. A significant minority of teachers disagreed that the code of behaviour is implemented consistently while approximately half of students who completed the survey agreed that the behaviour of students in their year group is good most of the time.

The school's relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy developed by the school should be progressed to ratification by the board as soon as possible. Feedback from parent questionnaires indicated that there was room for improvement in areas such as the provision of information regarding RSE.

It was noteworthy that the year head and form tutor system facilitated a culture where students can feel a sense of belonging. Activities such as year group trips and a vast extra-curricular programme helped to develop a sense of community in the school. Care team meetings provided a forum to discuss the needs of individual student and good referral systems were in place.

Very good procedures were in place to support the transition of students from the feeder primary schools into first year. Senior students availed of one-to one-guidance and counselling opportunities and guidance classes are timetabled, while guidance was provided during optional subject blocks in junior cycle, a programme which encompassed seven double periods.

The school's taught wellbeing programme comprised three curricular areas: short courses in Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) as well as junior cycle PE while SPHE and PE are provided at senior cycle. Good efforts were made to develop subject departments in CSPE and SPHE and the programme co-ordinators developed resources to support teachers and students in the area. However, the quality of programme planning for these curriculum areas varied significantly.

Given the size of the school, the current structure to support student wellbeing needs to be re-envisaged. There is scope to consider developing a wellbeing team to lead the planning of teaching and learning in these areas. This would include the development of Appendix I of the wellbeing programme to link with the SPHE programme including tutor time, junior cycle guidance provision and the range of activities in place, which support wellbeing.

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

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

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