

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**De La Salle College  
Macroom, County Cork  
Roll number: 623100**

**Date of inspection: 28 January 2016**



**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS  
AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION AND SKILLS  
INSPECTORATE**

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

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in January 2016 in De La Salle College, Macroom. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the inspection team met with the school's board of management, in-school management, and groups of teachers, parents and students. Inspectors also reviewed a range of school documentation and responses to questionnaires and examined other data in relation to the operation of the school. As part of the evaluation, a range of lessons across a number of subject areas was inspected. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

### ***Introduction***

De La Salle College is a secondary school providing education to boys from Macroom and its surrounding rural environment. The school, which opened in 1933, is from a LaSallian Tradition and operates now under the patronage of the Diocese of Cloyne. De La Salle College offers the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) to its current cohort of 304 students.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Key Findings***

- The board of management functions very effectively and is committed to the school's inclusive LaSallian ethos.
- The quality of school leadership is very good, is inclusive and forward looking.
- Clear and effective middle-management structures are established and post holders are empowered and active within these roles.
- The guiding philosophy of this school is inclusion and meeting the diverse needs of students.
- A whole-school approach to student support is evident and a well-organised and effective student support and care structure is in place.
- Despite the constraints of facilities and resources, the school endeavours to offer as broad a curriculum as possible.
- Practical rooms present particular challenges for students' access to the curriculum in the context of availability, size, internal layout and organization.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- A positive atmosphere underpinned by respectful interactions was observed in all lessons.

### ***Recommendations for Further Development***

- Physical Education should be provided for all students, by teachers with appropriate qualifications that are recognised by the teaching council.
- The Board should issue an annual report on the operation and performance of the school to stakeholders in line with requirements of Education Act.
- The health and safety policy and statement require review and updating annually.

- While some alternative assessment practices take place, the school as a whole should agree and implement an alternative assessment policy for TY that would focus on an appropriate balance between formative and summative assessment.
- The increased use of structured collaborative learning strategies is recommended.
- Increased formative written commentary should be provided on students' work in order to further enhance students' learning.

## **1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

### ***1.1 School ownership and management***

The board of management functions very effectively. It is a properly and democratically constituted, clear on its role and responsibilities, and conscious of its statutory obligations. The board is very committed to the college and its inclusive LaSallian ethos. Board members have a wide range of expertise and have participated in relevant training. Decisions are reached by consensus following discussions at meetings which are held regularly.

The board is forward looking and, in collaboration with the school community, has identified a range of developmental priorities in its six-year plan. As part of this plan, the board and senior management continue to maximise the potential of the current building and to advance the new school building project.

The board supports the development of high quality teaching and learning and in this regard, discusses student attainment and the curriculum, and supports continuing professional development for teachers. In line with LaSallian ethos, the board attempts to provide for the needs of all students in the community. This is exemplified by the addition of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit, which is due to open in September.

The principal's report keeps members well versed in relation to all key aspects of school life. The board encourages partnerships with a range of local and community-based organizations.

Policy development and review has been prioritised by this board and significant work has been done to-date. It is suggested that the board devise a schedule of review to assist in this ongoing work and that ratification and review dates should be provided on all policies. The School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools provides a legislative and regulatory checklist which is designed to support schools in meeting requirements and obligations. The board of management should complete this annually.

The school's anti-bullying policy has been updated and ratified. It is good to note that endorsement of positive behaviour underpins the school's code of behaviour. As is already in the school's anti-bullying policy, the inclusion of a clear ladder of referral from one level in the code of behaviour to another is recommended. There is a need to bring the wording of some aspects of the school's admission's policy into line with existing very good practice.

The board has good communication with its stakeholders and commendably is considering including its agreed report following board meetings to stakeholders on the school's website. The Board should issue an annual report on the operation and performance of the school to parents, staff and the student council in line with requirements of Education Act.

The school's website is a very useful form of communication. The publication of policies on the school website is noted as positive. The school should ensure that signed and ratified policies are published on the website. Relevant sections of the website should be updated.

An enthusiastic and engaged student council is in place. The student council representatives that were met were articulate and very interested in their work. They are well supported by a liaison teacher. It is suggested that the council be afforded opportunities to address the board of management and the parents' association. A significant minority of students strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, 'I have a say in how things are done in school'. This finding merits discussion with student council members and the general student body.

The parents' association demonstrates commitment to the school and is actively engaged in supporting the work of the school. It is noteworthy that fundraising is currently not its core work in supporting the school. Parents' association representatives agreed that they would consider communicating with the parent body as a whole through the school's website in order to further enhance communication. The parents that were met during the WSE-MLL very positively endorsed the work of the school in supporting students' academic and personal development.

### ***1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning***

The quality of school leadership is very good, is inclusive and forward looking. The new senior management team demonstrates a very positive working relationship. All teachers surveyed fully endorsed the effectiveness of the in-school management system.

Significant progress has been made in school planning and policy development. Clearly identified priorities have been established through inclusive and collaborative leadership. Leadership and management duties are distributed among staff. While maintaining and building on long-established student-support and other middle-management structures, senior management empowers staff leaders and encourages capacity building among all staff. Collaborative team-work is encouraged and facilitated. Clear and effective middle-management structures are established in the context of duties and role and post holders are empowered and active within these roles. While it is clear that informal communication between senior management and post-holders is good, consideration should be given to the establishment of regular management meetings to discuss ongoing leadership and management matters.

Teachers who are new to the school are well supported. Building on this good work, consideration should be given to the development of a staff handbook that gathers together existing procedures.

Subject department planning is well established and progressing. Curriculum plans have been developed but in many cases these are limited to lists of topics to be covered across the year. These plans should be further developed to include details on methodologies, resources and formative assessment.

The guiding philosophy of this school is inclusion and meeting the diverse needs of students. All staff place each student, and his needs, at the centre of the work of the school; the inclusion of an ASD unit is the most recent manifestation of this mind-set.

A whole-school approach to student support is evident both in practice and is outlined in policy. A well-organised and effective student-support and care structure is in place. This is manifest through the very effective work of all staff, the year-head and class-teacher

structure, the pastoral care team meeting, the special educational needs department, including the special needs assistants (SNAs) and the guidance department.

Students with additional needs are very well provided for and supported within the school. A range of very good quality interventions is in place to meet students' needs, including small group withdrawal, team teaching, and the formation of small class groups. A small, identifiable and effective teaching team and SNAs support these students. The progress and progression of students is monitored and informs reflective practice by the team. Effective communication with subject teachers assists inclusion and student progress. All teachers surveyed strongly agreed with the statement 'SEN students are included in classroom and school life'.

Guidance is very effective in the context of vocational, personal and educational supports for students. A whole-school guidance plan has been devised. Clear and well established structures are in place and due attention is paid to students' needs, confidentiality, and record keeping. Timetable provision and access for students is appropriate. It is very positive that the school has continued to maintain Guidance in the light of recent cutbacks.

The school endeavours to provide as broad a curriculum as possible within the constraints of school accommodation and staffing. In junior cycle, students study a core curriculum. At senior cycle a range of subject options is provided.

Emphasis is placed on offering students as wide a range of subject options as possible within current resources. This is further enabled by after school provision in subjects such as Art, Music, Applied Mathematics and Agricultural Science.

In first year, subject sampling is limited to a choice between Technology and Technical Graphics. The school should consider, as available resources allow, broader subject sampling and an opportunity to study both practical subjects for junior cycle. The feasibility of offering a second modern language should also be investigated.

Physical Education is not provided to students in senior cycle. To meet regulatory requirements it is recommended that Physical Education be provided for all students, by teachers with appropriate qualifications that are recognised by the teaching council, as was recommended in previous evaluations. This should be addressed in the context of planning for future staffing requirements.

Mixed-ability class groups are organised and higher-level and ordinary-level groups are created when necessary in core subjects. During the evaluation, the school agreed to cease the limited provision of study periods, as a result of the timetabling the LCVP.

A compulsory, well-organised TY is offered based on core Leaving Certificate subjects and TY specific events and activities. Students and parents were positively disposed towards the programme. Notwithstanding that, the school's rationale and philosophy for TY should be reconsidered using TY best practice guidelines as a benchmark. Management and staff should examine TY in the context of providing a transition from junior cycle to Leaving Certificate, its assessment processes and the provision of subject sampling for Leaving Certificate. While some alternative assessment practices take place, the school as a whole should agree and implement an alternative assessment policy for TY that would focus on an appropriate balance between formative and summative assessment in subjects within the programme.

The school community examines and tracks patterns of uptake of higher level and achievement in subjects in certificate examinations. Patterns of uptake and achievement at

both junior and senior cycles are strong. It is very positive that decisions relating to levels are taken in consultation with parents and students.

The school has effective admissions and transition practices and procedures. A comprehensive induction programme for students is in place. This includes student mentoring which allows students to become part of the school community very quickly. This student mentoring also has a significant positive impact on the TY students who act as student mentors, facilitating the development of their leadership skills and sense of responsibility.

A range of extra-curricular activities is provided including: sport, quizzes, drama and debating, among others. This report acknowledges the voluntary commitment of teachers and school management in providing such a range of extra supports for the holistic development of students. These include extra classes, after-school and Saturday study, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The work of the secretary, care-taker, cleaners and canteen staff is also acknowledged. Almost all students and parents very strongly endorsed all aspects of the work of the school.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

### ***1.3 Management of facilities***

Management is committed to providing a high quality learning and working environment in the school and continues to work towards the acquisition of a new premises. The school's infrastructure has been developed as much as is feasible. The recent inclusion of facilities for ASD students is commended.

There is a limitation in the range of subjects being offered, partly due to lack of facilities. Overall, the school is well maintained. In a minority of areas, a stock audit should take place as this would help the organisation of resources. Practical rooms present particular challenges for students' access to the curriculum in the context of availability, size, internal layout and organisation. Management is aware of the limitations to access of some aspects of the building, particularly the issue of steps descending into the resource teaching area.

There were examples of print-rich classrooms which support teaching and learning. Corridors are visually stimulating. Management continues to work to improve access to and integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into teaching and learning. The school canteen provides a good service to students.

The school's draft health and safety statement was reviewed in 2012, but not signed by the board. Documentation indicates that risk assessments were carried out for all areas of the school in 2011/2012. Follow up is required where 'needs to be investigated' is recorded in the risk assessment. The health and safety policy and statement require review and updating annually.

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

### ***2.1 The quality of learning and teaching***

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Very good practice reflected: the sharing of clear learning intentions that were revisited as lessons progressed; the active

participation of students that was balanced with whole-class discussion; coherence in the lesson structure and the use of clear instruction.

Other strengths noted included: the use of visual stimulus materials that effectively progressed students' learning with the learning intention; the successful integration of ICT as a teaching tool and the effective use of active learning methodologies. The use of visuals was particularly effective when students identified significant points in answer to questions, in advance of these being shown on the PowerPoint. Where used, simulations were very effective in illustrating difficult concepts.

The majority of lessons were very well planned and a range of resources had been prepared in advance. Planning and preparation, to include advance practice in the use of equipment was recommended in one instance. An appropriate focus on learning for the certificate examinations was observed.

The commitment of teachers in helping students understand the content and practical processes of the lessons was noted. The inclusion of challenging and interesting tasks in lessons promoted student interest and engagement and facilitated a very good level of learning. In many instances, individual attention from teachers clearly supported students in practical and task work. However, in a very small minority of instances, it was advised that attention be paid to the use of appropriate levels of language in worksheets for particular class groups. Where observed, peer assessment was very effectively employed. Teachers are strongly encouraged to use this effective strategy to a greater extent as it helps develop students' evaluative skills.

A very good range of questioning was used in lessons and students were regularly challenged to think for themselves. Questioning was employed both to ascertain learning and to progress the lesson. The use of higher-order questions was particularly effective in developing lesson content. On occasion it was recommended that attention be paid to the use of targeted questions, the avoidance of chorus answering, and the use of wait time to allow students to think before answering.

There was evidence of the effective use of collaborative learning. Where it was well managed, clear time-bound tasks were set, roles were assigned to group members and the plenary feedback session facilitated the sharing and consolidation of key learning points. The increased use of such structured collaborative learning strategies was recommended.

A very good focus on the development of students' literacy skills was observed in a good number of lessons, particularly in relation to oral and written literacy. Commendably, it was observed on occasion that students were encouraged to independently use the dictionary, a practice that should be extended across the school. Where possible and relevant, numeracy development was facilitated.

A positive atmosphere, underpinned by respectful interactions, was observed in all lessons. Students' behaviour was exemplary and they were well affirmed and encouraged by teachers in their learning. Students engaged well in their learning, remained focused and on task and were responsive to the high expectations required of them. Students displayed good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills.

Students perform well in the certificate examinations. The standard of students' written work was generally good or very good. In a minority of instances, formative feedback was provided to students on their written work. It is recommended that increased use of formative written commentary be provided on students' work at regular intervals in order to further develop the students' learning.

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

### ***3.1 Management***

Management has fully implemented many recommendations of previous evaluations. Full implementation of recommendations include: compliance with twenty-eight hours, electrical installation in the technology room, displaying the name of the designated liaison person and displaying standard safety signage. Some partial progress has been made in broadening the range of subjects available in first year and in setting double lessons for science subjects. Progress is noted on the relationships and sexuality in education (RSE) policy. It should now be ratified.

The outstanding recommendations which focus primarily on the provision of Physical Education, employment of a qualified physical education teacher within the limitations of available resources, provision of an annual report to parents from the board and those relating to TY should now be prioritised for implementation. In the case of Physical Education, this recommendation has been made in two previous physical education inspections and in a previous whole-school evaluation.

### ***3.2 Learning and teaching***

Significant Progress has been made in the use of team teaching. A range of teaching methodologies including the use of active learning approaches was observed in most lessons. Limited use of assessment for learning strategies was observed. However, it is noted that this approach to teaching and learning is prioritised under the six-year plan.

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

The school is committed to progressing the school's developmental priorities. A formalised whole-school approach is taken to self-evaluation practices and processes, led by senior management and a committed team of teachers. Reflection and evaluation is apparent in school life and there is evidence of practice being adjusted accordingly. The school uses quantitative and qualitative evidence to identify and to prioritise work on the improvements that will maximise the benefit to students. Parents and students should be included to a greater extent in formal review processes.

There is a collective vision for school improvement, coupled with the capacity to embrace associated change. The impact of actions designed to meet agreed school self-evaluation targets do, however, require closer monitoring and evaluation.



# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board welcomes the very positive report which affirms the commitment, professionalism and dedication of all members of the school community. The inspection was an affirming experience for all involved and the Board are pleased that the following were acknowledged in the report.

- The Board functions very effectively and supports high quality teaching and learning.
- There is a wide range of subjects available to students
- High student achievement in certificate examinations.
- Effective admissions and transition procedures meeting the diverse needs of all of the students.
- The very good quality of teaching and learning in a positive atmosphere underpinned by mutual respect.
- The pastoral care and extensive range of extra supports provided for the holistic development of students.
- The Parents Association role in actively engaging in supporting the work of the school.

## **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The following steps have been or are being taken as a result of the recommendations made by the Inspectors.

- The provision of senior cycle Physical Education will be reviewed when improvements to the school's infrastructure takes place. In the meantime all Junior Cycle students will have access to a PE teacher with appropriate qualifications that are recognised by the teaching council.
- The Board will issue an annual report to its stakeholders.
- A checklist of mandatory policy requirements has been completed and the Board will continue this practice on an annual basis.
- An alternative assessment policy for TY will be implemented.
- Study periods, as a result of timetabling LCVP shall cease and will be replaced by an alternative educational module incorporating oral language preparation.