

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste Chríost Rí  
Capwell Road, Cork  
Roll number: 625600**

**Date of inspection: 18 January 2012**



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

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in January, 2012 in Coláiste Chríost Rí. 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, 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 of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## ***Introduction***

Coláiste Chríost Rí is an all-boys post-primary school founded in 1960 by the Presentation Brothers and now under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust (PBST). It was founded on the twin pillars of Christianity and the Gaelic tradition. Located on the south side of the city, the school welcomes students from both urban and rural areas. It has a large number of feeder schools. Enrolment patterns are stable and the current enrolment is 637. The school has had a lay principal since 1995.

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

### ***1.1 Key Findings***

- The board of management exhibits significant expertise and has a clear and strong sense of pride in, and commitment to, the school.
- Leadership and management are very effective.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall and very good in a large number of lessons observed.
- Achievements in certificate examination are very good.
- Parents and students are very positive about the school.
- Student care and students' academic progress are central to the work of the school.

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

- The board should move to introduce Physical Education (PE) for fifth-year and sixth-year students.
- To inform school self-evaluation and curricular planning, the board should lead an analysis of outcomes in certificate examinations.
- Management and teaching staff should focus on teaching methodologies in order to fully engage with the challenge and opportunity offered by banding and mixed-ability groups.
- Teachers should further the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into lesson delivery when, and where, appropriate.
- The special educational needs teaching-team should be reduced in size and the capacity of the core team built up over time, as resources allow.
- All teachers should embrace the availability of base-classrooms to provide a print and visually-rich learning environment for their students.
- Teachers should focus subject planning within an action-planning cycle based on subject-specific criteria.

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

### ***2.1 School ownership and management – the Board of Management***

#### **Composition, functioning and fulfilment of statutory obligations**

The current board exhibits significant expertise with a clear and strong sense of pride in, and commitment to, the school. It is appropriately constituted, meets regularly and is very aware of its statutory obligations. Board members are fully engaged in managing and supporting leadership and learning. The work of the board is grounded in the mission of the school and clearly focused on school improvement, with its vision and priorities shared by the school community. Members of the board have availed of training to aid them in their duties.

The board is very supportive of the senior management team. It is involved in policy development and review. However, the inclusion of ratification and review dates on all policies should be ensured. The board has implemented the recommendations of previous evaluations. To inform school self-evaluation and curricular planning, it is recommended that the board should lead an analysis of outcomes in certificate examinations.

The school has a very committed and hardworking parents' association, which is currently not affiliated to the national body. It has drafted a constitution. The parents' association has also been involved in the drafting and updating of school policies. The association gives support at school events and through various fundraising activities. The principal and deputy principal attends, and gives a report to the members, at each of the association's regular meetings.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as a matter of priority.

#### **The school's priorities for development**

In the identification of priorities, the school context, the current economic situation and the wider education agenda have been considered. The board's priorities and those of the school include: the further development of ICT and e-learning in the school; policy development in the area of literacy and numeracy; the ongoing review of subject provision; the maintenance and development of the plant; support for the continuing professional development (CPD) of staff and the investigation of the possible implementation of a book-loan scheme. These priorities are the result of careful consideration by the school, with progress being made in many of these areas with the support of the whole-school community.

The school has recently moved from a situation of streaming to banding of students. This has resulted in a review of subject provision, organisation and delivery. Notwithstanding recent changes to the staffing arrangements in the school good effort has been made to maintain a breadth of subject provision. However, following careful and informed discussion, the school has decided to phase out the teaching of German. Overall, the school displayed an open philosophy to subject provision, supported by constant reflection of senior management.

Maintenance and development of the plant are ongoing. In recent times, this has seen the school make significant investment in various types of ICT equipment. All teacher-based

rooms and specialist rooms have access to data projectors and computer equipment. The further integration of these resources into learning and teaching is recommended. In addition, consideration should be given as to how this would support the development of the school's priority area of e-learning.

Opportunities for staff CPD are both supported and encouraged by the school. There is a clear belief that this will, in turn, benefit school improvement. Mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of learning from individual CPD should be promoted in order to build the capacity of staff generally.

In conjunction with the parents' association, the school is currently investigating the introduction of a book-loan scheme. This process was at an early stage of development at the time of the evaluation. A decision and the possible introduction of the scheme were expected for the coming school year. The school has also established a past pupil union which is greatly valued by the school.

## ***2.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning***

### **Leadership of staff**

The principal and deputy principal operate as a team and demonstrate a professional relationship of high quality. They have complementary roles and approaches and are seen to provide very effective leadership and management. They are both effective and reflective and are very committed to the education and welfare of all students in the school. Both have participated in training for senior management and are members of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD). The majority of parents surveyed feel that: the school is well run; their child feels safe and is well looked after in the school; and there is good contact between school and home.

Leadership of learning in the school is manifest in: the fore-fronting of the needs, care and academic progress of students; the implementation of significant changes to curriculum organisation; the promotion of staff engagement in appropriate CPD; and the centrality of the student experience. In addition, leadership is promoted through the empowerment of individuals and teams within the staff and through in-school management structures such as the pastoral-care, guidance and special educational needs teams.

The school has reacted proactively to the reduction in its middle management team following retirements. It has initiated several reviews in order to look at the priority areas which, in turn, have informed the assignment of roles. This is very positive. The role of year head has been assigned to assistant principals, with staff members and senior management willing to take on new and additional roles to ensure the successful running of the school.

Whole-school policies and subject planning have been advanced. Currently, the principal is acting as the planning co-ordinator. Continued development in this area is important and it should link with, and support, the areas the school has identified as priorities. The establishment of an action-planning cycle is recommended. Subject plans should focus on issues such as differentiation, literacy and numeracy, ICT, and study techniques. The use of staff expertise to help further this planning is encouraged.

### **Leadership of students**

The majority of students surveyed felt proud to be in the school. Students whom inspectors met were positive, articulate, well behaved and empowered. Attendance and retention rates are high. Enrolment practices are transparent and inclusive and are managed fairly and effectively by the school. A student-mentoring process has been established under the guidance of staff to help the transition of first-year students from primary to secondary

school. The fifth-year students involved receive prior training to ensure they are effective in this role. Formal support is also provided by the guidance and special educational needs departments and by the school chaplain. The school has also established a breakfast club for all students.

The school's pastoral-care system involves year heads and form teachers in a structure, which focuses on student support with a particular emphasis on discipline. In addition, the school also has a representative committee, which oversees pastoral care in the school. Communication is both formal and informal. Year heads meet twice weekly, with the pastoral team meeting once a month. Notwithstanding the structures currently in place, the effectiveness of support for students could be enhanced by more formalised communication. This could be achieved through the co-ordination of the implementation of key actions and resulting outcomes, which arise from these meetings.

The special educational needs supports in the school are well organised and structured with dedicated, good facilities available. There is clarity and transparency in relation to the allocation of resources with an electronic register of student supports established. A co-ordinator and core team are in place, with a larger teaching team involved in the full delivery of support to students. It is recommended that the special educational needs teaching-team be reduced and that the capacity of the core team be built up over time, as resources allow. The role of the mainstream teacher should be further explored as there is a need to build whole-staff capacity in general in this area. The re-testing of students should also be considered in order to measure progress. The staff handbook could be used to provide information to staff. The potential of team teaching could also be explored.

There is an appropriate allocation of time to curricular programmes and subjects within the school, with additional subjects, such as Agricultural Science provided for students after school to fulfil student demand. The school offers Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). Both are well organised and effectively delivered. TY is non-compulsory, but uptake is very high. The development of a cross-curricular horticulture module is praised as is the opportunity provided to the students through a modular system which allows the sampling of all subjects. Smaller student numbers currently take the LCVP. The students studying this programme praised its benefits.

The students interviewed were very positive about the new banding system and how it has allowed for wider access to the curriculum for all students. The subject-choice blocks are currently fixed. In general, the majority of students were positive about their subject choice. However, the subject choice blocks would need to be reviewed regularly and the idea of offering a more open choice to students should be explored.

The school's students' council is appropriately organised and energised within its role. It holds weekly meetings and has been involved in policy consultation within the school. A quarter of the students surveyed felt they had a say in how to make the school a better place. The students' council, through its work, could ensure that the views of all students' are sought.

The majority of parents surveyed expressed the view that their child enjoys going to school. They were very positive about the balance between the extracurricular and the curricular activities. Extracurricular activities have a strong sports focus in the school, with just over half of the students surveyed involved in some extracurricular activity. Student participation and interest in extracurricular activities should be further explored. The students' council could have a role here. On examination of the timetable, it was found that senior students are not timetabled for PE. Notwithstanding the strong extracurricular sports

culture in the school, and the dedication of the staff in question, it is recommended that the board should move to introduce PE for fifth-year and sixth-year students.

The school has a very impressive guidance suite. Resources are good and appropriately organised. Currently, formal delivery of lessons occurs in third year, TY and senior cycle with special emphasis at key transition phases. However, guidance and counselling is also provided to all students as appropriate, and when required by the student. The department is self-reflective and feels that second-year students should get some input in this area and it will also try and fulfil this over time. The delivery of Guidance in the school is underpinned by the whole-school guidance plan.

### ***2.3 Management of facilities***

Development and maintenance of the school's infrastructure are priority issues for the board and school management. An impressive new sports hall and fitness suite has been constructed. A horticulture area is currently being established on the school grounds with plans to develop further outdoor sporting facilities. These are all very positive developments. ICT infrastructure in the school has been significantly improved. Practical rooms are well organised, equipped and managed by the teachers involved. Teacher-based classrooms have been embraced by some teachers to provide a rich and stimulating learning environment, which is commended. The full potential of the teacher-based classroom should be utilised. It is recommended that teachers should embrace the availability of base-classrooms to provide a print and visually-rich learning environment for their students.

Over three-quarters of both the parents and the students feel that the school facilities are good. Students expressed some dissatisfaction with the plant, mainly in relation to the toilet facilities. Though some discussion has occurred, it is clear that further discussion with school management is warranted. This could be done through the students' council. The hard work of the highly competent administrative staff is also acknowledged by school management.

The current art room is very small. A focus on the limitations of this space in the context of allowing students' full access to the curriculum needs to be explored.

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning was good overall and very good in a large number of lessons. The majority of parents surveyed agreed with the statement that "teaching is good in this school". Lessons were syllabus appropriate, engaging, well planned and paced. In a very small number of the lessons observed, greater attention to planning, pacing and student engagement was required.

Clear and established routines were evident and student-teacher interactions were mutually respectful. A variety of teaching methods was observed in most lessons. However, it is recommended that teachers expand this range of methodologies to include greater use of differentiation, for example, in order to fully engage with the challenge and opportunity offered by banding and mixed-ability groups.

The effective use of ICT was noted in some lessons. Less than half of the students stated that ICT was used regularly in class. It is recommended that teachers further incorporate ICT into lesson delivery when, and where, appropriate.

Students were active and engaged in the majority of lessons. Appropriate teacher inputs and visual stimulus materials enhanced many lessons. Students' homework provided a focus to

advance the lesson and the students' learning. Homework was assigned in the majority of lessons observed with correction of previous work completed orally during the lesson. The good practice of monitoring homework was observed in some of the lessons. Attention should be afforded to the use of the student journal in the recording and monitoring of homework.

The stating of learning objectives, and the subsequent assessment of learning outcomes, occurred in some lessons observed. This helped to focus the students' learning and could be developed as a whole-school strategy. In addition, it would be important that learning objectives also reference literacy and numeracy as appropriate, reflecting the priority given to this area by the school.

Outcomes in certificate examinations are very good. All students are encouraged to take higher level with good levels of participation achieved. The continued analysis of examination results, as an element within subject planning, should help to inform ongoing review and self-evaluation within subject areas and would beneficially contribute to the school's teaching and learning policy.

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

##### ***4.1 Management***

The school has responded to the recommendations of previous evaluations. A dedicated classroom for Computer Aided Design (CAD) has been provided, as recommended in the report on Technical Drawing, Technical Graphics, Construction Studies and Materials Technology (Wood). In relation to recommendations made in the Science and Biology report, an audit and re-organisation of materials in the science preparation area has occurred. The old biology laboratory has been refurbished. ICT is available within all the science facilities and student access to the laboratories has improved. The introduction of banding has aided a review of how students are assigned to class groupings, as recommended in the report on mathematics.

##### ***4.2 Learning and Teaching***

There was much evidence from previous inspection reports of a high quality of learning and teaching in the subjects evaluated. There was also evidence from the current evaluation that many of the recommendation in the previous inspection reports had been implemented. Development in the planning of Technical Drawing, Technical Graphics, Construction Studies and Materials Technology (Wood), has been advanced. In addition, planning issues outlined in the Science and Biology report have been progressed. The mathematics department has implemented changes recommended in the mathematics report.

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

##### ***5.1***

The school, through its own school self-evaluation (SSE) process, has met the challenge of banding and re-organisation due to retirements. It has the capacity to continue its effective self-evaluation to meet the challenges ahead in relation to curriculum change and middle-leadership. Student and parent questionnaires completed during the evaluation should be used as an entry point to hear their views

The school is very well placed to implement all the recommendations of this report over time. The board and the school should look at all inspection reports received with the aim of applying recommendations at a whole-school level where relevant. It is also well-poised to engage in the further development of learning and teaching through the reflection, sharing and evaluation of professional practice amongst the whole teaching team.