



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Coláiste Chríost Rí
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Capwell Road, Turners Cross, Cork.
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	625600
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	23-02-2023

# 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 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.

## 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:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li> <li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li> <li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li> <li>4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li> <li>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 <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>

<p>7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).</p> <p>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</p>	
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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# Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

<b>Date of inspection</b>	23-02-2023
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with Board of Management</li><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</li><li>• Meetings with key staff</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Student focus group meetings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with parents</li><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

Coláiste Chríost Rí is an all-boys voluntary secondary school operating under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust. The school has a long tradition of providing education for boys from the locality as well as from further afield, and has a current enrolment of 513 students. It offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate (Established).

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was of a high standard, with a number of instances of very good quality practice observed.
- The quality of school leadership and management was very good: the senior leadership was supported in its work by an experienced board of management.
- Provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) was very good and included the work of a dedicated team, while good support for students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) was also provided .
- Support for students' wellbeing was of a very high quality, and very good attention was paid to promoting student voice and engagement.
- Very effective practice was evident in the school's development of leadership capacity.
- The school's engagement with school self-evaluation (SSE) was of a very high standard and the school demonstrated a very good capacity for continued improvement.

### Recommendations

- As some shortcomings were identified with regard to the use of subject-specific vocabulary by students in junior cycle lessons, there should be a renewed focus on this area.
- As very effective participation by students was observed where they worked together, teachers should seek to ensure a positive learning experience for students through increased opportunities for them to interact with each other in lessons.

## **Detailed findings and recommendations**

### **1. The quality of teaching and learning**

The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was of a high standard, with a number of examples of very good practice observed during the course of the evaluation.

Due to the time of year, the lessons visited were limited to First, Second and Fifth Year classes.

#### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

A very positive relationship between students and their teachers was evident in the lessons observed. This good relationship had a positive impact on students' motivation and behaviour as well as on their interest in their work. Students demonstrated a willingness to participate in lesson activities and tasks, and to answer questions.

The students' sense of enjoyment in their learning could be seen in lessons where they had opportunities to interact with each other, to express their opinions and to build their critical thinking skills. In this way, they were enabled to develop a sense of themselves as capable and confident learners with a very good level of subject knowledge.

Where pair or group work was organised, it was set up in such a way that students of all abilities were able to participate and contribute. Very effective collaboration was observed when students were engaged with a task such as an experiment or a practical activity, and where the task was carefully prepared in advance. The students took responsibility for their learning and demonstrated a good understanding of how to improve their work and to develop their skills. Given the benefits of this approach, it is recommended that all teachers should look to ensure a positive learning experience for students through increased opportunities for them to interact with each other by means of structured group and pair work.

In some lessons, students were encouraged to share their work on the school's IT platform so that it was accessible to all students. This is good practice as it extends student learning beyond the confines of the classroom and allows it to become a co-created resource for learning.

A very good focus on the development of students' subject-specific literacy was evident in some lessons where relevant vocabulary such as key words, was explicitly taught. It is recommended that this good practice should be used more widely with junior cycle classes in order to reinforce subject literacy.

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

Teachers' individual practice was generally observed to be effective or highly effective in the classes visited. There was evidence of very good preparation for lessons with materials, worksheets and presentations prepared in advance.

Where practice was of a very high quality, lessons were well structured with learning intentions and success criteria used to guide the work. The pace of the lesson was appropriate to the students' age and ability, and new ideas and concepts were clearly explained. Time was also allowed for questions that helped to consolidate or expand students' understanding, as well as for revisiting the learning intentions in order to encourage students to reflect on what they had learnt.

The teachers created a relaxed atmosphere in their classes through the use of humour and encouragement as well as through their enthusiasm for their subject. This was effective in motivating students and in fostering their interest in learning.

Teachers' collaborative practice was very good. The subject planning process was well established while the use of formative assessment was embedded in classroom practice.

Furthermore, the recent introduction of academic tracking ensured that there was ongoing monitoring of students' learning and achievement, and that results were used to inform teaching and learning.

## **2. Quality of school leadership and management**

The overall quality of school leadership and management was very good.

### **Leading learning and teaching**

The quality of leading learning and teaching was very good. The senior leadership team provided valuable leadership for the school. The commitment of the principal and deputy principal to the school was very evident in their openness to new ideas and initiatives, and in their efforts to ensure that the school continues to expand and develop while still retaining traditions established over time.

The principal and deputy principal worked to promote a caring and inclusive school culture built on an ethos of kindness, trust, and respect. They encouraged staff to develop their teaching and assessment practices, and to provide positive and enjoyable learning experiences for all students. Members of staff spoke highly of the support they receive, and in their responses to the surveys carried out during the evaluation, a very high percentage of staff agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that it is well run.

The curriculum offered to students is wide and varied and includes a well organised Transition Year (TY) programme and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The introduction of the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme is planned for the next school year, and the relevant school policy is currently under development. The introduction of LCA formed part of the school's response to providing choice for students who would benefit from engagement with this programme.

The provision of very good support for students with special educational needs (SEN) was evident throughout the school, and reflects the school's strong commitment to inclusion. This support was led by the SEN coordinator and a small core team, and included individual, small group and team-teaching as per the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) continuum of support. It was targeted at meeting students' needs, based on the results of standardised testing. The team met on a weekly basis and communicated regularly with staff. An important aspect of the team's work was in supporting parents and in getting them involved in their sons' education and support. Strong links have been established with external agencies.

Structures were in place to support mainstream teachers in planning for students with SEN including a SEN folder on VS Ware. It is very positive that a Level Two Learning Programme (L2LP) has been introduced in Junior Cycle in order to meet the learning needs of a small number of students, as part of the school's "support for some" approach. The valuable contribution of the special needs assistants (SNA) in providing support is acknowledged.

The school has established a class for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The current provision of facilities for students with ASD included a dedicated Home Room within the main building. However, it was good to note that plans were well advanced for new accommodation for the ASD unit to be ready for the next school year. These developments will further complement the work of the school and its vision to support the educational needs of all its students.

The range of subjects on offer in Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle has been expanded in recent years following discussion with students. In response to students' expressed interests, subjects such as Art are now provided. The wide choice of subjects was of benefit to students in helping them to enjoy learning and to achieve their potential. It is very positive to note that further expansion of the current curriculum was seen as an ongoing process by management and staff.

Students in First Year were assigned to classes in mixed-ability groupings for all subjects. This system changed in Second Year where classes were streamed for Irish, English and Maths, while all other subjects continued to be taught in mixed-ability common level groups.

The Policy Review Committee and the Coiste Churaclam (Curriculum Committee) played a very effective role in policy development and review, and in areas pertaining to the curriculum, including the introduction of new subjects and programmes. A key development was the school's recently introduced system of academic tracking which continues to be embedded. The aim of the system was to track student progress and attainment so as to identify, acknowledge and support improvements in student performance.

A Parents' Association was in place and met regularly throughout the year. There was very good communication between the school and parents. In their responses to the surveys, parents agreed that they feel welcome in the school and that the parents' association keeps them informed about its work.

## **Managing the organisation**

The overall quality of school governance was very good. The board of management was appropriately constituted and the current board is in place since October 2021. The members of the board have undergone training for their roles, and support was provided by the school trustees. Meetings were held regularly and were informed by the wealth of experience of individual members and by comprehensive reports from the principal and school personnel.

The board was fully aware of its statutory obligations, in particular with regard to health and safety. The minutes of meetings show that the board was kept informed on all matters relating to child protection and bullying. The school's anti-bullying policy was consistent with Department of Education guidelines and had been ratified by the board. The requirements in relation to child protection and anti-bullying checks undertaken as part of the evaluation were fully met.

The work of the board included a clear focus on improving the school for students and staff, and on ensuring their safety and wellbeing. The members had a keen awareness of the proud tradition of the school, and saw it as a firm foundation to build on for the future. Together with senior management, the board promoted a positive school culture that was inclusive of all students; that welcomed diversity; and that supported teaching and learning.

The board of management promoted positive interactions and communication with staff and the student body. Members of staff such as the assistant principals, have been invited to make presentations to the board, while an invitation to meet the board was also offered to the Student Council. This represents very good practice as it allows the board to build relationships and to keep itself informed about different aspects of the school's work, including teaching, learning and assessment, and the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process.

## **Leading school development**

Leadership of school development was highly effective. A number of key priorities have been identified by the board in conjunction with senior management, in response to the evolving needs of the school. Additional priorities have arisen due to circumstances such as the pandemic, and the need to move to on-line teaching and learning. It was clear that the board and senior management had a guiding vision for the future of the school as a learning community, and were actively engaged in its implementation.

Overseeing the development, implementation and review of the school's schedule of policies, and supporting the school's Policy Review Committee and the Coiste Churaclam (Curriculum Committee) represented an important aspect of the board's role. Policies currently under development included a comprehensive health and safety policy, a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy, and the finalisation of the new Leaving Certificate Applied policy. During its tenure, the board has also overseen a significant upgrading and updating of the school building and facilities, while its current focus was on plans for a major new extension which has recently been approved.

The work of policy development and review was managed by the policy co-ordinator who kept track of policies as they progressed through a number of steps until eventual ratification by the board of management, and subsequent publication on the school's website. It is positive to note the links made with the student council as part of this process. The Admissions policy is the most recent policy to have been reviewed and updated.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

Very effective practice was evident in the school's development of leadership capacity. Senior management encouraged members of staff to take on leadership roles through the post of responsibility system as well as on a voluntary basis. Consultations were held with staff, and opportunities to lead were well distributed among teachers. There was a clear willingness amongst staff to engage with this work, and the commitment of staff to the school and to their students was very evident.

The school self-evaluation process (SSE) was well-embedded in the school, and a culture of reflection and evaluation was very evident. SSE has been used to very good effect to bring about school improvement and increased benefits for students. While the pandemic led to a focus on the use of technology to support on-line teaching and learning, a more recent focus has been on formative assessment. This work involved a detailed study of students' levels of achievement and attainment in examinations, and on how best to improve their performance. The current focus of SSE was on Wellbeing and the work was being led by the SSE and Wellbeing co-ordinators.

An active and motivated Student Council was in place. Interested students applied for places as representatives on the council, and the successful candidates were elected by the student body. Meetings were held regularly and council members have helped to bring about changes, including the introduction of soccer as a school sport. It is very positive to note that significant attention was paid by senior management and staff to promoting student voice and student engagement in the school.

The school regularly provided placements for student teachers. Engagement in the initial teacher education programmes provided valuable professional benefits for all involved, for example, through engagement with the Droichead programme.

### **3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing**

Support for students' wellbeing was of a very high quality. The school had a comprehensive Wellbeing plan in place based on the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2017). The plan aimed to make the school's ethos of respect and inclusion, as well as its commitment to student wellbeing, visible to students. It looked to build on the good practices already in place in the school such as the opportunities for students to develop their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing, and to assist them in forming a strong sense of connection to their school and to their community.

The Wellbeing programme for Junior Cycle was delivered through four hundred hours of timetabled engagement for students spread over three years. It encompassed learning experiences for students in the key curricular subjects of Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) as well as Guidance and students' co-curricular and extra-curricular learning. It is positive to note that in-school planning time was made available for Wellbeing, and that teachers were consulted before being assigned to teach SPHE classes.

The role of the Wellbeing co-ordinator was seen as central to ensuring a continuum of support for students. Creating a safe, positive learning environment, with teachers taking on the key role of "one good adult" for their students, permeated all aspects of school life. The school optimised opportunities for building relationships between students and with staff through positive behaviour management strategies. These strategies included verbal praise in class, positive phone calls to home, as well as the adoption of a code of positive behaviour that had restorative practice as its core tenet.



As an acknowledgement of good behaviour and as an incentive for further improvement, students were awarded positive points rather than negative points or comments. These points were shared with parents by means of the students' VS Ware record. During the evaluation, parents expressed their appreciation of this approach, and of its value in encouraging conversation about school with their children.

It was evident that school management and staff were very aware of the importance of support for students at moments of transition, especially with regard to students starting First Year. This support began with the very good links established with its feeder schools, and continued during the school holidays with a summer programme for a selected group of sixth class boys in need of extra support. In addition, through the creation of the fifth year Meitheal team, the school aimed to mitigate the stressful aspects of starting secondary school for young students, and to support them in finding their feet in their new community through a "buddy" system.

At the end of Transition Year, interested students were interviewed for places on the Meitheal Youth Leadership Programme. Having completed training externally with the Scala Youth Ministry Team, these students returned to school a week early to introduce the group of new first year students to the school. They used their talents and initiative to respond to their needs, while at the same time, providing them with support and friendship. The senior students involved benefited from the leadership training process while the new students benefited from the creation of a "trust group" with older students. During the evaluation, all the students involved spoke very positively about what they had gained from the programme.

From meetings with parent representatives, with students and with the student support team, it was apparent that a successful system for teaching and learning about wellbeing, and for ensuring student wellbeing was in place. Starting in first year, students had good access to the guidance counsellors through timetabled Life Skills lessons. The school also enlisted the support of outside agencies as required.

While all students benefited from the work of the guidance counsellors both for pastoral care and guidance, a focus for the team was to ensure that they had a visible presence within the school and especially with first year students. They operated an open-door policy, and adopted a collective approach to building a picture of students' needs. In this, they were helped by the SNAs who had a wealth of knowledge about their students. The team's work with students allowed them to draw the strands of Guidance, Meitheal and Wellbeing together, and to address issues such as student anxiety and worry through programmes which focused on building resilience like My Friends Youth and student surveys.

The school had established a voluntary chaplaincy team which met on a weekly basis. Members of the team worked with students from different faiths (or none) and established new school traditions and celebrations such as a remembrance tree in the school hall each November.

Supports for students were in evidence throughout the school, and included language supports such as team-teaching for students with English as an additional language (EAL). The school has been pro-active in welcoming students from other countries, especially those displaced because of the invasion of Ukraine. Very good use was made of digital technologies such as the immersive reader for translation purposes, in order to facilitate student understanding and participation, while a free breakfast club supported both conversation in English and student integration. Establishing effective ongoing communication between the year heads, staff, students and the home, was seen as a key factor in promoting good relationships and student wellbeing.

The role of year head has developed from a previous focus on disciplinary issues to that of supporting students and acting as an advocate for them. A collective approach was taken to supporting students, and teachers worked together to build a picture of what each individual needed. The outcomes of such an approach were very worthwhile and supported the school's ethos and values.

In their responses to the survey conducted during the evaluation, a very high percentage of teachers agreed that the school's core values are being implemented well in its day-to-day life, and that their views are valued in the decision-making process.

In their responses to the survey, students were very positive about the school. A very high percentage of students stated that they feel safe and cared for in the school; that there is a good atmosphere; and that they get on well with other students. They were equally positive about how they, as individuals, are treated fairly and respectfully by other students and adults in the school.

They furthermore agreed that everyone in the school is treated with respect by both staff and students alike.

The school has extensive facilities for sport including pitches and a recently constructed sports complex. While the school has a proud tradition of involvement and success in Gaelic games, students can choose to engage in a wide range of team and individual sports, as well as other activities. It is very positive to note that in response to requests from the student body, soccer and volleyball have recently been introduced, and a chess club has also been formed.

A number of small changes have been made which have further enhanced students' sense of wellbeing. The school timetable has been adapted to allow more space indoors for students to mingle through the creation of separate break-times for junior and senior classes. Students in the focus groups also expressed their pride in wearing their school "hoodies". A wide range of activities were made available to support students' interests including horticulture, Green Schools, Young Social Innovators and Coding. These activities represented a significant aspect of the student experience in the school, and achievements were celebrated by the school community.

## 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;