

**An Roinn Oideachais**  
**Department of Education**

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

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Sancta Maria College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ballyroan Crescent Rathfarnham Dublin 16
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60341P

**Date of Evaluation: 27-04-2021**



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

## **WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING**

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

### **How to read this report**

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
4. The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

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

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe and 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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	<b>10-12 March 2020, 4 November 2020, 26 January 2021 and 27 April 2021.</b>  The final day of the in-school phase was on the 12 March 2020. A number of meetings were held after this date to complete the inspection.
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with chair and 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 interview</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

Sancta Maria College is an all-girls voluntary secondary school which was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1960. The school operates under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST) and offers a range of programmes including the Junior Cycle Programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). There is a current enrolment of 550 students.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- There are many positive examples of good and very good practice and provision for learning and teaching in the school; however, poor communication and relationships between senior management and the teaching staff impede the school’s work and prevent the school from achieving its full potential; careful initiatives will be required towards restoring a positive and collaborative whole-school culture, based on trust and mutual respect, among all parties.
- A new board of management has been appointed, has been proactive, and has done very good work; however, the board and the principal have yet to achieve a strong collaborative working relationship; this needs to be addressed at the earliest opportunity to further advance the work of the school.
- Some very good work has been undertaken to support students with special educational needs (SEN); however, a large proportion of resource hours are not currently used for the purposes for which they are intended and support for students is fragmented across a large team of teachers.
- While there are many worthwhile structures and processes in place to support students, the promotion of student voice and the further development of the student experience at school are areas that require development.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good overall and lessons observed included some outstanding practice; there is scope to develop aspects of teachers’ collective practice.
- There has been very good implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.

- Some elements of the school's work in self-evaluation (SSE) have been positive; however, the school's current capacity for internal self-development is low and there is significant scope to use the SSE process as an inclusive and collaborative mechanism for whole-school improvement and renewal.

### **Recommendations**

- With the assistance of the trustees of the school, the board of management, the senior management team and the teaching staff should work together on the actions necessary to address poor communication and relationships, as a priority; this should include accessing external support, facilitation, and advice, as necessary.
- The board is advised to explore purposeful actions or initiatives which it can take forward, towards restoring a positive and collaborative whole-school culture, based on trust and mutual respect, among all parties in the school community; establishing effective SSE processes across the administrative and pedagogical work of the school, with the students at the centre, can provide an inclusive mechanism for whole-school improvement and renewal.
- Action should be taken to address key areas for improvement including the students' experiences of the school, the operation of the board, quality assurance, and the embedding of school self-evaluation (SSE) across all learning and teaching settings to enable thorough and ongoing review of the school's administrative and curricular policies .
- The board of management, together with the senior management team, should ensure that the full teacher allocation for SEN is used solely for its intended purpose, as stipulated in Circular 0014/2017. The school's leadership team should seek to improve the continuity of teaching supports for students by adopting a more coherent and less fragmented approach to timetabling, along with a reduction in the high number of individual teachers currently providing the supports.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

There are many positive examples of good and very good practice and effective provision for learning and teaching in the school. However, the new board of management and the principal have yet to achieve a strong collaborative working relationship. Poor communication and relationships between the school's management team and teaching staff, impede the school's work in areas such as leadership of teaching and learning and school self-evaluation (SSE) and prevent the school from achieving its full potential.

The positive aspects of educational provision in the school should become the foundations for new administrative and pedagogical projects and developments involving all members of the school community. Carefully devised initiatives will be needed towards restoring a positive and collaborative whole-school culture, based on trust and mutual respect, among all parties. This will require all members of the school community to support a coherent vision for the school's further development and to commit to a collective effort to work hard on a shared journey of school improvement and renewal.

#### **Leading learning and teaching**

The principal has been in place for ten years and has led a complex and extensive building project in the school in the last number of years. The deputy principal was appointed in 2017 and supports the principal in her work. The senior management team has implemented a significant upgrade in the ICT facilities available for students and staff, and has provided relevant continuing professional development (CPD). The outcomes of a student survey conducted as part of this evaluation suggest that these upgrades are having a beneficial impact on the work in classrooms. In addition, the school has committed to a significant pilot project in the area of special educational needs. There was evidence during the evaluation that some of the actions taken as part of this project are having a positive impact on teaching and learning. There is also good curricular provision in the school and programmes of learning for different cohorts of students, as outlined below, are appropriate.

Despite the advancements mentioned above, the leadership of teaching and learning and further development of the school's educational provision for students is greatly constrained by the poor communication and relationships within the school. These tensions were evident to the inspection team and were commented on frequently by school management and staff during the inspection. The ongoing difficulties at staff meetings, reported by staff members and senior management to inspectors, are a particular source of concern as these greatly restrict the opportunities for collaborative and collegial engagement in the interest of improving the educational experience for students. While there are many positive developments and practices in relation to provision for students with additional learning needs, much remains to be done to enhance the overall quality of educational support and to ensure that practice is in accordance with Department of Education circulars and guidelines.

The school provides a broad curriculum for its students, offering four modern foreign languages. A very good optional Transition Year (TY) programme has been organised. Student engagement with the TY programme is supported by using a variety of assessment modes, as well as providing different learning experiences for students throughout the year. In addition, certification processes are in place, along with opportunities for students and parents to provide feedback and evaluation. It is also apparent that the programme is kept under regular review.

Planning for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is in place and a core team meets regularly to co-ordinate the programme. In the past, the school has offered the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme for students. The potential for the programme to be reinstated should be explored in the context of students at risk of early school leaving and as a means of further supporting levels of attendance in senior cycle classes.

Provision for students in Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) is appropriate. A senior cycle course in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is delivered in modular format in each year of senior cycle and an SPHE and an RSE policy has been developed.

A comprehensive transitions programme is organised for first-year students. This includes the administering of assessment tests to inform planning for student needs, an induction day, and a mentoring programme through which first-year students are supported by senior students. A very positive recent development is the adoption of a new approach to tracking and supporting students' academic progress. A post-holder has been assigned responsibility for this project as part of the recent review of middle management posts of responsibility.

A care team is in place comprising the senior management team, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the guidance counsellor; this group of staff meets on a weekly basis. In addition, there are meetings of year heads. These have been timetabled in the past, but the meetings are scheduled less frequently at present. It is suggested that the possibility of reinstating such meetings, on the school timetable, should be explored as a valuable and supportive element of the care and behaviour system in the school. A class tutor system is also in place.

A guidance plan has been developed. The plan includes the vocational, personal, and educational aspects of student support. A well-organised subject-choice process is in place. A critical incident plan has been developed and the school also works with students through links with a number of external support agencies.

Pastoral care lessons are provided for classes in each year group. While it was evident that a structured programme is implemented in some classes, evidence gathered during the evaluation indicated that, in other instances, no programme is in place.

While many of the care structures outlined are worthwhile, students in surveys conducted as part of the inspection indicated a low level of satisfaction with their experiences of particular aspects of school life. The level of care provided by the school and how students are treated at school were among the concerns indicated by students in the surveys. The school's leadership team should consider these survey findings carefully and engage with representatives of the student body to explore ways of addressing the main issues of concern urgently. The school self-evaluation (SSE) process and successful approaches and techniques for engaging with student voice should be employed as part of a plan to address the main areas of concern for students.

A newly appointed co-ordinator of special educational needs (SEN) is in place. Very good work has been undertaken in developing a register of supports for students with additional educational needs. Communication with the wider staff group is facilitated through digital means, as well as through whole-staff presentations. It is positive that meetings of the SEN team, made up of the guidance counsellor, the deputy principal and the SEN co-ordinator take place each week. Commendably, the school has moved towards a flexible model of support, employing in-class support, team teaching and small group withdrawal. A comprehensive inclusion policy is in place. It is positive that this policy is now under review.

Improvements in the support for students with additional educational needs are recommended as a matter of priority. Currently, a large proportion of the school's SEN allocation of hours is not being used for the purpose for which it is intended. The board of management, together with the senior management team, should ensure that the full allocation for SEN is deployed solely for its intended purpose, and that all practice complies with circular letter 0014/2017 and the associated *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.

At present, a large number of teachers are involved in the delivery of additional learning supports for students; however, this provision is disjointed and the supports provided are fragmented due to the number of personnel involved. The number of teachers delivering these supports should be reduced to allow for a more focused delivery of support by a core additional educational needs team. This will also ensure that such support is more coherent and effective. This move should be supported through introducing priority timetabling at an earlier point in the timetabling process. It is also advised that the school revises its inclusion policy in the context of circular 008/2019, the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*, and circular 0053/2019 regarding exemptions from the study of Irish. In addition, a reconsideration of the place accorded to reduced timetables in the policy should take place in the context of evidence-based advice from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

The school reported that it regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, students and the teacher education institution.

### **Managing the organisation**

A new board of management has been in place since October 2019. The board is appropriately constituted and training for members regarding its role has been accessed. Members of the board of management are aware of their responsibilities as a board and present as dedicated and committed to the work of the board. The board has identified key priorities for the school's development. The school has undertaken a very significant redevelopment project, with planning underway since 2010 and work ongoing onsite since 2015. The building project has presented a number of significant challenges and is nearing completion. As a result of this programme, which has been led by the principal, the facilities are very good.

Evidence provided during the evaluation indicated that the board and the principal have yet to achieve a strong collaborative working relationship. This needs to be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity to further advance the work of the school.

Poor communication and relationships between the senior management team and the teaching staff were reported by members of the school community and indicated in questionnaires administered during the inspection as impacting adversely on the operation of the school. It is recommended that the board of management and the senior management team, in collaboration with the teaching staff, undertake strategically coherent and comprehensive actions to address the serious issues relating to poor communication and relationships as a matter of urgency. Such actions should include engagement with the trustees of the school, as necessary, and require the accessing of external support, facilitation, and advice focussed on the goal of enabling better interpersonal relationships and creating a renewed culture of positivity within the school.

The board of management has overseen the provision and review of relevant administrative policies as outlined below. However, a number of shortcomings in relation to the development, review and implementation of these policies were identified during the inspection. To support a consistent review of its work and the realisation of its oversight role, the board should incorporate a policy and legislative checklist into its practice, as outlined in circular 0040/2016.

An anti-bullying policy is in place. This policy has recently been reviewed and discussed by staff and the board of management. In this context, and following a review of draft minutes and agreed minutes of the most recent board meetings, it is recommended that the principal submits reports regarding bullying cases to the board at least once per term, as is required by the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The school has developed a comprehensive admissions policy. In the context of the school's overall emphasis on the inclusion of all students and the recent implementation of sections of the Education (Admissions to School) Act, 2018, it is advised that sections of the school's admissions policy and associated enrolment documentation be reviewed. Areas which should be addressed include ensuring that the policy and the inclusive practice and ethos of the school are consistent, while also removing any perception of a linkage of fees with the enrolment process. It is positive to note that the board of management is aware of and has acknowledged the need for such an adjustment.

There is a comprehensive code of behaviour in place. This is positive. During the evaluation, inspectors observed very good behaviour throughout the school environs and students behaved very well towards their peers and their teachers. However, in meetings, a number of members of staff and students highlighted a need for greater consistency with regard to the implementation of the code. These concerns were also evident in a significant minority of teacher and student responses to questionnaires distributed as part of the evaluation. It is therefore advised that senior leadership and staff discuss the implementation of the code with a view to agreeing a consistent approach.

An attendance policy is in place. The policy clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community. Notwithstanding this, a number of members of staff identified student attendance as an area of concern. The school's senior management has identified the attendance strategy as an area for review. It is also recognised that cases where students have particularly high non-attendance rates have been followed up by senior management with relevant external agencies. Nevertheless, information presented during the evaluation suggests that the school might benefit from a wider consideration of underlying patterns of attendance. It is recommended that the board of management, senior management, and staff address this matter in the school's action plan for improvement. The review should focus on the identification of key baseline data with regard to non-attendance, and should employ appropriate methods of consultation to gather students' views on the matter. Relevant questions that might be explored with specific groups of students include the range and suitability of curriculum provision in the school and the available pathways to certification for students with different aptitudes and interests. Realistic attendance targets should be specified, and progress towards achievement of these should be monitored and reported to the board as a standing item.

The school has invested significantly in the development of its ICT infrastructure and capabilities over the last number of years. Significant CPD has also been provided for teachers. It is notable that in questionnaires distributed as part of this evaluation, both teachers and students responded positively with regard to the place of ICT in the school. In addition, the effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning was observed regularly in lessons. Senior management has expressed a desire to move towards the development of a digital learning team. Such a development should be



advanced and capacity building strategies implemented that promote distributed leadership, staff involvement and engagement.

It was reported during the evaluation that, on a number of occasions in the recent past and in the absence of members of staff, senior management had assigned responsibility to senior cycle students for supervising other students in the school. This practice should be immediately discontinued.

### **Leading school development**

The school's new board of management has identified a number of priorities to be addressed over the next number of years. It is encouraging to note that the board has sought to engage in oversight of the outcomes in the certificate examinations. In the short period between the establishment of the board and the inspection, the board has also been proactive with regard to the school's self-evaluation (SSE) process. Key priorities identified by the board include: managing increasing enrolment; promoting the quality of teaching and learning; monitoring student performance; promoting wellbeing; reviewing programmes and curriculum; reviewing provision for students with SEN; and reviewing policy requirements. This level of engagement with school development, by the new board, particularly in relation to its awareness of the need to gather relevant data to inform school improvement and the need to ensure that necessary school policies are in place, is very positive. The focus on SSE as a resource for gathering the views and inputs of all students and teachers is to be commended. The further development of this collective and cooperative approach, if implemented in an enabling way, should provide the school with the necessary foundations for high-quality educational provision in the years ahead.

A parents' association is in place and meets regularly during the school year. There is good communication with parents regarding school policy and procedures. A school app has been developed and was praised by a parent representative during the evaluation. In addition, the school is communicating effectively with parents through additional means such as information evenings and meetings with particular groups of parents during the school year. Parents surveyed during the evaluation expressed satisfaction generally with regard to their experience of the school.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

The development of policies is undertaken through the formation of policy groups. These groups then report to staff and the other partners and various activities are organised on the part of the teaching staff. A review of posts of responsibility has recently been undertaken and the outcomes of this review have been implemented by the school. This has included the addition of a number of very worthwhile roles.

Notwithstanding these points, there are deficiencies evident in the manner in which the in-school management processes and the distribution of leadership responsibilities are working in the school. It was reported to the inspection team that the in-school management system in the school was not working effectively. It was evident that the significant weaknesses with regard to relationships and communication between senior management and the teaching staff have severely curtailed the potential for the appropriate development of leadership capacity. Urgent action by the board of management, the senior management team and the teaching staff is needed to address these issues. It is suggested that the involvement of the school's trustees could provide additional governance and leadership supports in the task of developing a more collaborative, cooperative and cohesive working environment and culture across the entire staff team.

A very positive aspect of the school is the organisation of a range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. These include a variety of sporting and cultural activities, as well as a number of trips abroad. Students were very complimentary with regard to these activities when interviewed during the evaluation.

A student council is in place, as well as a number of other representative structures. These include head girl and deputy head girl positions, senior prefects and class captains. It is positive that a post-holder has been given responsibility for the co-ordination of student voice. There are regular meetings of the student council. Members of the student council reported a lack of communication with senior management regarding some issues in which they were involved. This was also reflected in responses to a student questionnaire distributed during the evaluation; most students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: 'I have a say in how things are done in the school'. It is recommended that the school focus on the further development of student voice as a priority. It is suggested that, as part of this development, the board should meet with representatives of the student council on a regular basis. Contact should also be facilitated with other schools that are recognised as having outstanding arrangements for taking account of student voice especially regarding how the school is run and how student voice can positively support learning and teaching throughout the school.

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons observed during the evaluation were generally of a good or very good quality and included a number of lessons where outstanding practice was observed. There is scope to develop some important aspects of teachers' collective practice, including those relating to collective planning and continuing professional development. While the very good practice observed in classroom is positive to note, learner outcomes and experiences in a number of areas should be considered.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

In lessons observed, relationships between students and teachers and students and their peers were respectful and supportive. This ensured a classroom environment where students were willing to engage openly and constructively in learning tasks. A particular feature of lessons was the high level of engagement on the part of students with the work being undertaken. Students were motivated in their learning. A key contributory factor was the clarity provided by teachers around tasks to be undertaken and learning to be achieved across most lessons.

A very good feature of lessons was students' capacity to work effectively in groups. In one instance, this was of an exceptionally high quality involving the setting up of different stations, a high level of interdependence to achieve the task set and substantial opportunities for formative feedback. A concluding activity, based on feedback already garnered from the class group, provided an effective scaffold for revision at the end of the lesson.

In other lessons, students worked effectively in less structured groups. However, overall, there are opportunities for teachers to further develop students' co-operative skills through the planning and implementation of more structured group activities. These should be devised while taking account of wait time, accountability and security in learning, alongside the appropriate division of individual and group elements in tasks. Occasionally, the use of a think-pair-share activity rather than question and answer sessions might also be considered.

There was widespread use of ICT by students in classrooms and this was supported very effectively by teachers. Students and teachers worked seamlessly together in utilising digital devices to support their learning outcomes and experiences. This included the use of digital devices to facilitate research on relevant topics, to share resources, to share work and to consolidate student learning. In a number of lessons, students' digital literacy was developed through an explicit focus on the evaluation of the relevance, authenticity and perspectives of specific sources of information on the internet. Digital devices were used very effectively to manage information and to support and record students' classroom based assessments (CBAs). This provided teachers with further worthwhile opportunities to support the advancement of students' skills in these areas.

A particular feature of a number of lessons was the way in which the assessment literacy of students was enhanced as part of their subject experience. This worked very well where teachers had designed assessment tasks arising from key success criteria. These had been shared with or co-created by students; and students displayed a clear appreciation of their role in effectively shaping and achieving the task being undertaken. In a number of lessons, this led to students being asked to reflect on the learning that they had achieved during the lesson or as part of the task. This was highly effective. The sharing of this good practice with teachers throughout the school should be facilitated and encouraged.

While the very good practice observed is positive to note, learner outcomes and experiences in a number of areas should be considered. Here, there are opportunities to explore trends in some subjects. Achievement levels as evidenced in the certificate examinations vary and require attention. This could be achieved through comparing attainment in a particular subject with national patterns of attainment and norms provided by the State Examinations Commission for individual subjects. The school self-evaluation framework provides a context for engaging constructively in careful review of student outcomes and achievement. The school's new academic tracking system should be central to this development. Student responses to questionnaires should also be considered in areas where a significant proportion of students expressed dissatisfaction. The feedback provided to students on their learning is one area that could be considered in this regard.

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

In all lessons observed, teachers' individual preparation was of a very high standard. Classroom management was very good and lessons proceeded in an orderly and well-structured fashion. Teachers displayed high expectations with regard to their students' learning and acted as effective language models in their subjects. The consistent use of target language in a number of language lessons observed was a particularly strong feature in this area.

Questioning was used as an effective strategy across lessons. In this area, on occasion, the potential for some further utilisation of wait time to facilitate students in accessing prior learning would be worthwhile.

Classroom environments were well laid out and frequently incorporated well-thought-out displays to support student learning. Many classrooms included displays of subject specific vocabulary. This was very worthwhile and it is suggested that, as a further development of very good work being done in this area, the widening of this approach to include vocabulary to support student thinking with regard to evaluation, creativity and innovation in each subject could be further explored.

While teachers' individual practice is very good, there are a number of aspects of teachers' collective practice that require development.

The subject-planning process is well established. Subject departments are currently in the process of transferring their planning resources and documents to a digital environment. Departments are encouraged to continue to develop their collective engagement with the digital environment as a support for student learning.

Overall, subject plans varied in quality. Plans were most effective where departments had engaged with planning focused on learning outcomes, alongside an awareness of the need to continually develop the subject in a strategic manner. In the subject plans reviewed, there was very limited engagement with the school's SSE plan. It is important that as part of subject departments' analysis of their practice and outcomes, a strong focus on medium-term and long-term actions and targets be developed. In addition, there is a need for a clear link between the collective work of subject departments and the overall SSE focus of the school.

Such a focus is important in the context of student responses to questionnaires distributed during the evaluation where a significant minority of students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'teaching is good in the school'. Overall, student responses to the questionnaire should be considered seriously and carefully and investigation undertaken by the school and individual subject departments. In this regard, it is recommended that the school should explore opportunities to acquire a deep understanding of students' needs, abilities, interests and expectations so that through SSE, particular initiatives in the areas of curriculum design, and development of pedagogical strategies, might be taken on by the school with a determination to impact on students' learning outcomes and achievement.

While a range of CPD opportunities has been provided for staff, there was evidence of some disagreement regarding teachers' engagement with professional development and the organisation of CPD. As teacher engagement in professional development is key to the promotion of teachers' collective and collaborative practice and the sharing of professional expertise, it is essential that these issues are addressed at the earliest opportunity with the assistance of the board and the trustees.

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

There has been very good implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.

#### **Leadership and Management**

The previous board of management has responded to each of the most recent subject inspection reports, including an SPHE report in 2015 and Science and Mathematics reports in 2014. In addition, the new board of management states that it expects to review, respond, and address weaknesses identified in inspection reports in the future in a systematic manner. The planned development of this systematic approach will be very worthwhile and it is suggested that it should also incorporate the sharing of recommendations across subject departments whenever external evaluations occur.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

Very good work has been undertaken in addressing key recommendations outlined in the most recent subject inspection reports for the school. This includes the employment of new assessment modes, the updating of departmental schemes of work and a focus on assessment for learning in departmental planning.

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

While some aspects of the school's work in self-evaluation have been positive, overall, significant action is required to improve the process as a mechanism for school improvement. The school's capacity for school improvement is low, at present, but with sound leadership from the trustees and the board of management, and with collaborative effort, agency and ownership on the part of the principal and staff team, it is considered that this school can progress steadily to where it needs to be.

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

During the evaluation, both staff and senior management highlighted to inspectors that the SSE process had been impeded due to poor communication and relationships between members of staff and senior management. Review of the current status of SSE suggests that the process has not proceeded as might have been expected and that the collaboration necessary to support successful engagement in the process is not in place.

Documentation relating to a previous school improvement plan from 2014-2017, was of a very good quality. In addition, a plan, linked to the pilot project in the area of special educational needs, has also been developed. This includes many worthwhile elements. However, the school improvement plan based on this work does not clearly link with the baseline data collected.

In other school improvement plans presented, a number of significant deficiencies were noted including, a lack of baseline data in the case of two plans; a lack of links between baseline data and targets; and a lack of clear, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-linked (SMART) targets. In a number of plans, there is a need to limit the number of targets identified in order to ensure they are achievable.

Overall, action is required to improve the SSE process in the school and to embrace very good approaches that have been undertaken in the past. There is a further need to share this information with the wider school community, as required by Circular 0040/2016.

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

While a number of aspects of the work of the school present as being of a high quality, overall there are significant difficulties with regard to implementing a school improvement process. Primarily, but not exclusively, these difficulties concern poor communication and relationships within the school and an SSE process that is not currently working effectively as a mechanism for school improvement. This environment is not conducive to the implementation and embedding of change for the improvement of student outcomes and experiences. Significant and well-coordinated initiatives are required to set the school on course to achieve the changes and improvements which school staff and the school's leadership spoke about in the course of this inspection.

## The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

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

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

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board notes the many positive findings in the report. The Board thanks and compliments senior management and staff.

All areas identified in the report for attention and / or improvement are being carefully considered by the Board for immediate action.

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

The Board will address and fully implement all the recommendations in the report, including seeking the direct assistance of the College's Trustees and external facilitation.