

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**CBS, Secondary School,  
St James's Street, County Kilkenny  
Roll number: 61550G**

**Date of inspection: February 2013**



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

# **Whole-School Evaluation**

## **Management, Leadership and Learning**

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in February 2013, in CBS Secondary School, Kilkenny. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the inspection team met with the school's board of management, in-school management, and groups of teachers, parents and students. Inspectors also reviewed a range of school documentation and responses to questionnaires and examined other data in relation to the operation of the school. As part of the evaluation, a range of lessons across a number of subject areas was inspected.

### ***Introduction***

CBS Secondary School, Kilkenny was founded in 1859 and is under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice School Trust (ERST). Students come from the local and wider Kilkenny area. The school has an enrolment of 656 boys and offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate. The board of management 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.

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

### ***Key Findings***

- The vision of ERST is evident in all aspects of school life and the whole-school community demonstrates a sense of pride in the traditions of the school.
- The board of management presents as a committed body and provides clarity of direction in ensuring ongoing school development and improvement.
- The principal effectively leads the school with vision, energy and enthusiasm, promoting leadership of staff by delegating full responsibility for identified areas of school development.
- The principal and deputy principal take a partnership approach in the effective management of the school, resulting in a quality education provision for students.
- School staff is commended for its professionalism, commitment and willingness to engage with school development and organisation, ensuring that the needs of the school and students are prioritised.
- Overall academic performance of students is very good; students were motivated and demonstrate good aptitude to applying their learning.
- A wide range of effective systems and structures is in place to provide care and support for students in the school.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to exemplary practice.
- The responses from the parent and student questionnaires indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the overall management structures, the quality of teaching and learning and the level of support for students offered by the school.

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

- The board of management should review the admissions policy to ensure that the inclusive enrolment practices of the school are fully reflected in the policy.
- Strategies that support a greater balance between teacher instruction and student activity should be shared among teachers and integrated into all lessons.

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

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

The board of management is appropriately constituted and comprises of members who bring a wide range of experiences and expertise from their diverse backgrounds. The board of management presented as a highly effective and committed team who have been successful in ensuring the implementation of a range of initiatives to support the educational and infrastructural needs of the school. The board effectively leads the school in the direction of ongoing change and development. Board members work as a cohesive team and demonstrate a strong sense of pride in the school.

Training for members of the board of management has been provided through ERST and the Joint Managerial Board (JMB). The roles and responsibilities of the board are clearly understood and carried out in an effective manner. The board meets on a regular basis and minutes of meetings are comprehensive and informative. In line with best practice, minutes of board meetings are forwarded to ERST while an agreed report is provided to the staff and the parents' association.

The board's practices and procedures regarding ongoing school development are exemplary. Mandatory policies have been adopted and appropriate systems are in place for ongoing policy review and development, based on inclusive consultative practices. Subcommittees are established to support and advise the work of the board.

The school's admissions policy is comprehensive and is reviewed regularly. However, some key aspects of the policy require greater clarity in relation to student enrolment. To this end, further review of the policy is recommended. This should allow for the open enrolment and inclusive practices of the school to be fully reflected in the policy.

On the establishment of each board a three-year strategic plan is developed which is monitored and reviewed annually. Such practices are highly commendable. Themes from the comprehensive strategic plan 2010-2013 include; "teaching and learning, enhancing partnerships, improving students' support systems, policy development, school ethos and infrastructural priorities".

The school's vision includes promotion of personal, intellectual and physical development of its students in a caring Christian community. The ERST charter fosters worthy values which are promoted by the trustees through representation on the board, by providing a network of personnel to support the school and by providing training and support to school management and staff.

Senior management, comprising the principal and deputy principal, work effectively as a team and take a partnership approach to school leadership and development. The skills and talents that each bring to their respective roles act in a complementary way in leading and managing change. They have a clear vision for the development of the school in line with the principles of the Edmund Rice tradition.

The principal leads the school with vision, energy and enthusiasm. He promotes and encourages devolved leadership among members of staff by delegating responsibilities to staff members for identified areas of school development. To this end, subcommittees have been established involving teachers from the full cohort of staff members. Staff members are afforded and avail of the opportunity to lead projects and initiatives. For example, staff present and share their expertise during staff development days and staff meetings. This is very good practice. The principal demonstrates effective management and leadership in all aspects of his role.

The deputy principal has a significant role in the management of students, for example, she undertakes teaching duties, participates in extra-curricular events and more recently she has assumed responsibility as senior year head. In addition to her day-to-day senior management role, the deputy principal participates in many initiatives to support the effective development of the school.

Leadership roles are distributed at middle management level with relevant, appropriate and clearly defined duties. Middle management, comprising assistant principals and special duties teachers, fulfil significant roles and responsibilities in school administration and in pastoral and academic functions. The commitment and flexibility of post holders has ensured that school needs are prioritised. The duties attached to each post are meeting current school needs and are carried out effectively.

Communication among staff and management is very good and includes regular staff meetings, and an informative staff handbook. Meetings are well planned and regular, both at the whole-school level and at the subject department level. Furthermore, the wider community is fully informed about school events and achievements through information evenings, texts, school newsletters, letters and the school's website.

The active parents' association is consulted on all aspects of school activities and is committed to supporting the school on an ongoing basis. Members meet regularly and have opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way to the ongoing school policy development and review. Current work undertaken by the parents' association includes organising study skills seminars for students and review of the draft policies.

Responses received from the parent questionnaires indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of leadership and teaching and learning provided in the school. This view was endorsed by the officers of the parents' association.

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

During the course of the evaluation, students presented as being courteous and respectful. A comprehensive and clearly structured code of behaviour is in place and is implemented through a well-organised student support system. The school's code of behaviour endeavours to promote positive behaviour in addition to identifying practices and procedures for addressing discipline issues. In line with the policy, relevant discipline issues are brought to the attention of the board. A further review of the policy is suggested to ensure alignment of school policy and practice.

A pastoral care team meets weekly and offers an effective range of supports to students. Responses from the parent and student questionnaires also indicated very high satisfaction with the levels of support and care offered by the school.

Effective practices and procedures are in place to monitor and support those students with poor attendance records. Attendance is monitored in each class electronically via Eportal and by each teacher on a class-by-class basis. In addition, a weekly attendance report is prepared by a post-holder and distributed to the relevant year head.

Significant emphasis is placed on student leadership roles. A very progressive students' council meets regularly and is supported by a member of staff. A student council notice board has been developed and includes minutes from previous meetings, decisions reached and a suggestion box. Such practices are excellent.

A highly effective and wide-ranging programme of events takes place to support students' induction. An annual open night in addition to an induction meeting are arranged for parents and students of first-year students. The schools' Cairdeas team, comprising selected senior students, offer support to new entrants by organising activities to help students during their transition into the school. To support the ERST ethos the school organises a Zambian Immersion programme. The involvement of students in programmes both in

school and internationally has been of great benefit and all concerned are commended for their work in this regard.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum programme to provide for the needs of the student population. First-year students are offered a wide range of subjects and have an opportunity to sample optional subjects prior to a final selection, at the end of the first term. Commendably, every effort is made to ensure that students receive their preferred optional subject selection.

In senior cycle, students have a choice of following the TY programme, the established Leaving Certificate or the LCVP. The organisation, structure, and content of the TY programme is excellent and allows students to develop in line with the school's mission statement through the provision of core and optional academic subjects and co-curricular and extracurricular activities. A review of the programme is undertaken each year. The integration of the roles of TY coordinator and year head, for that year group, contributes to fostering excellent support for students.

The LCVP programme is coordinated by two teachers, each of whom teaches the links module aspect of the programme. Following a LCVP review undertaken by the coordinators, areas for further development have been identified. Action plans to advance these priorities should be progressed.

A comprehensive guidance programme is in place, which offers students an opportunity to access guidance through timetabled classes and on a needs basis. In addition, counselling services are provided from personnel within the school and from professional services outside the school.

The overall organisation and structures of the learning support department are very good. Examples of very good practices include; the dissemination of relevant information to all staff members, weekly meetings, and a variety of models of intervention to support the specific learning needs of each student. The inclusion of various strategies to help students with specific learning needs, are included in the teacher handbook as an additional support for the teacher in the classroom.

A wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities are arranged for students including sports, music and participation in events such as SciFest and Team Math. Teachers' commitment to providing extra-curricular activities is highly commendable.

Excellent structures are in place to systematically analyse student performance in examinations by school management and staff. Overall academic attainment is very good with some areas for improvement recognised by school management and staff. The recent introduction of effort and commitment reports for second and fifth-year students are an example of how the school has proactively developed a system of monitoring student progress.

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

### **1.3 Management of facilities**

Over the years, additional building extensions have been added to the original 1859 school building. Issues highlighted in a recent health and safety audit have been addressed. The overall upkeep and maintenance of the building are excellent. Classrooms are well equipped and have an array of student and commercially sourced materials on display to support the learning environment. Management has invested significantly in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities. Most recently, management has been proactive and worked collaboratively with the local Christian Brothers Primary school to develop a playing pitch for use by both schools. The board of management has made an

application to the planning and building unit of the Department of Education and Skills for new facilities.

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

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

Twenty-one lessons were observed during the evaluation and across different disciplines including both core and optional subjects. Teachers demonstrated considerable commitment to their subject areas and engaged positively in the subsequent professional dialogue.

The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with some exemplary practice also noted. All lessons were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect. A positive rapport and very good classroom atmosphere prevailed in all lessons. Teachers were caring and supportive of their students who in turn were courteous and respectful of their teachers. Motivation levels were suitably high resulting in meaningful learning experiences.

In all lessons, clear learning objectives were shared with students at the outset with a small section of each board set aside for recording shared learning outcomes. This is very good practice. The majority of lessons were very well planned and structured. Individual teacher planning and preparation for the lessons was very good. In a few lessons, greater attention to the pace and structure of the lesson would have helped to engage all students in their learning.

There was very good continuity with prior learning and in some lessons the topic was set in a real life context to support learning for students. Students' literacy skills were developed through good use of the board to record key words. In some instances, students retained key words for the subject within a copy. This good practice should be extended where appropriate.

Students displayed very good aptitude in applying their learning, whether in the use of language, the completion of experiments and tasks, or the solving of practical problems. Best practice was observed when differentiated tasks were implemented to support increased levels of student participation and engagement.

In almost all lessons, a very good range of appropriately chosen methodologies was observed. These included students' self-directed learning, pair work, group work and practical activities. In a few lessons, an approach which would facilitate a greater balance between teacher instruction and student activity is recommended.

In the majority of lessons, effective questioning strategies were used. Recall-type questions were initially used to determine students' understanding or to provide a link with prior learning. In many lessons, more challenging questions were effectively integrated, giving students an opportunity to provide justification for their answer. In such lessons, frequent use was made of questions such as "why" or "what do you think". In a few instances, greater use of more higher-order questioning would have provided opportunities for students to be more involved in their learning.

Very good use was made of available ICT facilities to support and promote specific learning objectives. In particular, video, animation and photographs were expertly utilised to advance lessons and to enable students to experience the world beyond the classroom. The visualiser was particularly well used as an aid for the teacher to model best practice and to depict an incremental approach to problem solving. In almost all classrooms, visual displays of students' work were supplemented with subject specific materials. All of which effectively supported the learning environment for students.

In addition to questioning strategies many teachers provided individual oral feedback during lessons. In some lessons, effective use of peer-assessment was observed, whereby students marked each other's work. In the majority of lessons, students received written feedback in their copybooks indicating areas for development. This good practice is an essential element of *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) and should be more consistently integrated into all subject areas.

Homework was assigned in all lessons observed. Monitoring of homework is effective. While homework is assigned, there was evidence of inconsistencies in how students are recording the assigned work. Students should be encouraged to adopt the good practice of recording all assignments.

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

#### ***3.1 Management***

Subject inspections in Special Educational Needs (SEN), History, Technical Graphics, Design and Communication Graphics, Science and Physics, Mathematics, English and German have been conducted and published in recent years. Management has made significant progress in the implementation of all of the recommendations made in previously published subject inspection reports. For example, increased time has been allocated to subjects and programme planning. A whole-school approach to Literacy and Numeracy strategies has been developed.

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

Several of the recommendations in previous subject inspections related to subject planning. Significant progress has been achieved in this area including the development of common schemes of work, the identification of specific student learning outcomes, an analysis of students' performance in state examination examinations and literacy strategies in line with the school improvement plan.

Overall, very good progress has taken place regarding teaching and learning recommendations from previous subject inspections. These included teachers explicitly stating learning objectives and an increased usage of the target language in lessons. While good progress was noted in many subjects in relation to the use of more active methodologies, there is still scope for the further development of such practices in a few instances.

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

The school has been proactive in embracing a process of self-evaluation. Teacher surveys have been developed and administered to identify further development needs of teachers with student surveys used to gather sixth-year students' views on aspects of school life. This year the school has identified Literacy as a focus for school self-evaluation. In line with best practice, a committee has been established, a policy has been drafted and a literacy plan developed. Whole-staff training has been provided and initiatives that can be used by individual teachers with students have been identified. Furthermore, a dedicated weekly literary class has been established for first-year students. The plan to review the impact that such initiatives have on students' literacy will be reviewed at the end of the

year. This is commendable practice and demonstrates a whole-school commitment to this initiative and the self-evaluation model for school improvement.

Evidence from meetings with the board of management, senior management, teaching staff, parents and students clearly demonstrates that the school has the capacity and willingness to embrace change and improvement through self-evaluation.

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# **Appendix**

## **School response to the report**

### **Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

The Board of Management of C.B.S. Kilkenny welcomes the exceptionally positive WSE-MLL report completed by the Inspectorate of the department of education & Skills. The board is appreciative of the very wide range of aspects of school life which have been commended and applauded in the report. The Board is particularly appreciative that the dedication, diligence and professionalism of all members of the school community is recognised and affirmed.

The key findings of the Inspectorate underline the very positive contributions of all partners within the school community towards providing a unique educational experience for all students in the school. It is indeed very gratifying for the Board of Management that the quality of management and leadership and the high standards of teaching and learning as well as the overall impression of the school as a happy, caring and supportive educational environment has been highlighted in the report. It is acknowledged that all partners – Staff (both teaching and ancillary), Students, Parents, Board of Management and Trustees are commended as individually and collectively contributing to the excellence which makes CBS Kilkenny such a quality educational experience.

The Board wishes to thank the Inspection team for their positive and professional approach throughout the inspection process. The school community found the experience of the inspection to be most affirming and encouraging.

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

The Board of Management of C.B.S. Kilkenny is committed to building on the high standards across all aspects of school life as outlined in the findings of the report. The recommendations of the Inspectorate will be addressed as part of the school's improvement plan in the immediate future.