

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Oaklands Community College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Sr. Senan Avenue Edenderry Co. Offaly
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	725400

**Date of Evaluation: 10-05-2018**



---

An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 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, RSE, Wellbeing).
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

Dates of inspection	10-05-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with Board of Management</li><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principals</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

Oaklands Community College, Edenderry, is a co-educational, non-denominational school located in Co. Offaly with a current enrolment of 761 students. The school is under the management of the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board and participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school offers all the junior and senior cycle programmes as well as an optional Transition Year.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- Results from teacher, parent and student surveys were exceptionally positive and corroborate the excellent work of the school.
- The senior management team, led by an energetic and dynamic principal, is proactive, progressive and ambitious for the school and provides exceptionally high-quality leadership for learning.
- The board displays a commitment to the school and is very supportive of the senior management team (SMT).
- A positive learning environment supported by very good student-teacher interactions was evidenced throughout the evaluation; however, this positivity should be reflected in the school's code of behaviour.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons was very good; examples of excellent practice were observed in many of those lessons.
- Very good progress has been made in addressing recommendations from previous evaluations and the capacity for school improvement is of a very high standard.

#### Recommendations

- The number of teachers providing special education needs (SEN) support should be reduced and models of provision should be further extended.
- A system of rolling policy review should be developed and the date of ratification should be on all policies.
- The code of behaviour should reflect the positive behaviour management in evidence throughout the evaluation.
- Students should receive regular and developmental feedback on their written work.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

Leadership for learning is of an exceptionally high quality and has been a shared key priority for the SMT. The principal and deputy principals have clearly defined roles and work very well together as a team. The key strength of their leadership style is their commitment to self-reflection, continuously using different mechanisms to capture feedback for improvement from staff, students and parents.

The SMT has identified continuing professional development (CPD) for staff as the catalyst for driving improvement in teaching and learning. CPD, including that sourced in an international context, is chosen strategically to meet the current and upcoming needs of the school. There is an impressive whole-school focus on pedagogical improvement to enhance learner outcomes. Capacity is developed through very high levels of teacher collaboration. Teachers also have the opportunity to share their expertise through making presentations at staff meetings

The school offers a broad curriculum, seeking to maximise its capacity to provide subject and programme choice for students. Currently, the school does not offer subject sampling in first year and this should be kept under review. There is an annual presentation of subject information by teachers for students entering senior cycle for the purpose of enhancing their understanding of the nature of different subjects. Support, regarding subject choice, is provided for parents and students through a variety of information evenings. Current limitations regarding provision for Physical Education (PE) at senior cycle are being addressed and this should continue. Moreover, there are anomalies with regard the school timetable such as double lessons scheduled over break times and subjects spread unevenly throughout the week. Minimising occurrences of these issues should be prioritised.

Subject teams are pivotal to school improvement and are strongly supported by the senior management team. High-quality subject planning underpins the DEIS and school self-evaluation (SSE) targets for improvement. However, subject planning should be digitised for ease of teacher access and all discussions regarding teaching and learning at subject team level should be documented and included in the subject plan.

The school places a particular emphasis on the developing role of the year head as a leader for learning and this supports the senior management's vision for the school as a centre for academic improvement. The current review of posts of responsibility supports the drive for progress and development for the school in this context.

A key strength of the school is the energy and drive of the staff, among whom an exceptional level of volunteerism is evident, from the provision of extra-curricular activities to devising worthwhile literacy and numeracy interventions to support student learning in the school.

Student welfare needs are at the heart of the school and are regarded as the responsibility of all staff, with a particular emphasis on the tutor and year-head role. The care team meets regularly to discuss interventions and review progress for students in need of or receiving support. A colour-coded register of students in receipt of support, which is available to staff, prioritises discretion and upholds the dignity of the student. A system is also in place where students can self-refer. The home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and school completion programme (SCP)

personnel reinforce the important links between home and school. The explicit promotion of mental health awareness during the school's 'Health and Happiness Week' is indicative of the commitment of the care team.

The school places an emphasis on the transfer of students from primary to secondary school and substantial work goes into smoothing this transition. Tracking student progress across all year groups is a whole-school focus and informs planning for future improvement.

The newly formed SEN core team, strongly supported by the SMT, is strongly committed to supporting the students with additional needs in the school. A very dedicated approach is taken to securing resources, grounded in consultation with students, parents and feeder primary schools. Students with SEN are well supported through individual and small-group withdrawal from mainstream class. However, the number of teachers offering SEN support should be reduced and the models of support should be expanded. Currently, co-teaching is being introduced by the SEN team and this should continue across all year groups. There are worthwhile targeted, measurable interventions to support students' literacy and numeracy skills such as *Ninja Maths* and a paired-reading programme. The development of the resource room as a welcoming place of learning is to be commended. A very good profiling system is currently in use for first-year and second-year students and this should be extended to all students in receipt of SEN support.

### **Managing the organisation**

The board of management is properly constituted and members are very committed to their work. They bring a variety of valuable experience and expertise to the school. Agreed reports are relayed to teaching staff and the parents' association. There is scope to include more detail of the board's role and activities through the school website. Required policies have been developed but some have still to be ratified and many are in need of review. A schedule of rolling reviews should be set up to ensure that all policies are ratified and reviewed. Timeframes for the completion of this work should be agreed at an early date. The checklist available at [www.schoolself-evaluation.ie](http://www.schoolself-evaluation.ie) should be adopted to support the work of the board in a policy review system. All policies should include a review date.

The code of behaviour sets out high expectations for students. The code should be enhanced to reflect the positive behaviour management that was in evidence throughout the evaluation. Greater use of students' journals to promote positive behaviour should be explored as a whole-school initiative.

Very good communication structures are in place throughout the school, such as text messages, parent-teacher meetings, information evenings and social media use. Despite challenges posed by infrastructure, the creation and maintenance of a positive learning environment has been a focus for the school. This is evidenced by the art work on display, and the print-rich environment in classrooms that promote learning and celebrate student achievement.

The SMT work very hard to manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. They have a high visibility on the school corridors and, together with staff, maintain very good order in the school.

There is an exceptional culture of learning in the school, evidenced by the emphasis on school improvement and the focus on pedagogy. The school evinces a model of collaboration where attainable and measurable improvement targets are brought together and translated into classroom

teaching for the purpose of enhancing learner outcomes. The schools' commitment to the development of posts of responsibility as leadership of learning opportunities corroborates the vision of the school as a centre of holistic learning. Leadership opportunities are available for students through the active student council, a mentor and a prefect programme.

### **Leading school development**

The board maintains very strong links with senior management and has prioritised the development of leadership roles for staff. However, consideration should be given to expanding the board's role in overseeing improvements in teaching and learning. The parents association is important to the school and has a strong fundraising role. It is involved with relevant policy development. The parents association should consider ways of strengthening its communication with the wider parent community.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

Leadership capacity development is of an exceptionally high standard in the school. Currently, there is a review of posts of responsibility which emphasises leading learning. It is a strength of the SMT in how it empowers the members of the middle-management team and staff members by giving them appropriate autonomy to develop initiatives and carry out their duties. The SMT strategically plans for improvement with the middle-management team and wider staff to enhance curricular development and embed pedagogical improvements.

Student leadership opportunities are available in the student council, mentor and prefect system. Students have availed of opportunities to take part in specific policy development and feel their voice is listened to by the school. Students should have some opportunity to address the board occasionally for the purpose of raising the profile of both these groups.

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

In the majority of lessons observed the teaching and learning was very good and there were instances of outstanding practice in many of those lessons. In a small minority of lessons there was significant scope for improvement.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

Lessons were well-planned. Learning intentions were used in all lessons to frame the lesson content and learning activities and to include students in the learning process. In the best lessons, the learning intentions were student focused and reviewed at the end so that learning was consolidated.

A range of very effective teaching approaches was noted during the lesson observations. These included activating students' prior knowledge and engaging in good quality questioning to connect new learning with real-life contexts. In many lessons, the teachers' own enthusiasm for the subject had a positive impact on student learning. Moreover, the engagement of students was further enhanced when teachers made explicit links between lesson topics and students' own lives. There was impressive use of the target language in language lessons. Students were given opportunities to be independent in their learning, active rather than passive, supported by collaborative learning experiences. However, a more structured approach to group work should be developed at whole-school level, allowing ample time for feedback on tasks from students and thus ensuring that there is a balance between teacher input and student participation.

In many subjects, students needed to have more practice in extended writing tasks.

In the lessons observed, a variety of strategies to explicitly develop students' literacy skills was observed such as a focus on subject-specific keywords and the use of word banks. However, teachers should consider how to explicitly promote numeracy to a greater extent in their lessons.

Assessment for learning (AfL) strategies are prioritised by the school in planning documentation and this was evident in many lessons. The best lessons provided students with criteria for success so that students could see what good quality learning looked like. In these lessons, teachers developed students' critical-thinking skills by asking higher-order questions. Teachers clearly saw the value in offering students opportunities to reflect on their learning and strategies such as 'exit-passes' and 'post-it reviews' were often in evidence in the lessons observed. However, students should receive regular and developmental feedback on their written work to further inform improvement.

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

In all lessons observed, the interactions among teachers and students were very positive and teachers had high expectations of their students which supported good learning. In many classrooms visited, this positivity was further enhanced by the creation of learning spaces that promoted subjects and celebrated student achievement.

Teaching approaches reflected DEIS and SSE targets for improvement in a cohesive way reflecting the collaborative whole-school approach to teaching and learning.

Teachers' engagement with CPD, some in an international context, was particularly impressive and a testimony to their dedication. There was clear evidence of teacher collaboration in planning documentation and in the emphasis on the common examinations for most subjects at relevant stages in junior cycle. While there were good examples of the use of information and communications technology in some lessons, there is scope for further development through in-house sharing of expertise in this area.

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

### **Leadership and Management**

A number of strategies are in place to ensure that recommendations from previous evaluations are used to inform and develop practice in the school, including discussion at subject team level and an audit of previous recommendations from inspection reports to aid in reviewing practice in the school and inform future planning. Recommendations in the area of leadership and management have been addressed at both whole-school and departmental level, for example issues regarding the admission policy, co-ordinators for Leaving Certificate Applied programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and the appointment of Home Economics and Guidance personnel.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The implementation of many of the recommendations from previous inspection reports in the area of teaching, learning and assessment has taken place. For example, excellent work has taken place regarding the provision of common papers in various subjects and extensive progress has been

made in relation to AfL. In the area of attainment in the certificate examinations, progress has been made in increasing the number of students taking higher level and this continues to be a whole-school focus. The exception is the area of formative feedback on students' written work which remains an area for development across the school.

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

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

Overall, the school's self-evaluation process is of a very high standard. The school has developed an exceptional level of leadership capacity in relation to SSE, evidenced in how task groups, programme teams and subject departments have been enabled to lead planning for improvement by gathering feedback and engaging in data analysis, and action planning for improvement. A culture of evaluation and review has been embedded in the school.

The school has engaged with school improvement strategies, prioritising the development of students' attitude to learning. Strategies have been developed to broaden literacy initiatives by focusing on reading for pleasure and subject-specific key words. The school has progressed its strategic planning for improvement to focus on whole-school assessment procedures, specifically AfL strategies, and by placing an emphasis on teacher collaboration. The school is currently in a review phase and is reflecting on its SSE journey and building on baseline data to inform improvements to areas of literacy, numeracy, retention and attendance.

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

The school has an exceptional capacity for improvement and has identified appropriate priorities to support its development into the future. The SMT, with the support of the teaching staff, has ensured that the school is self-evaluating on a continuing basis, with a focus on excellence in teaching and learning.



## 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**

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

The Board Of management Of Oaklands Community acknowledges the receipt of this extremely positive WSE-MLL Report, which affirms the excellent practices in our school. We are particularly pleased that the report endorses:

- The exceptional leadership displayed by the senior management team
- The energy and drive of the staff
- The high quality subject planning
- The exceptional positive attitude of the parents and students towards the school
- The very good teaching and learning with evidence of some excellent practice in many lessons
- The exceptional leadership for learning displayed in the school
- The exceptional capacity for improvement
- The exceptional level Of school capacity in relation to School Self Evaluation
- The strong emphasis on student welfare and wellbeing and effective structures to support students

## **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 acknowledges the recommendations made by the inspectors and are committed to their implementation. Since the initial feedback Of the WSE-MLL process, the school has already set about addressing the recommendations in the following ways:

- A schedule of policy review was adopted by the Board Of Management at its meeting on 12th April 2018
- Planning for the 2018/19 timetable envisages a reduction in the number of teachers delivering Special Education Needs
- The code of behaviour is currently under review and will incorporate a means by which positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded
- A whole school approach to developmental feedback on written work will be address at start Of next academic year