

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Glanmire Community College  
Glanmire, County Cork  
Roll number: 76064F**

**Date of inspection: 12 December 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 December 2013 in Glanmire Community College. 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. 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.

## ***Introduction***

Glanmire Community College is a co-educational post-primary school situated on the outskirts of Cork city. The school's co-trustees are the Diocese of Cork and Ross and the Cork Education and Training Board (ETB). The school was founded in 1997 to provide an English-medium, second-level education for students from the Glanmire area. It now serves a rural, urban and suburban population. The school has a current enrolment of 903 students and is committed to fulfilling its mission as "a safe, caring and inclusive Christian community that promotes quality teaching and learning in an environment of mutual respect."

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

### ***Key Findings***

- The board of management carries out its roles and responsibilities very effectively.
- The principal and deputy principal form an effective senior management team and demonstrate very high quality leadership of the school.
- There are significant strengths evident in the area of school improvement planning.
- Staff are committed and professional and display a willingness to undertake and lead new challenges and initiatives.
- The quality of care and support for students is very good.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.
- Students and parents, in their questionnaire responses, were very positive with regard to the quality of the education provided in Glanmire Community College.

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

- In order to further progress planning at subject department level, the whole-school teaching and learning strategies outlined in the school improvement plan should become a focus for reflection, implementation and review within the context of subject planning.
- As the promotion of students' oral literacy is a current priority, it is recommended that subject departments, as part of their planning, explore how oral literacy could be further promoted in specific subject and classroom contexts.

- The possibilities offered by the use of learning intentions and outcomes as a framework for the effective linking of teaching strategies with students' learning in the classroom, should be fully explored.
- The timetabling allocation of single periods for a small number of subjects in TY should be reviewed.

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

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

The board of management is appropriately constituted; it meets regularly and carries out its roles and responsibilities very effectively. It is well supported by Cork ETB of which it functions as a sub-committee. Members of the board have a significant level of experience and expertise in education and they are committed to facilitating high quality student learning in Glanmire Community College.

The board is responsible for ensuring the good corporate governance of the school and is centrally involved in all aspects of its work. The board supports senior management in the day-to-day running of the school. It sees its role as being both supportive and challenging of senior management as it seeks to provide a quality learning environment for staff and students.

A key role of the board is in the provision and management of a structured and systematic school planning process. The board is responsible for the ratification and review of policies. In this regard it has adopted mandatory policies including admissions, code of behaviour and child protection, and also oversees the introduction of new policies.

The board is instrumental in approving the annual school improvement plan prepared by senior management, and in reviewing the progress made at the end of the school year. In the current plan, the board has identified a number of priorities in the areas of policy development, teaching and learning, administration, physical resources and planning, including a new school extension and a focus on best practice in teaching and learning. These priorities have been identified through a process of consultation with staff, students and parents, and through the ongoing review of current initiatives.

The school has experienced a rapid growth in numbers in recent years and student enrolment is due to increase substantially in the future. As a result, a significant issue for the board is the lack of physical infrastructure necessary to cater for the projected increase in numbers. It is positive that planning to meet the current and future accommodation needs of the school has been prioritised, and plans are well advanced for the construction of a large extension.

Partnership with parents is recognised as important in the school as they form part of the school's shared vision. The board promotes good communication with parents through the provision of an agreed report following board meetings. Good practice is evidenced by the publication of the report on the school's website.

The school benefits from the support of an interested and active parents' council. The council meets regularly and the members play a role in many areas of school life including consultation in the development of policies and the school improvement plan as well as a more traditional fundraising role. The responses of parents to the questionnaire completed as part of the evaluation were very positive and parents stated that they were very happy with the school.

The principal and deputy principal form an effective senior management team and demonstrate very high quality leadership of the school. They take a partnership approach to leadership and communicate well as a team. They share a vision for the future of the school that seeks excellence in learning and teaching, that empowers members of staff to realise their potential and that maximises students' learning experiences and outcomes.

Their leadership is strategic in planning for the changes and future challenges that face the school such as the increase in student enrolment, the new extension, and reform of the junior cycle. A significant strength of their leadership approach is their understanding of the importance of allocating time for all aspects of the planning process. It is noteworthy that a key element of this approach, as exemplified by the school improvement plan, is that time is afforded to the initial development of ideas until they reach the stage where they become identified as school priorities. This ensures that the time frame for implementation is realistic, and facilitates the monitoring and eventual achievement of targets.

The senior management team has a keen awareness of the importance of empowering individuals and teams within the staff. Through a process of distributed leadership they seek to empower staff and to facilitate their professional development through dialogue and communication, openness to change and professional challenge. This model of leadership places an emphasis on the development of trust, individual responsibility and accountability.

Key leadership decisions have been informed by a process of reflection, strategic thinking, action and evaluation and this has contributed to the creation of a very evident school culture that promotes excellence and high expectations, while still taking into consideration the needs of the individual.

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

Leadership is distributed at middle management level through key teams, committees and co-ordinator roles. Such structures facilitate collegial and collaborative work practices and allow for decision-making to be devolved. As a result, staff members are afforded the opportunity to lead projects and initiatives. Recent initiatives include the Literacy and Numeracy strategy, policy development, and the school improvement plan.

Leadership for learning is demonstrated in the facilitation of collaborative planning and of teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) through regular staff meetings and subject department meetings. Management has provided CPD in areas such as literacy, co-operative learning and assessment for learning. Staff are involved in the Instructional Leadership programme and in the Droichead programme for teacher induction, and are encouraged to take on external professional development as well. Formal and informal meetings provide opportunities for staff to articulate their ideas and to share their experiences and expertise with colleagues. In this way, new initiatives such as Edmodo, an on-line platform for sharing resources have been introduced and taken on board by the staff.

The care of students and the support structures in place within the school are of a high quality and are well organised to meet the needs of students. This support is provided through systems and structures such as the assistant principal meetings, year head and class teacher structure, the guidance programme and the on-going work of all involved in the school's care team including the guidance counsellors, the chaplain, the learning support team and the school's special needs assistants.

The year head structure represents one of the formal supports for students. While primarily a pastoral role, the duties encompass the management of student behaviour and attendance, and the monitoring of academic progress. Very good practice is evident in the weekly meetings with management, and in the feedback to class teachers and staff following the meetings. This structure is replicated in the assistant principal meetings which serve as a conduit for discussion and consultation with management.

A well-organised learning support team offers assistance to students through a variety of models including withdrawal and team-teaching. Care is taken in the matching of staff members with individual students requiring support. A significant number of teachers is involved in the provision of support, and the quality of their work is acknowledged.

Awareness of students' well-being is demonstrated by the prioritising of a whole-school approach to positive mental health. The school's Code of Behaviour seeks to affirm positive behaviour, and highlights the role of parents in modelling good behaviour. There is a clear ladder of referral relating to student behaviour from subject teacher to class teacher and eventually to the deputy principal.

The school offers a range of curricular programmes including the established Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

A wide range of subjects is provided with additional subjects such as Agricultural Science provided after school in response to student demand. Students in first year choose their options on entry to the school, and changes of subjects are facilitated, where possible, both in first year and in senior cycle. It is evident that curricular programmes such as LCVP and LCA are regularly reviewed, and this is good practice.

Parents and students spoke positively during the evaluation about the quality of the TY programme and the range of experiences and opportunities for personal growth that it offered. However, at a timetabling level, the allocation of single periods in a small number of subjects should be kept under review.

Good leadership for learning is evident in the tracking of student academic attainment. This has been a focus of school planning and has resulted in a significant increase in the uptake of higher-level subjects by students. In addition to the analysis of achievement in the certificate examinations, the school has commenced using data from students' pre-entry results to provide a broader picture of their academic achievement. Coupled with this initiative is the system that has been introduced for senior students in which they track their own progress through the setting of specific targets and goals. Students also attend the annual parent-teacher meetings as part of an engagement with learning strategy which seeks to foster the development of a sense of personal responsibility for their own learning amongst the student cohort.

Many opportunities are offered to students to participate in extra-curricular activities and to undertake a variety of roles in the musical, artistic, scientific and social spheres. A wide range of sporting activities is provided for students and the school benefits from the facilities of the nearby GAA club. The generosity and dedication of staff in volunteering to lead such extra-curricular activities is noted and acknowledged.

There is a commendable emphasis on the recognition and celebration of students' contributions to all areas of school life. This is achieved through affirmation, through

positive comments in the student journal, through the Éacht awards distributed within each year group and in the school's annual Díograis or Awards evening.

The school provides very good opportunities for student leadership through the student council. The council is made up of elected class captains and vice-captains and the members meet regularly with the principal. The council's current focus includes work on the Díograis awards and on the anti-bullying policy. As the council is a vehicle through which students can communicate their views, the role of class captains in providing the "students' voice" within the school's consultative process should be highlighted.

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***

The school building is maintained to a high standard and the space available is well managed. Changes to the timetable including the provision of a split lunch-break have facilitated access to the specialist rooms and to the sports facilities, and have allowed for an atmosphere of calm to prevail in the main areas. Attractive displays of photographs and artwork are visible on the corridors and electronic notice boards are used to good effect for communication purposes.

A comprehensive school website has been developed which provides information on the school community including dedicated sections for the parents' council and the board of management. The school is well equipped with resources for information and communication technology (ICT). The use of ICT has been integrated into teaching and learning and is also utilised in the provision of services by the administrative staff. The valued contribution made by the administrative and ancillary staff and the school caretaker is recognised and commended.

Environmental awareness is reflected in the work of the committee which oversees the school's Green Flag status. The school also has a health and safety statement in place.

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

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

Thirty-two lessons were evaluated during the WSE-MLL, across a range of subjects, curricular programmes and year groups. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.

The responses to the questionnaires reflected a high level of satisfaction amongst students and parents with regard to teaching and learning. Students reported that they were getting on well in their school work and that the teachers encouraged them to work to the best of their ability, while parents commented favourably about their child's progress.

The planning and preparation undertaken by teachers in advance of lessons was very good and included the preparation of a range of teaching resources such as worksheets and visual material to support student learning.

The very good classroom practice observed included well-structured lessons with established classroom routines and clear instructions and explanations. Students' prior learning was factored into the lesson plan thus ensuring continuity with previous lessons.

While the intended learning outcomes were shared with students in a number of lessons, practice varied, and consequently there is scope for the further development of the use of this approach. Clarifying and revisiting the intended learning outcomes represent key elements of assessment for learning. Greater integration of these elements into the lesson would facilitate the monitoring of students' learning particularly in mixed-ability class groupings. It is recommended that the practice of using learning outcomes be fully explored so that they form a focus and a framework for the teacher's work in monitoring students' learning, and for students to consolidate their learning.

A significant strength of the practice observed was the range of teaching approaches employed, including whole-class teaching, guided discussion, collaborative learning and problem-solving. A variety of activities and resources was used successfully to engage students' interest such as games, graphic organisers, small boards and cards. The utilisation of effective teaching and learning strategies such as placemat and star bursts was also noted.

There was a good emphasis on co-operative learning strategies with opportunities for pair and group work factored into many lessons. Where these activities worked well, there was a clear understanding shown of the factors that help to ensure successful group work such as the seating arrangements or the role of the teacher. However, in some instances, a stronger focus on the management of the activity would have improved the learning experience for students. Further development of questioning strategies is suggested, especially the use of higher-order questioning when students are taught in mixed-ability class groups.

Key words and subject-specific language were given due attention and students showed a good familiarity with the relevant vocabulary. A small number of lessons included oral presentations by students of their projects and posters, thus reflecting the school's commitment to the development of oral literacy. In language classes, very good practice was evident in the consistent use of the target language by teachers and opportunities were also provided for students to engage in oral work in the language.

There was an appropriate focus on examination preparation, and also on the development of skills in making notes and in structuring an answer. It was very positive that students were encouraged to reflect on their work and to assess their progress. In this way they were enabled to become independent learners and it was commendable that the teachers also engaged in reflection on their own practice.

There was a very good rapport between teachers and students with evident teacher enthusiasm, energy and good humour. Teachers had high expectations of students' participation and engagement while the students were well-behaved, focused, and showed interest in their work. Student achievement in the certificate examinations is good with a consistent increase evident in the levels of student attainment in recent years.

The school improvement plan outlines the whole-school strategies and targets in the area of teaching and learning. In order to link this plan more closely with subject-department planning, it is recommended that these strategies should be explored within a subject planning context with a view to making them part of classroom practice.

As the school has selected oral literacy as one of its targets for the year, it is recommended that subject departments, as part of their planning, explore how oral literacy could be further promoted in specific subject and classroom contexts.

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

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

Five subject inspections have been carried out in the school since 2006. The board of management reviews all inspection reports and there is evidence of a clear commitment by the board and senior management to address and implement the recommendations. The reports are used to promote professional dialogue and discussion both at subject department and at whole-school level. This allows for the development of best practice in all subject areas.

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

Progress in the implementation of recommendations is clearly documented and includes the development of collaborative learning, student participation and engagement and the use of ICT within the classroom.

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

Glanmire Community College's capacity for the management of change and for continued school improvement is very strong. There is a culture of self-evaluation and review in the school, and the school improvement plan reflects a focused and effective engagement in the school self-evaluation process. This has been achieved through consultation with the stakeholders, and through the collection and analysis of data. Progress in achieving the identified priorities is monitored closely, and the school self-evaluation model is used to ensure that there is appropriate analysis of the impact of the identified priorities. The planned evaluation of the outcomes of the school improvement process should continue to provide new insights for the school community.

# **Appendix**

**School response to the report**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

1. The Board welcomes the fact that the report provides a strong endorsement of the high quality practice that permeates all aspects of our school culture.
2. It is a core value of our school that all students are cared for and safe and that each student feels this to be the case. The Board welcomes the inspectors' finding that "the care of students and the support structures" needed for this "are of a high quality". The Board feels that the acknowledgment of high quality care and support indicated to various stakeholders in oral feedback and described in the body of the report, was not reflected in the more measured language used in the key findings summary of this area of school life.
3. It is a core value of our school that every student has an excellent learning experience in our school. The Board welcomes the inspectors' findings that the school is "committed to facilitating high quality student learning" and that students are empowered "to become independent learners". It also welcomes the fact that the inspection team found that the quality of teaching and learning was in the top quartile.
4. The Board is pleased that, based on the results of the survey conducted by the inspection team, 98% of parents surveyed agreed that the school was well run. Additionally, over 97% of our parents expressed themselves to be happy with the school.
5. The Board is pleased that, based on the survey of students conducted by the inspection team, the feedback from students indicates similarly high satisfaction levels as those recorded for parents.
6. The Board notes that the report acknowledges and supports the "high quality leadership" found by the inspection team in the school. In particular, the Board is pleased that the report affirms the "good leadership for learning" evident in our school.
7. The report finds that the school improvement planning and the management of change is an area of significant strength in our school. The Board feels that it is important to record, that the school is currently using a "Concerns Based Adoption Model" as the theoretical framework underpinning all change management processes in our school, including school improvement planning and school self-evaluation. The Board considers it imperative that any analysis of SIP and SSE in our school, should contextualise current practice within the CBAM model of change management.
8. The Board welcomes the fact that the inspection team recognise the strength of partnership between staff, students and parents in our school, as this is the bedrock of our community of learners.
9. The Board wishes to thank all stakeholders of Glanmire Community College for the contribution that they have made to our school. In particular it wishes to thank the staff, students and parents/guardians.

**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 will now seek to engage all stake holders in our school, in a process of critical evaluation of this report. The school will seek to evaluate how the report can contribute to the future planning and development of our school.