

**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>	Ramsgrange Community School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ramsgrange New Ross Co Wexford
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	91431Q

**Date of Evaluation: 01-04-2019**



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**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 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, 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	01-04-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with board of management</li><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</li><li>• Meetings with key staff</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Student focus-group 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

Ramsgrange Community School is a co-educational post-primary school with 433 students serving the community of South County Wexford. The school provides a broad range of curricular programmes including the Junior Cycle programme, Junior Certificate School Programme, optional Transition Year (TY) programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied, and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is very high; there is a highly effective senior management team, a committed board of management and a dedicated, collaborative middle leadership and staff working diligently to deliver a positive learning environment for students.
- The principal and other leaders in the school effectively foster a culture in which learning flourishes, they lead the school community to strive for excellence by promoting continuous improvement through teamwork, action research, action learning and reflective practice.
- Students have access to a broad curriculum at both junior and senior cycle; nonetheless there are some aspects of future curricular provision that require consideration.
- Highly effective policies and practices support students' educational, social and personal wellbeing; it is an inclusive school which values diversity and partnership with the local community.
- The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons was very good or good; however, there was scope to further develop and embed formative assessment, differentiation, and attainment tracking strategies in daily classroom practice.
- The principal and deputy principal, supported by the DEIS core team, have developed a strong culture of school self-evaluation (SSE) action planning for improvement with good teaching and learning targets and actions identified; however, monitoring of progress and embedding of whole-school practices is not as effective.

#### Recommendations

- The board of management should consult students and parents as part of a review of the current curriculum to explore the viability of potential new Junior Cycle short courses and extending the range of the subjects offered at senior cycle.

- All teachers should further develop and implement in daily lessons formative assessment, differentiation and attainment tracking practices to support improved student outcomes.
- The SSE/DEIS team should systematically monitor the SSE agreed actions to evaluate the impact of the identified teaching and learning strategies on learner outcomes.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

The principal and other leaders in the school effectively foster a culture in which learning flourishes. They lead the school community to strive for excellence by promoting continuous improvement through action research, action learning and reflective practice. They maximise opportunities to develop teachers' capacity and competence to improve teaching and learning by providing whole-staff continuing professional development training and encouraging teacher leaders to become involved with Forbairt, the Professional Development Service for Teachers action learning programme. It is commendable that high numbers of staff have attended learning and teaching training programmes and are enthusiastic participants in instructional leadership courses, team teaching, peer-observation and reflection on practice.

The board of management and teachers successfully foster students' holistic development by providing a broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities. The school provides students with access to the complete suite of junior and senior cycle programmes. The curriculum range has developed with the introduction of new JC modules such as Coding, the introduction of Music, further development of Art, together with new subjects in TY. It is positive to note there is an advisory board of studies currently investigating the viability of one-hour lessons and considering JC short courses to meet the specific needs of students in areas such as fisheries and farming. During the evaluation, some students and parents expressed an interest in subjects such as additional Modern Foreign Language options, Physical Education, and Politics and Society. As part of a full curriculum review, it is recommended that the advisory board survey students and parents about these options and assess how appropriate the curriculum is for the changing needs of students. It was observed that in some practical subjects the gender balance was not as good as it could be; the reasons for this are not clear and warrant further investigation so that appropriate action can be taken to improve uptake of these subjects with both genders.

Those with leadership and management roles very effectively promote an inclusive school community which demonstrably values diversity and challenges discrimination. Students are active participants in worthwhile anti-bullying activities including a gender equality pilot programme. The fifth and sixth year students led and organised the *Just be You (LGBTIQ+)* event. There are many valuable extra-curricular activities for students including sports, non-sport activities, social justice groups, mathletes, choir, craft club, peace advocacy group, chess club, and creative arts activities.

Highly effective policies and practices support students' educational, social and personal well-being, including high-quality and innovative programmes that promote wellbeing, resilience, positive relationships, meditation and mindfulness. The student support team structures and practices are very efficient; there are weekly meetings, clear referral pathways and a wide range of supports and qualified personnel involved, including a full-time chaplain and home school community liaison (HSCL) teacher. Both the guidance and additional education needs (AEN) departments are highly

effective and committed to delivering a high quality service for students. It is evident that student care and welfare is given a very high priority by all staff especially those with designated support roles such as tutors, year heads, chaplain, guidance counsellor, learning support teachers, behaviour for learning teacher, HSCL, and the ASD team.

It is commendable how senior management and the AEN department have planned and very efficiently deployed resources using the continuum of support model through widespread subject-specialist team teaching, appropriate small group work, supplemented by individual student withdrawal. The AEN team should continually evaluate the effectiveness of team-teaching partnerships and the subjects selected for team teaching to ensure it is the best model of targeted support for identified students. It is praiseworthy that there are three members of the AEN team with postgraduate learning support qualifications and further training completed in ASD and other learning issues.

Mainstream teachers are very well supported by appropriate sharing of student support files, baseline information, and a wide range of beneficial resources are available to assist teachers working with students with identified needs. Progress is monitored regularly by communicating with parents, progress reports, and a new tracking and monitoring system. It is recommended that senior management further develop use of this new monitoring and tracking system and explore how to link it into school house exam reporting systems, in conjunction with students' use of self-tracking in their school journals.

Very effective programmes are provided to support student wellbeing and self-management. The behaviour for learning teacher works strategically to support improved student behaviour and outcomes through a range of initiatives.

### **Managing the organisation**

The board of management and the principal are fully aware of their statutory obligations, and ensure timely compliance with all legislative and policy requirements with a very good rolling systematic review of policies. Board members receive a detailed pack of information in advance of board meetings and members have a very good understanding of junior cycle reform, DEIS action planning for improvement and SSE. The board has employed good strategic oversight and ensured a recent upgrade of the school's Wi-Fi and computer room facilities while supporting an application for an ASD unit. The board should ensure the new code of behaviour and inclusion policies, which are currently under review, reflect the full range of very good practices such as positive behaviour strategies, restorative practice and inclusion strategies promoted.

The principal and deputy principal very effectively lead and manage the organisational structures and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school which begins with a daily meeting to plan and discuss issues. By strategically making the best use of their specific skills and complementary strengths they have identified clear roles and responsibilities. Senior management model and have developed a strong culture of mutual trust, respect and shared accountability. They foster a very positive school climate and encourage respectful interactions at all levels. Commendably, staff spoke of a 'high-trust' model of leadership while students and parents described an open door policy and how their ideas have been welcomed.

The principal effectively promotes a culture of collaborative review and meets formally on an annual basis with middle leaders and programme co-ordinators to discuss their work; all other teachers are welcome to discuss any issues with the principal as they arise. The principal should extend the formal collaborative review process to include an individual meeting with each teacher to review, critically analyse and evaluate their practice and professional development needs using *Looking at Our School, 2016 (LAOS)*.

## **Leading school development**

The principal takes responsibility for communicating the guiding vision and does so very effectively, working with the board and the whole school community to translate the vision into daily practice. The vision is stated as '*RCS – Respect, Community, Success*' by '*promoting an atmosphere of respect, honesty and fairness*' and during meetings it was evident that students, staff and parents believe the school culture exemplifies these values.

The principal and deputy principal recognise that a crucial part of their role is to lead and manage action planning for improvement. It is commendable they have developed their own senior management three year action plan for improvement linked to the overall school action plan. They are working diligently to ensure that improvement plans are put into action on a whole-school basis. Nonetheless, it is important that the senior management team oversee the systematic monitoring of agreed actions and targets and seek regular progress reports as it was evident that progress has not been fully achieved, at a whole-school level, on some learning and teaching classroom practice improvement targets such as formative assessment.

The principal and deputy principal demonstrate a clear understanding of change processes and approach the management of change in a collaborative, flexible and sensitive manner. Over a series of meetings the staff were introduced to LAOS where senior management guided subject departments in how to critically evaluate their own learning and teaching practices. During the recent middle leadership responsibilities review process, staff effectively used LAOS to assist them in identifying the needs and priorities of the school. This is very good self-reflective practice.

The principal and other leaders in the school value and support partnership with parents as a means of supporting students' learning and wellbeing. There is a significant number of parents involved in school activities and policy formation. In particular, the HSCL teacher has built and maintained very constructive and mutually beneficial relationships with parents and the wider community through workshops for parents, parents in the classroom activities, reading and literacy initiatives, coffee mornings and gardening activities. There are very good links with local primary feeder schools. The school is an authentic community school, hosting a variety of local community events thus placing it at the heart of the community.

## **Developing leadership capacity**

The senior management team regularly review their own and each other's professional practice and have developed very good self-awareness by regularly questioning their own practice through personal and collaborative reflection.

Senior management effectively encourages teamwork in all aspects of school life. They create and motivate staff teams and working groups to lead developments in key areas including team teaching, wellbeing and positive behaviour. Teachers have been empowered to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, through the effective use of distributed leadership. It is commendable that the assistant principal teams meet regularly to discuss school development and view their roles as greater than the identified post duties.

The principal, supported by the induction team, provides and manages a very effective mentoring programme which supports teachers in new roles and develops the leadership capacity of the seven *Droichead* mentors. The school welcomes and regularly provides placements for student teachers.

It is praiseworthy that students are recognised by those in leadership and management roles as stakeholders, value their views, actively consult and engage with students to review and improve teaching, learning and assessment practices through frequent SSE surveys. They ensure students' involvement as partners in the operation of the school by consulting them for their views on policies, inclusion strategies, team teaching, homework, and the code of behaviour. The principal meets

student representatives and communicates weekly with the students' council by email. They support students in taking leadership roles by providing opportunities for students to lead school initiatives such as *'Maths in Your Eyes'* and participation at school events and open nights.

Teachers successfully support the professional development of their peers, and contribute very purposefully to the professional learning community. Both members of the senior management team have attended leadership training and the principal is actively involved with the Centre for School Leadership through the coaching programme and is providing training to new middle leaders. This is to be commended.

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

Twenty lessons across a range of subjects and programmes were observed. The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in most lessons visited with some exemplary practices noted.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

Student behaviour was very good and students were well organised. In the majority of lessons, students were engaged or highly engaged in learning and classroom interactions were highly respectful and positive, and conducive to well-being.

In a small number of lessons in which learning was not as effective, teachers did not provide opportunities for students to be as active in their learning and learn collaboratively. Collaborative learning experiences were highly effective when tasks were clearly explained and aligned to learning intentions. It was positive to note that group work roles and responsibilities were delegated clearly and students had sufficient time to complete activities which included adequate time for students to provide feedback on their own and others' learning. In a minority of lessons, there was scope to develop these very good practices.

Highly effective student engagement was observed when a balance was achieved between teacher and student voice. In all lessons, students were confident to ask questions. However, a significant minority of lessons were teacher-led, and students had limited opportunity to talk, discuss and lead learning. Teachers should prioritise opportunities for students to share their opinions, ideas and experiences in all lessons.

Exemplary practice was noted when students utilised success criteria to inform their judgements when completing self and peer-assessments. In these instances, opportunities were provided for students to share their evaluative judgements with others and to justify their decisions. There is scope to extend and share this very effective practice across all subject departments by facilitating professional teacher peer observation during lessons.

Students demonstrated good subject knowledge and skill in the majority of lessons. There has been a notable increase in the uptake of higher level and a recorded improvement in attainment in a significant number of core subject areas.

Commendably, student homework journals contain attainment tracking graphs for students to record grades. However, these charts are inconsistently used. Teachers should encourage and support students to record results and reflect on progress on a regular basis.

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

Teachers had high expectations of students' work and behaviour and communicated these expectations clearly to students in almost all lessons visited. In many cases, teachers modelled enthusiasm for their subject and skilfully maximised student engagement by presenting content as relevant to students' lives. Teachers were very affirming of students' contributions and progress.

There was evidence of effective advance planning and preparation for all lessons. In some instances, teachers had chosen suitable video clips to enthuse students and stimulate discussions. Highly effective practice was noted when students were set a task which was aligned to the learning intentions, in advance of viewing the video clip, and adequate time was allocated to processing and reflecting on learning.

Formative assessment practices were satisfactory overall. In less than half of the lessons observed, learning intentions were not clearly stated in terms of learning. Best practice was observed when learning intentions clearly described what students should know, understand and be able to do at the end of the lesson. Exemplary practice was evident when teachers revisited and assessed learning intentions during the lesson and facilitated students to reflect on their progress using various whole-class assessment strategies.

Teachers' questioning of students was the main form of in-class assessment and in many instances questioning was very effective. Best practice was observed when teacher questioning required students to engage in higher-order thinking and a balance was achieved between global and directed questions. In a minority of lessons observed, global questioning was favoured and this was not as successful in engaging students.

Best practice was evident when teachers differentiated their questions to enable students of all abilities to experience success. In almost all lessons, however, learning was not differentiated and content was delivered in the same way for all students. It is recommended that teachers plan for and utilise, differentiated learning intentions, methodologies and assessment tasks both during class and as homework, to ensure all students are appropriately challenged and supported.

In the student questionnaires, it is positive to note that most students agree that teachers talk to them about how to improve their learning. This was also evident in classrooms, as most teachers provided good formative feedback to students. However, having reviewed student copybooks little written developmental formative feedback was evident on students' work. It is recommended that written formative feedback be provided by teachers on key pieces of student work. A whole-school approach should be considered and agreed as to how students can record teachers' oral feedback during lessons and how students can utilise and respond to written formative feedback to improve their work.

It is commendable that teachers are proactive in building collective expertise in the skills and approaches necessary to facilitate student learning for the future and are willing to share resources and strategies with their colleagues through team-teaching, peer observation, and collaborative planning.

It is good practice that all subject plans follow an agreed template which has been designed by senior management. Highly effective practice was observed when teaching and learning strategies were central to action planning for improvement. In some instances, programmes of work were included as part of subject department plans. This practice should be extended to all subject plans.

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

#### **Leadership and Management**

Overall very good progress has been achieved on previous leadership and management recommendations, including those in the whole-school inspection in 2007. More recent recommendations such as a review of the guidance programme have been instigated. As an



outcome of the DEIS evaluation, DEIS planning is now a constant agenda item at all staff meetings and an attendance strategy has been developed to address student absences.

### **Teaching and Learning**

There has been some very significant programme developments in TY, SPHE, and RSE. Planning for TY has improved; the curriculum has been updated, organisation and planning of work experience has been reviewed, a common planning template is utilised, and a core TY planning team meets regularly. The TY team should prioritise the introduction of e-portfolios as part of the digital learning plan.

While there has been good progress on learning and teaching recommendations there remains scope to embed the whole-school targets and actions to be implemented by all teachers in daily classroom practice such as differentiation and written formative assessment practices.

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

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

In the current plan (2018-21), the process for target setting is effective and based on analysing relevant data and identifying priorities for improvement. Targets are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) and are periodically adjusted according to evidence gathered. Plans are shared effectively with teachers, students and parents.

However, while the improvement plans are put into action effectively, there remains scope to further monitor agreed actions from both phase one and the current phase of SSE to evaluate the impact on daily classroom practices to assess if they have become fully embedded.

Good progress has been made with the literacy and numeracy targets to increase the uptake of higher-level English and Mathematics, reading for pleasure and to improve students' confidence in reading and speaking aloud in lessons.

Staff are highly engaged with the current teaching and learning team-teaching initiative with almost half the staff team teaching. The current other improvement area is homework. The targets should be linked to how students monitor and evaluate their progress through formative assessment practices and attainment tracking.

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

There is very good capacity for school improvement with a dynamic senior management team, motivated middle leadership and teacher groups, a committed board, highly engaged parents and students all willing to work together to move the school forward as a learning community grounded in respect, community and success.

## 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 of Management acknowledges that the inspection report states that "The overall quality of school leadership and management is very high, there is a highly effective senior management team"

The Board of Management acknowledges that the inspection report states that " It is evident that student care and welfare is given a very high priority by all staff' and, "in the majority of lesson students were engaged or highly engaged in learning and classroom interactions were Highly respectful and positive and conducive to wellbeing"

The Board Of Management was very happy that the report stated, "The school is an authentic Community School...thus placing it at the heart Of the community".

The Board of Management was very happy that the report stated, "students are active participants in worthwhile anti-bullying activities including a Gender Equality pilot programme".

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

- A whole school curriculum review has been ongoing since February 2018 and will continue until its completion, the school will then begin a cycle of review on changes made.
- The introduction of new subjects/short courses will be explored and dependent on demand, DES allocation and expertise within staff.
- An Action Plan is currently being devised by the SMT in terms of the systematically monitoring of agreed actions. This plan will begin in September 2019.
- Although an 'Open Door' policy exists in our school and the principal meets very regularly with staff a more formal and structured meeting will be put in place using LAOS 2016 in order to 'critically analyse and evaluate practice' as per inspection report recommendation.