An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Crana College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Crana Road Buncrana County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71140Q

Date of Evaluation: 19-01-2018

AN ROINN DEPARTMENT
OIDEACHAIS OF EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA AND SKILLS

What is 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; a response was not received from the board.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	19 January 2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with board of management • Meetings with principal and deputy principal • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus-group interview • Meeting with parents	• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Crana College operates under the patronage of Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB). There are 549 students enrolled currently: 241 girls and 308 boys. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. All curricular programmes, including an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, are offered.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Leadership and management are very good and the school is very well run; enrolment is approaching full capacity and this is putting pressure on aspects of school infrastructure.
- Very high-quality care is provided for students and provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) is good overall; however, a significant portion of the SEN allocation is being directed currently towards providing wider curricular choice for all students.
- Distribution of leadership is excellent and consultation processes are inclusive and comprehensive.
- Observed teaching and learning were very good overall; there was scope for improvement in some lessons, however.
- There has been very good progress in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations.
- Overall, the school improvement planning processes and capacity for improvement are very good; there is scope for the school to further inform parents of its improvement priorities and progress reports.

Recommendations

- The board of management should review its enrolment policy and practices in light of the facilities available.
- School management should ensure that all of the SEN resources allocated to the school are used for their intended purpose.
- The established practice of sharing the professional learning gained from engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) and collaborative experiences within the school and the wider ETB should be exploited so as to extend the highly effective teaching and learning practices observed.
- Relevant DEIS priorities for development, the school self-evaluation (SSE) report and school improvement plans should be shared with the whole school community including parents, as appropriate.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is very good.

Leading learning and teaching

Leadership for learning is of a very high standard. The senior management team is committed to valuing existing expertise while ensuring that teaching and learning benefit fully from new programmes and practices. The principal and deputy principal are open to initiatives and proactive in providing all of the necessary supports and resources to deliver positive change. SSE is used to very good effect in supporting improvement in the school.

The leadership style of the principal and deputy principal promotes innovation and creativity. Ideas are welcomed and teachers are supported to develop initiatives according to their interests and talents. The members of the senior management team engage actively in CPD themselves. Throughout the evaluation, staff and students alike expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the school and described it as a positive place to work and learn.

A number of teachers are associates with the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) initiative. Their expertise is used very well to promote and share good practice. Additionally, programmes such as *Driochead* and *Instructional Leadership* have been used effectively to develop valuable collaborative practices. There is also very good engagement with other schools through participation in ETB cluster planning groups. Some teachers engage in peer lesson observation and review; this very beneficial practice should be developed further throughout the school.

There is a comprehensive transfer programme for first-year students. Student mentors play a very important role in supporting new students. The school maintains very good links with feeder primary schools, parents and outside support agencies. The information gathered from such sources is used very effectively to provide targeted support to students.

A very wide range of subject and programme options is provided for students. A valuable subject sampling programme is provided for first-year students, and senior-cycle students are given an open menu on the basis of which the subject option bands are created. A very high-quality TY has been introduced. Achievement, effort and contribution are celebrated appropriately through the school's awards systems.

Provision for students with SEN is good. There is very good use of data and the continuum of support to identify students' needs. Highly effective communication between the SEN team and mainstream teachers takes place. Teacher expertise is used effectively to meet the needs of students. However, a significant portion of the SEN allocation is being directed currently towards providing wider curricular choice for all students. School management should ensure that all of the SEN allocation is used for its intended purpose.

There are three students enrolled in a class for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). Students are provided with a high level of support within the ASD class and are included in mainstream lessons, social activities and school events commensurate with their needs.

Overall, the quality of care provided for students is very good. The student support team and the wellbeing team meet weekly to coordinate supports for students experiencing difficulty. Every teacher sees it as their duty to be alert to students' well-being needs but the guidance department, year heads and form tutors play a particularly important role in this regard. The students in their focus group meeting were very appreciative of the care they receive from school staff.

The home-school-community-liaison co-ordinator, through his links with parents and guardians, provides essential support to those students who are most at risk of non-attendance and leaving school early. There is an attendance officer in the school and attendance records are well maintained. The rate of attendance is good.

The school provides courses for parents in a range of areas including Mathematics. The supports received from the School Completion Programme, including a breakfast club, homework club and a variety of extra-curricular activities, are highly effective.

Very high-quality guidance is provided for students. There is a full-time guidance counsellor whose time is divided between timetabled guidance lessons and individual appointments for career advice and personal counselling. There is also a part-time teacher with a qualification in counselling who concentrates on the personal counselling aspect of this work.

Managing the organisation

The board of management supports the management of the school well. The minutes of board meetings show a very high level of oversight and monitoring. Child protection, school finance, and SSE are standard agenda items. The board's policy development and review processes are effective and include appropriate consultation with relevant members of the school community. All of the mandatory school policies are in place. The surveys administered as part of the evaluation indicate scope to improve communication between the board and the wider school community. This matter should be investigated further and addressed at school level.

Enrolment practices are very inclusive. However, there is a reference in the admissions policy to conditional enrolment of students with SEN. This reference should be removed in the next review of the admissions policy.

The parents' association (PA) provides valuable support. The members of the PA are appropriately consulted in relation to policy and decision making. Commendably, the school is focusing on promoting positive attitudes to school amongst parents and to equipping them with the skills to support their children's learning and to communicate the value of their education.

The principal and deputy principal manage the day-to-day running of the school in a highly effective manner. They demonstrate a very good working relationship and have agreed roles and responsibilities. They share the school's vision which is to 'inspire every student to learn, to think, to care and to achieve'. They demonstrate accountability by closely monitoring student outcomes and the use of resources. They have an approachable style of leadership that helps to support, empower and encourage leadership and creativity amongst staff.

Student behaviour was observed to be exemplary. Restorative justice practices are embedded and very effective in encouraging students to take responsibility for their behaviour. The code of behaviour is based on respect and fairness; it outlines a reward points system as well as sanctions. There is a clear ladder of referral for managing students. Positive relationships throughout the school are central to maintaining high standards of behaviour.

Leading school development

The board of management is highly committed to driving school development. It is encouraging and supportive of CPD for staff. The board has overseen significant improvement recently in information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, expansion of the curriculum to include coding and *Level 2 Learning Programmes* (L2LPs), and the widespread promotion of *Instructional Leadership* in teaching and Learning.

The board's work in recent times has been dominated by its plans for a new school which now has Department approval. There remains difficulty over securing a site. Student numbers are approaching a maximum currently and the school is reliant on additional temporary accommodation. The school reports pressure on basic facilities such as toilets and lockers. While the school has not yet had to refuse enrolment, projected demand for school places indicates that this may be necessary in the near future. In preparation for this eventuality, the board should review its enrolment policy and practices in light of available facilities.

Developing leadership capacity

Leadership capacity is being developed very well within the school. Distribution of leadership is excellent. The middle-management system provides very high-quality support to the operation of the school. Teachers' initiative is encouraged very well and ideas are acted upon. There is extensive volunteerism amongst teachers who willingly take on additional roles and duties.

The posts of responsibility have been reviewed recently and meet the needs of the school very well. Overall, the duties attached to posts of responsibility are sufficiently substantial. Currently, however, there are four teachers dedicated to co-ordinating individual curricular programmes with one post-holder having overall responsibility for coordinating all programmes. There is scope to streamline this arrangement so as to avoid duplication of tasks and make the system more efficient.

Students are given very good leadership opportunities through participation on the student council, the student leadership team, and as mentors for first-year students. Students' inclusive activities are celebrated in the school's awards system. It would be worthwhile to provide opportunities for student representatives to address the board of management and for the student voice to be facilitated as means to further inform teaching and learning.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall. There was scope for improvement in some lessons. The established practice of sharing the professional learning gained from engagement with CPD, and collaborative experiences within the school and the wider ETB should be exploited to extend the use of the highly effective teaching and learning practices observed.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Learner outcomes and experiences ranged from good to very good over the lessons observed. The warm and encouraging relationships that exist between students and their teachers are a particular strength of the school and were seen to have a positive effect on learning.

In most lessons, students worked well together in pairs or groups. Highly effective use of peer-learning approaches was evident. Relevant tasks were well designed and pitched at an appropriate level to challenge and engage students and plenary sessions were used effectively to consolidate learning. In a few lessons, there was scope to reduce the pace of teaching to facilitate deeper learning.

Students were observed to be confident in asking and answering questions. They derived much enjoyment from engaging in group-learning activities that involved discussion and were respectful when sharing or listening to others' opinions. In particular, excellent examples of collaborative learning were observed when Leaving Certificate Applied students practised mock interviews in pairs and when music students composed and performed musical pieces in groups.

In the majority of lessons, students were facilitated to be independent and active agents in their own learning. This was not universal practice, however. The good practice of encouraging students to think for themselves should be extended to all lessons.

High-quality provision for students with SEN was noted in most lessons and was particularly effective when the teaching methodology supported appropriate differentiation. However, in a few lessons, there was a need for teachers to ensure that students with SEN were participating and engaging fully in all classroom activities. It is recommended that all lessons be planned with a view to optimising participation and engagement for all students including those with SEN.

Student outcomes in the certificate examinations are monitored by subject departments and senior management and show good levels of achievement. It is good practice that the mixed-ability arrangement in junior cycle allows students to develop as learners before decisions about subject levels are made.

The study club, available for all year groups, and the homework club for first years are valuable in promoting good study habits. There is a very effective student academic mentoring system which encourages students to reach their potential.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The quality of teachers' individual practice was very good overall, but some excellent practice was also noted. Teacher explanations and instructions were clear in all lessons. A good variety of methodologies was used. The learning objectives were shared with the students at the outset of all lessons. In a significant minority of lessons, there was scope to revisit the learning objectives to support assessment of learning.

In some lessons, there was highly effective use of mind maps, spider diagrams, place mats and brainstorming activities to support active engagement. These activities were particularly effective when used in revision activities to help develop good study techniques and student confidence, and to make learning more manageable.

In the main, teachers used questioning effectively to engage and assess students. In a few lessons, questioning was used to encourage investigation and discovery; this is very good practice. However, in a few lessons, there was a need for teachers to use higher-order questioning more effectively in order to facilitate deeper exploration of concepts and ideas.

Overall, the quality of teachers' individual lesson planning was very good. Most lessons included a wide variety of well-planned tasks. However, in a few lessons there was overuse of teacher instruction. Additionally, in a minority of lessons, while there were some good student-tasks used, the lessons lacked sufficient variety to engage students for the full duration. A range of engaging tasks should be planned for all lessons.

Teachers used keywords to good effect in progressing students' literacy skills. Best practice was seen where keywords were explored by the students themselves, and where spellings and elements of grammar were explained in context.

In the lesson observed in the ASD class, worthwhile, very well-established routines, based on effort and reward, were evident. The learning environment was warm and encouraging and the teacher-student relationships were observed to be excellent.

Teachers used a variety of modes of assessment to monitor learning effectively. They provided valuable and encouraging feedback to students, listened very well and accurately responded to students' contributions. In some lessons, success criteria were provided to facilitate peer assessment and student reflection, and this strategy worked very well. In one lesson, students' performances were videoed for assessment in a future lesson; this is innovative practice.

In the majority of lessons observed, there was good practice in relation to giving and correcting homework. Valuable research homework was given in some cases. However, a review of some student written work indicated a need for teachers to provide written formative feedback and to ensure that high standards of presentation are maintained. Additionally, the questionnaire responses suggest some issues around the amount of homework assigned to students. This issue should be investigated at school level.

ICT, such as video clips and electronic presentations, was used to good effect in some lessons. Homework assignments and lesson notes are shared on an electronic platform also. Developing the use of ICT was a recent focus of the SSE process. While there was good use of ICT evident in some of the classrooms visited, there remains scope for an extension of its use.

Teachers' collective practice is of a very high standard. Sharing good practice in teaching and learning is the focus of this year's SSE work. There is a significant cohort of teachers trained in a variety of valuable teaching approaches and involved in delivering external CPD training. Collaborative peer observation and review practices should be further developed for sharing this highly valued expertise.

Teachers engage both formally and informally in lesson and subject planning. Curricular planning also benefits considerably from collaboration with local schools in the ETB. This collective engagement is particularly valuable for teachers of one-teacher subject departments.

The quality of subject planning ranged between very good and good across the different subject plans reviewed during the evaluation. The best plans outlined programmes of work in terms of learning to be achieved within a given timeframe. They also included an analysis of certificate examination results as well as evidence of teacher reflection and action planning. Commendably, all reviewed plans were informed appropriately by the DEIS/SSE plans and included Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) statements of learning. The subject plans are stored electronically and resources are hyperlinked for convenient use in classrooms.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

The school has made very good progress in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations in respect of leadership and management. Recommendations made in individual subject inspections have been implemented across the school.

Teaching and Learning

The lessons observed showed good implementation of previous recommendations in respect of teaching and learning. The most commonly made recommendation was to include lesson activities that facilitate students' active engagement. While most lessons had a good variety of methodologies and students were observed to participate well overall, there remains scope for fuller implementation of this recommendation.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

Overall, the SSE and DEIS planning processes are very good. The school is at the baseline data gathering stage of a new phase of DEIS planning. This work is progressing in a very thorough and meaningful manner. The use of the six-step SSE process is developing in conjunction with the DEIS planning process. Improvement planning is led effectively by a teacher coordinator, the principal, and the deputy principal.

There is a culture of reflection in consultation and decision-making practices. Parents, teachers and students have been surveyed on a range of areas of school life. Teacher consultation groups have also been established to drive improvement. The student council fulfils an important role in representing the students' views, but there is scope to extend their reflection and feedback on teaching and learning. There is scope for the school to further inform parents of its improvement priorities and progress reports; this should be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has a very good capacity for improvement. There is evidence of a genuine embracing of new programmes and initiatives. Outside expertise and training is availed of and highly valued. There are very good systems for sharing practice amongst teachers. Decisions are made in a considered way that have the students' best interests at heart. There is a willingness amongst staff to embrace change and implement improvement.

5. CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to 1, 2 and 3 above but did not meet the requirements in relation to 4. At the time of the evaluation, not all teachers were yet aware that they were mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard. Plans were in place to provide training to address this matter.

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	*Very good* 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 *outstanding* 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	*Good* 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 *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	*Satisfactory* 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	*Fair* 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	*Weak* 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;