



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Midleton College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Connolly Street Midleton Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62370J
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	07-12-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	22/04/2024

What is a 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. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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 (revised 2023).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 (revised 2023).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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.5. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's policy on anti-bullying and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.

<p>and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).</p> <p>7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).</p> <p>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</p>	
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

<p>During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the boarding facilities' child protection procedures were conducted:</p>	
<p>Child Protection</p>	
<p>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the boarding facility.</p> <p>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board of management and includes an annual review and risk assessment.</p> <p>3. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).</p>	<p>4. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the <i>Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)</i>.</p> <p>5. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all boarding facility personnel on the <i>Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023</i>.</p> <p>6. Child Protection Records are maintained in a secure location.</p>

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Date of inspection	07-12-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with Board of Management• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 leadership team, board of management and teachers

School context

Midleton College, founded in 1696, is a fee-paying Church of Ireland, co-educational boarding and day school under the patronage of a board of governors. The board of governors are the trustees of The Midleton Endowed School. Educational and child protection operations are managed by the board of management, while the boarding, non-educational, and financial aspects fall under the control of the board of directors of Midleton College CLG. The school offered a broad curriculum comprising the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). At the time of the evaluation the college had an enrolment of 476 students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good and students were particularly engaged and motivated by high-quality lesson planning and preparation.
- Teachers' individual and collective practice was highly effective.
- The quality of school leadership and management was very good.
- The principal and deputy principal worked very well together and provided very good leadership for the school.
- The work of the board was highly effective and it was especially beneficial for the school that the board had a focus on teaching and learning.
- The school's culture, based on trust and respect, supported very good quality provision for students' wellbeing.

Recommendations

- As support for students identified with special educational needs was divided among a large number of teachers, the principal should establish a smaller core team of special education teachers to plan and deliver additional special education teaching supports.

- The use of digital devices, and the school's digital plan were under review. In this context the school should explore further possibilities for students' use of digital devices in their learning.
- In a number of subject plans common tasks were linked to the end of units of learning in junior cycle. As a means of advancing students' assessment literacy and to support a focus on effective feedback arising from assessment tasks, an approach to collaborative task design should be adopted by teachers in all subject plans.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Relationships between students and teachers and students and their peers were of a very high quality. Students were clear regarding the learning under way in all lessons observed. This was strongly supported in almost all lessons by the effective use of learning intentions to support students' awareness of where they were coming from in their learning and where they were going to. This was most effective where teachers returned to the learning intentions at the end of lessons to consolidate student learning. This incorporation of learning intentions as a point of reference throughout lessons should be pursued, where practicable.

Students displayed considerable competence when teachers organised them in pairs or groups to work together. They displayed ownership and responsibility for their learning and were facilitated well in these activities. In one instance where highly effective practice was observed students participated in an expertly planned co-operative learning activity. This incorporated their collaboration with peers in building an answer based around their Christmas examination and then supporting other groups so that an overall appreciation of the topic in question was developed. Other good practice observed supported student wait time as a means of developing their understanding in particular subjects. To consolidate and extend good practice already present, further exploration of the effective organisation of cooperative learning incorporating the key principles of wait time, accountability and security in learning might be pursued across subject departments. This should draw on professional expertise already present in the school.

Student awareness and use of the school's digital learning platform was evident on a number of occasions during the evaluation. Teachers shared notes and other resources with their students through the platform. On occasion, students used digital technology in lessons to support their learning. It was positive to note that the digital infrastructure was expanding to support this area. The expansion of the use of digital tools by students in classrooms is an area for development at whole school level. The digital key skills elements of the junior cycle curriculum will provide a useful support for this endeavour.

The school had identified feedback to students as its school self-evaluation (SSE) focus in the current cycle, as well as the development of student achievement in classroom-based assessments (CBAs). There was frequent evidence that subject departments had engaged in serious consideration of these areas.

In several subject plans, common tasks were linked to the end of units of learning in junior cycle. As a means of advancing students' assessment literacy and to support a focus on effective feedback arising from assessment tasks, an approach to collaborative task design should be adopted by teachers in all subject plans.

Students were particularly engaged and well-motivated when high-quality lesson preparation by teachers was observed. This often included the preparation of a range of subject specific resource material. Teachers should share best practice as to how differentiation could be used

more effectively to support and challenge all learners. This was particularly important in view of the emphasis which the school had placed on differentiation as a means of providing support to students.

Teachers individual and collective practice

Teachers' individual practice was highly effective in the lessons observed. Individual teachers were well prepared and had undertaken effective planning, and displayed high expectations of their students' behaviour and learning. Teachers frequently displayed an expertise in and passion for their subjects which was responded to in kind by their students. In all lessons a welcoming and safe environment was observed which supported student learning. Classroom management was universally very good.

Lessons were clearly structured and followed a logical progression. The use of questioning to focus on a topic and draw out learners' previous knowledge was well deployed in most lessons. In the very effective examples of questioning observed, teachers scaffolded student understanding to support learners to achieve their goals. Learner experiences in these lessons were very positive and created high expectations for students' achievement.

There were numerous examples of very good learning environments having been developed by teachers. These incorporated examples of student work, motivational posters, cultural displays and, in a number of instances, vocabulary displays. This was very positive, and this practice should be extended into all classrooms. To build on the good practice already evident, it was suggested that subject specific vocabulary and tier two words should be pursued within all classroom environments as a support for students' learning.

It was evident that there was a very good level of collaboration between teachers in the context of the school's subject department structure. The school's digital platform had been adopted as a key communication and planning tool between teachers. Subject departments had developed specific areas on the platform which included common time-linked plans as well as a wide range of shared print and digital resources. Subject departments utilised the platform's communication channels to share ideas and continuing professional development (CPD). A very positive feature of teacher collaboration was the leading of CPD by teachers on particular areas of interest. Such an approach was very effective, allowing for bespoke CPD in the context of the school.

Very good practice in assessment and feedback was observed in numerous lessons. Best practice was observed in those lessons where formative assessment strategies were used to check and acknowledge the progress made by students. This included: variously, retroactive feedback on students' examinations which was organised expertly; explicit sharing of key success criteria; and the explicit teaching of assessment skills to students. In one instance, particularly good practice was observed where areas for repair in students' learning had presented during a summative assessment task. Here the teacher placed appropriate emphasis on the process underpinning the tasks in question and worked in collaboration with the students in greatly developing their understanding.

2. Quality of school leadership and management

The quality of school leadership and management was very good overall.

Leading learning and teaching

Very effective leadership of teaching and learning was observed through the actions of both the senior leadership and middle management teams. The principal and deputy principal worked very well together and provided very good leadership for the school. Their commitment to the school was evident in their openness to new initiatives, and in their work to ensure that the school developed and progressed while maintaining traditions established in the school over many years.

The school's culture was based on trust and respect. The senior leadership team encouraged staff to develop teaching and assessment practices which place students at the centre of their own learning. Student voice was also important to the senior leadership team. In their answers

to questionnaires, students agreed that they were treated fairly and respectfully by both their peers and by the adults in the school.

The school offered a broad curriculum, with students undertaking eight subjects at Leaving Certificate. A very strong area was the provision of modern foreign languages with three languages available, French, German and Spanish. The Board and senior management had been proactive in developing the curriculum with the introduction of senior cycle Physical Education, Design and Communication Graphics, Home Economics, Politics and Society and Computer Science since the last whole-school evaluation (WSE). Teachers' attendance at CPD events was facilitated and the board had allocated a fund for staff to avail of further CPD opportunities.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was provided for all students in junior cycle. In addition, there was provision for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in all year groups in senior cycle. In a very small number of instances, it was reported that a very small number of students were withdrawn from SPHE lessons for additional support. While recognising that this had been done with the best intentions, it is important that all students are provided with the full SPHE programme and ideally should not be withdrawn from lessons with their peers. A number of workshops were provided for students in senior cycle, facilitated by external speakers. In addition, a range of projects dealing with this area were underway. A number of members of staff had recently undertaken training in this area and this development was strongly endorsed as it is important that members of staff are directly involved in the delivery of this subject. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan was also a welcome development and the school was encouraged to develop this area over the coming number of years, particularly in light of ongoing curricular developments at a national level.

The school regarded inclusion of all students as a core part of its mission. A special educational needs co-ordinator was in place. In addition, teachers had undertaken CPD in the area of special educational needs. The dedication and commitment of the special educational needs team to their work was very evident. It was very positive that the Board of Management and senior leadership had a commitment to increase the number of teachers with additional professional qualifications in the area of inclusion and special educational needs provision.

There were regular meetings between the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and senior leadership, as well as meetings with special-needs assistants (SNAs) and other groups of teachers. A Special Educational Needs Plan was in place. Induction was organised for teachers new to the special educational needs team. Very good communication processes were in place for teachers in mainstream classes regarding the needs of their students including guidance on how to address particular needs. It was notable that the school was seeking to further extend provision through the development of a GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) policy as well as applying for funding for a special class for students with autism.

A range of approaches were employed to provide support for students with special educational needs and this reflected the school's strong commitment to inclusion. Three quarters of the teachers in the school were involved in the provision of teaching supports for students identified with special educational needs. The senior leadership team should establish a smaller core team of special education teachers to plan and deliver these additional special education teaching supports. This team should: plan and organise the provision; provide specific, targeted supports for students with similar needs when withdrawn for such supports which aligns to their identified needs; facilitate communication between members of the core team and the wider teaching team; and optimise opportunities for collaboration and sharing of expertise.

Managing the organisation

The board of management was appropriately constituted. Members of the board provided valuable and committed service to the school. Board meetings were held regularly and were informed by the breadth of expertise of the individual board members, and by comprehensive reports from the principal. The work of the board was highly effective. The board was proactive in consulting students, teachers and parents on policy development. In addition, it had developed a fund to support teachers' professional development. The board had prioritised school improvement and strategic planning, and places students at the centre of its

deliberations. It was especially valuable that the board had a focus on teaching and learning which included inviting teachers to address board meetings on curricular developments.

Key policies had been developed and adopted by the board, such as the code of behaviour and an admissions policy, with students, parents and teachers included as part of the policy development process. An agreed report was communicated to the school staff following each board meeting. In addition, upcoming board meetings were listed in the school newsletter. Questionnaire responses from parents and teachers suggested there was very good communication regarding the board's activities.

There was very good communication between the school and parents. In their responses to the surveys, parents agreed that the school was a welcoming place, and that it was well run. A parent-teacher association was in place and met regularly. A very positive feature of the association was its role in supporting social aspects of school life, including links with the local community.

Leading school development

A review of the school's development plan was underway. It was notable that it was planned that this review will include all key staff in the school community and across five identified themes: academic, pastoral, financial, physical environment, and partnership. The school's strategic plan was supported by a comprehensive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. The SSE focus for the school had recently incorporated enhanced feedback procedures, while a new focus had been identified for the current cycle, including students' reflective practice after the completion of CBAs in junior cycle.

Computer Studies was timetabled, however the use of digital devices, and the school's digital plan were under review. This was highlighted by student responses to questionnaires which indicated their perception that they do not use digital devices often. In this context the school should explore further possibilities for students' use of digital devices in their learning, including the development of collaborative teaching and learning opportunities.

Developing leadership capacity

The principal and deputy principal regarded the building of teachers' leadership capacity as an important part of their role. This culture of distributed leadership had been facilitated by good communication between senior leadership and teachers with leadership responsibilities. This communication should now be used to facilitate the expansion of school leadership by the development of a year head structure.

During the focus group, students reported that members of the student council had good, clear and open communication with the senior leadership team. The student council reported regularly to the board on their ongoing work and their suggestions for areas of development. In addition, recently a boarders' council had also been established. Student voice and agency were valued and acknowledged by senior management and teaching staff.

3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

The quality of support for students' wellbeing was very good.

The Wellbeing programme for Junior Cycle was delivered through four hundred hours of timetabled engagement for students. It comprised the curricular areas of Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), PE, SPHE, RSE as well as Guidance and students' co-curricular and extra-curricular learning.

In the meeting with the parents' representatives, they spoke of the mutual respect fostered between teachers and students. They valued the clear expectations for students' behaviour which were communicated during the open day and throughout first year. In their responses to the survey conducted during the evaluation, a very high percentage of teachers agreed that the school's core values were being implemented well in its day-to-day life, and that their views were valued in the decision-making process. In their responses to the survey, students

were positive about the school. A high percentage of students stated that there was a good atmosphere in the school and that they got on well with other students. They were equally positive about how adults in the school treated everyone with respect.

The school had extensive facilities for sport including playing pitches and a new sports hall. Students could choose to participate in a variety of team and individual sports, as well as other activities. In the student focus group, a range of extra-curricular opportunities were mentioned positively. Parents also commented positively on the appearance of the campus and the attention paid to the history of the site. The school had acknowledged the link between nutrition and student wellbeing and provided healthy and varied meals in the dining hall for both boarders and day students.

The school had developed a notable equality, diversity and inclusion plan. The plan established a commitment to upholding the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion within the school. The purpose of the policy was to prevent discrimination, ensure equal opportunities for all, celebrate diversity, and promote an inclusive environment where every individual was respected and valued. This was a highly commendable objective.

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

Midleton College warmly welcomes the findings of the WSE-MLL report conducted in December, 2023. We are gratified that the report recognises the strength of our teaching, learning, and assessment practices, and highlights the effective leadership and management across our school community. It is particularly rewarding to have the inspection acknowledge our culture of trust and respect, which underpins the quality provision for our students' wellbeing. We appreciate the constructive feedback provided, which aligns with our continuous journey towards excellence in education.

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

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordination: In response to the recommendation to establish a smaller core team for SEN, we are currently reviewing our SEN provision to ensure a focused and cohesive approach. This will involve the professional development of our staff and the creation of a dedicated, compact team to enhance the support and outcomes for our students with additional needs.

Digital Learning Strategy: Acknowledging the recommendation to further integrate digital learning tools, Midleton College has commenced the process of updating our digital learning strategy. This involves investing in new technologies, training staff, and exploring innovative ways to incorporate digital devices into our learning environments, thereby enriching our students' educational experiences.

Collaborative Learning and Assessment Activities: In response to the recommendation for adopting a collaborative task design across all subject plans, Midleton College aims to incorporate this into our ongoing School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process. Recognising the importance of advancing students' assessment literacy and the value of effective feedback from assessment tasks, we will prioritise the development of collaborative task design as a key area of focus. Through this SSE target, we will foster a cohesive approach to learning and assessment, ensuring that all subject plans are aligned with our objectives for student engagement and achievement.