

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Carrigaline Community School  
Waterpark, Carrigaline, County Cork**

**Roll number: 91388S**

**Date of inspection: 10 February, 2011**

## **Whole-School Evaluation**

### **Management, Leadership and Learning**

*A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in February 2011 in Carrigaline Community School. 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, 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.*

### **Introduction**

*Carrigaline Community School was founded in 1981 on a green-field site. It is a nonselective, co-educational, non-denominational school providing a comprehensive education. Currently the school has an enrolment of 967. The school serves the community through the provision of an extensive programme of adult and continuing education.*

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

### **1.1 Key Findings**

- *The board of management functions effectively.*
- *Senior management demonstrates a number of the qualities of instructional leaders.*
- *Communication systems are very effective.*
- *The teaching staff is highly motivated and very focused on its continuing professional development.*
- *The school is focused on school improvement, and review is ongoing.*
- *The school is inclusive, and students are supported, guided and cared for.*
- *Student achievement is overtly celebrated.*
- *A broad and balanced curriculum is offered to students.*
- *Facilities are very good, and the physical environment is conducive to learning.*
- *Teaching and learning is very good, with some excellent teaching evident.*
- *Active consideration has been given by the board, senior management and the teaching staff, to recommendations provided in previous inspection reports.*
- *The school climate is most suited to progressing school self-evaluation.*

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

- *A review of the school's post schedule is recommended in the short term.*
- *It is recommended that the school collates documents already in existence, to form the permanent section of a school plan.*
- *A systematic re-testing of students in receipt of resource and learning support is recommended.*
- *It is recommended that management and staff seek to further embed self-evaluation in school practice, with a particular focus on the classroom and, therefore, on teaching and learning.*

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

### **2.1 School ownership and management – the Board of Management**

#### **Composition, functioning and fulfilment of statutory obligations**

*The board of management is properly constituted. Appropriate notification is provided for regular meetings. Good practice was noted in relation to the preparation and circulation of high-quality minutes and agendas. A finance sub-committee exists and a finance report is provided at each meeting.*

*Nominating bodies are kept well informed. Nevertheless, it is recommended that an agreed report be prepared following each meeting. With reference to Section 20 of The Education Act 1998, the board is advised to publish an annual report on the operation and performance of the school. Particular reference should be made in this to the achievement of annual objectives, as set out in the school plan.*

*Board members are clear on their collective role, as almost all members have accessed training. The board plays an active role in the management of the school, particularly in the areas of finance and resourcing, policy development and review, and recruitment. Members demonstrate a very good, working relationship. Discussion facilitates consensual decision making. Members are conscious of the legal framework in which they operate, with the principal keeping members informed in relation to legal requirements.*

*The board oversees the development of policies, discussing and contributing to each in advance of ratification. The majority of the legally required policies have been ratified. The board articulated its intentions to advance the development and ratification of any remaining required policies. Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Post primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's Child Protection Guidelines for Post-primary Schools (Published September 2004). Confirmation was also provided that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.*

*The board seeks to foster a relationship with both staff and students. The attendance of members at school events helps to ensure this, whilst providing opportunities to acknowledge students' attainments. In addition, the chairperson of the students' council is invited to make an annual presentation to the board.*

*The board has a number of strengths, each contributing to its effectiveness. These include: its sense of solidarity, which relates directly to the school's motto 'Together We Achieve'; its knowledge; its capacity to think progressively, and its acknowledgement of the value of review and reflection.*

#### **The school's priorities for development**

*The board is clear on the school's developmental priorities. These are focused on the provision of a relevant, comprehensive education, through the promotion of high quality teaching and learning. This is a praiseworthy approach. Resourcing and supporting teachers' ongoing professional development, are recognised as key factors in the realisation of these priorities, with much progress evident. It is suggested that the board's encouragement of and support for teacher self-evaluation, would further support the realisation of this priority. The board is conscious of its responsibilities in relation to school related achievements are significant. The work of the school's enrolment committee provides an example of the advantages to be gained from such an approach.*

## **2.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning**

### **Leadership of staff**

*The principal and deputy principal have a very good, working relationship. While their roles are clearly defined, a partnership approach is evident. The knowledge and experience garnered by them, through other roles held in the school, has provided a good basis in relation to understanding school operations and in relation to developing a vision of school leadership. Equally, it strengthens their capacity to empathise with the teachers, who share in the task of making the school work. Strong links to relevant professional bodies have been established. Senior management leads learning through a keen awareness of curriculum issues; good communication skills; the maintenance of a visible and informed presence; and the acknowledgement of work well done.*

*Delegation is a key operating principle of senior management, which allows the promotion of leadership opportunities among staff. This is embraced by the middle management team, as well as by the general teaching staff, many of whom have assumed voluntary responsibility for tasks deemed important to the school's successful operation. Post-holders carry out their assigned duties in an effective and committed manner, feeling empowered to explore alternative approaches to assigned tasks. In light of recent retirements, a review of the post schedule is advised.*

*The teaching staff is highly motivated. This can be attributed to the management and leadership styles of both past and current senior management teams, as well as to the school's recruitment practices. A comprehensive mentoring system for student teachers has been developed in the school, and an extensive staff handbook is prepared annually. The creation of learning opportunities for staff is a significant feature of the school. Teachers are encouraged and supported in relation to their own personal, professional development. Knowledge acquired on a personal level is disseminated to staff through the school's long-standing, teaching and learning committee. This committee supports the development of a shared and complementary expertise. Its establishment demonstrates the emphasis placed on instructional quality.*

*There is a clear focus on school improvement. A planning-for-betterment culture is evident in the work of all partners. The task-group approach to planning has been adopted, and much has been achieved. A school mission statement has been devised. Policies have been developed and reviewed and subject-department planning is well advanced. Ongoing review is part of school practice. School systems and procedures are monitored continuously, and subject departments submit annual progress reports to management. All of this is positive, with the ultimate outcome of improvement in the quality of students' experiences and achievement.*

*While the staff handbook includes key policy documents, the school is encouraged to collate documents already in existence, to form the permanent section of a school plan. Action planning at task-group level should be encouraged in all task groups, as this would provide the basis for the developmental section of a school plan. Communication within the school, as well as with parents, is very effective. The strength of internal, informal communication was noted. This is supported by a number of formal mechanisms exist, including weekly meetings of key personnel and Wednesday planning meetings.*

*Senior management, the teaching staff and the special needs assistants unite to form a community striving for excellence. They are supported in their efforts by a hard-working secretarial staff, who provide essential administration, and by an equally committed caretaking staff, who maintain an aesthetically pleasing, comfortable and safe environment. The student questionnaire, administered in the course of the evaluation, indicated that, in the main, students were proud to be in the school.*

## **Leadership of students**

*The school welcomes all students. Admission is supported by the existence of extremely comprehensive and excellent enrolment, induction and transition practices. The voluntary nature of the contribution requested on the enrolment form should be made clear. Provision for students with special education needs is founded on the principle of inclusion, with a clear consciousness around the need to provide additional supports, as necessary. The associated plan is well constructed, and focuses on the practical aspects of provision. Comprehensive, pre-admissions testing supports the school in providing for students. A systematic re-testing of students in receipt of resource and learning support is recommended. The model of provision is flexible, with withdrawal of students operating alongside co-teaching. Teachers' interest in engaging in co-teaching is very positive. Teachers are encouraged to explore other co-teaching configurations, when considering the potential for further developing practice. Well-developed support structures and systems exist for newcomer students.*

*A review of the school's Code of Behaviour is nearing completion, with inputs from students and parents planned. The students' council recognised the firmness of the code, and the fairness of the rules. These students also demonstrated a keen awareness of the basic principle that underpins the code, 'RESPECT'. The code indicates that positive behaviour is valued and encouraged. The recent establishment of a school-based, behaviour support group is helping to address repeated incidents of poor behaviour. Overall attendance rates for students are very good, and attendance is carefully recorded, tracked and monitored.*

*Year heads and assistant year heads play a pivotal role in the management and leadership of students, and in the promotion of respect for learning among students. Senior management's support for the role is evident in the provision of twice-daily assemblies, year-head offices, and year-group assembly areas. Class teachers also play a part in relation to the management of students, while simultaneously seeking to build a rapport based on encouragement and support.*

*An elected students' council, which is representative of all class groups, functions effectively. Annual action-planning and event reviews are positive features of the council's work, ones which were seen to support student leadership. A liaison teacher, together with an annual plan based on desired learning outcomes, supports the development of the council. An interesting outcome of the student questionnaire, and one which merits further exploration at school level, is the relatively low percentage of students who feel they have a say in how to make the school a better place. Students are actively pursuing Green Flag Status for the school.*

*Students' achievements, personal, academic and sporting, are overtly celebrated in the school. In addition to daily acknowledgement of achievement, both directly to students on a one-to-one basis and more publically over the school intercom, the principal also gives awards and an annual awards ceremony is organised. Students' successes in certificate examinations are formally recognised, as are high-achieving and scholarship-students.*

*Students are fully supported, genuinely cared for, and carefully guided during their time in the school and, in particular, at the key points of induction, transition and progression. This is reflected in the outcomes of the student questionnaire, where students indicated that they felt safe and cared for in the school. This can be attributed, in part, to high levels of communication, co-operation and collaboration amongst the key student support personnel. In the observation of teachers' interactions with students, it is clear too that supporting students is central to the work of all staff. Students helping students is an outlook that is also fostered. The whole-school guidance plan documents a very balanced whole-school*

*guidance curriculum, which details the school's formal and co-operative guidance programmes. The spiritual care of students is well provided for in the school. The role of the chaplain is significant here, as is that of the school's key catechists.*

*A key strength of the school's curriculum is its broad and balanced nature. The school's TY programme is very well constructed, with balanced provision for academic subjects and non-academic opportunities, modules, and activities. Students spoke favourably of their experience of TY. The school operates an open system of subject choice, and significant support is offered to both students and parents in relation to subject choice. An equally comprehensive programme of co-curricular and extracurricular activities, the majority of which are provided for on a voluntary basis by teachers, complements the school's academic curriculum. Such good quality provision is central to providing leadership for learning.*

*Overall, the timetable is very fair, with sound educational thinking evident in its construction and layout. Teachers sharing class groups, timetabled access to information communication technologies (ICT) for students studying the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the provision for Physical Education (PE) in third, fifth and sixth years were identified during the evaluation as areas for attention.*

### **2.3 Management of facilities**

*Responses to student questionnaires indicated very high satisfaction levels in relation to school facilities. The school building, while spacious, is at capacity. This is being addressed however, with plans to construct a large extension well advanced. The school plant and grounds are extremely well maintained, with the upgrading of key facilities addressed on an ongoing basis. Corridors, which are richly decorated with students' artwork, provide an impressive visual environment. Classrooms walls are well utilised to display students' work. As a result, the learning environment is attractive, comfortable, safe and stimulating. A small, but very efficiently run, school canteen, seeks to cater for the nutritional needs of both students and staff, delivered with an obvious sense of concern and care. The board of management, together with the senior management team, provide all the necessary resources for learning. Classrooms, including specialist rooms, are appropriately equipped. The school is well resourced in relation to ICT. The further enhancement of ICT is a priority in the school, and there are plans to equip all classrooms with data projectors. A comprehensive health and safety statement has been compiled, and audits are ongoing.*

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

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

*The overall quality of learning and teaching is very good, with some excellent teaching evident. Lesson planning was of a consistently high quality. A range of carefully chosen resources, including ICT-generated resources, was well utilised to support learning.*

*Directions provided on the board or via PowerPoint slides, often promoted independent student activity and learning.*

*Lessons were purposeful, well structured, appropriately paced, and content rich. Instruction was thorough and comprehensible, with the outcomes of the student questionnaire indicating that the vast majority of students felt that teachers explained things clearly. Lesson delivery was sometimes enthusiastic and energetic. On the whole, a variety of methodologies was used, with a good percentage demanding the active participation of students, often in pairs or small groups. Students responded favourably to this. The student questionnaire highlighted that this approach is the norm in the school, with a large*

*percentage of students agreeing that teachers provide opportunities for them to work with other students. In practical lessons, students followed established practices and procedures, and were conscious of safety. Independent student activity was monitored and supported. In language lessons, there was good use of the target language.*

*Questioning was well utilised, with a good mix of global, directed, lower-order and higherorder questioning evident. Recapitulation featured in almost all lessons, and a good show of hands, as well as quality student answering, indicated a high level of student learning. Students were given adequate time to respond to questions, with an appropriate degree of prompting by teachers in instances where students found a question difficult to answer. Homework was examined, corrected, monitored or assigned in most lessons. Student responses to the questionnaire also indicated that homework is assigned and checked regularly. An appropriate referencing of subject matter relevant to the certificate examinations was observed.*

*In the main, students were well behaved, co-operative and focused, and often enthusiastic. Good relations created positive classroom environments, where students participated happily and confidently. High, yet realistic, expectations are set for students, with the student questionnaire indicating that a high percentage of students agree that teachers encourage them to work to the best of their ability while, simultaneously, highlighting areas for improvement.*

*Teachers are encouraged to consider their own and their colleague's good practice as models to be promoted and emulated at school level. It is suggested, that the expansion and further development of two existing school practices, namely co-teaching and the student teacher mentoring programme, could be worthwhile in this regard.*

*Teachers, individually or as a subject department, are equally encouraged to undertake systematic and regular self-evaluation at classroom level. Examples of aspects of classroom practice that may merit exploration include: students' attitudes to a subject and what they perceive as the supports or obstacles to their learning; teacher and student practice in areas such as, for example, questioning, homework and feedback; practices that support student self-evaluation and peer-evaluation; and strategies designed to enhance students literacy and numeracy levels.*

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

### **4.1 Management**

*Recommendations from previous evaluation reports have been or are being addressed. Provision of ICT equipment is ongoing, which is facilitating the greater incorporation of ICT into lessons. To compensate for the lack of a school library, some class-based libraries have been developed. Work continues on a policy for newcomer students.*

### **4.2 Learning and Teaching**

*Recommendations relating to enhanced planning for teaching and learning are being considered and implemented by relevant subject departments. Recommendations provided in relation to teaching methodologies and assessment, including the assigning and monitoring of homework, are under active consideration by teachers. There is evidence of the reflective adoption of recommendations made in relation to provision for EAL students. The subject plans examined indicated that some thought is being given to how EAL students are catered for within the mainstream, subject classroom.*

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

*The school demonstrates an obvious capacity for change and improvement. The school climate is founded on trust, openness and collegiality, as well as a level of professionalism and knowledge that informs advancement agendas. The school is, therefore, very well placed to implement the 'next steps' in self-evaluation. This involves management and teaching staff defining and setting educational objectives on a school-wide basis, which are informed by baseline data. Following this, targets are set, and then initiatives are devised and implemented. The process concludes with the measuring of outcomes. It is suggested that the 'next steps' would include a focus on self-reflection and evaluation in the area of teaching and learning, and the related area of classroom practice.*