

**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>	Hartstown Community School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Clonsilla Dublin 15
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	91339F

**Date of Evaluation: 10-05-2018**



## **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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 5 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

## WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	08-10 May 2018
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

Hartstown Community School is a co-educational, multi-denominational second-level school serving the areas of Huntstown and Hartstown in Dublin 15. The school offers a range of curricular programmes, including junior cycle, the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The Transition Year (TY) programme is optional. The enrolment at the time of the evaluation was 1132.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good, with improvement recommended in some areas.
- Current class formation practices have been in place for a number of years and are based on ability groupings; it is timely that a review of such arrangements take place.
- The school prides itself on being a school for the community, and highly successful links have been established with local companies, with the wider parent body and third level institutions.
- Very good opportunities for student leadership are available and student care is considered as a key priority by the school; there is scope to further review certain SEN practices within the school.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good; there is scope to challenge students more and, commendably, staff have also identified this as an area to be progressed.
- The school has led a successful engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.

#### Recommendations

- The board of management and the senior management team (SMT) should develop and document a long-term actionable plan for the next phase of student academic development.
- Existing arrangements for class formations should be reviewed in light of evolving educational trends, recent junior cycle reform, and improving ability in cohort intake.
- A whole-school approach focussed on the development of further teaching strategies to support, motivate and challenge all students is advised; In particular, subject departments should formulate action plans, using accurate baseline data, to raise expectations and further improve overall student attainment within levels.
- A review of SEN practices within the school, as outlined in the body of the report, should take place in line with 2017 *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools* and Circular letter 0014/2017.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

The overall quality of leadership and management is good, with improvement recommended in some areas.

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

A very broad range of subjects is provided in the school, including recent additions such as Economics and Politics and Society. The school is also proposing to introduce other subjects, for example, Technology at senior cycle. A wide variety of languages is also available for study, including the traditional options and a mix of Asian and Eastern European languages; this subject range is informed by student demand and serves to cater for a diverse student population.

Timetabling arrangements are very good in terms of time allocated and the scheduling of subjects. A review of the timetable indicated thirteen class groups on one band in fifth year, resulting in some small class groupings. A curriculum review body could be usefully established to build on the work already undertaken in this area; this could examine the long-term sustainability of offering a wide range of optional choices within the timetable, as well as planning for the introduction of additional subjects and class formation at junior cycle within the current teacher allocation.

Well-being related provision includes appropriate timetabling allocation for Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education (PE) for all students. Commendably, the school has already timetabled provision for four hundred hour tuition in Wellbeing, in advance of the requirement to do so. In addition, the equivalent of two lesson periods a week is dedicated to the daily tutorial and daily assembly for each year group. 'Talking topics' are provided by the guidance department for tutorial time. To enhance this daily provision, it is important to ensure that the consistent delivery of a structured programme is achieved at tutor time.

Formal lessons for sixth-year students were suspended this year in mid-May, following which students were facilitated to meet with teachers on a needs basis. The impact of this practice on overall student attainment should be reviewed and the integrity of the school year observed.

On entry to the school, students are assigned to ability groupings. During the evaluation there was evidence of a lack of clarity among staff surrounding the terminology used to describe class formation practices, with various sources referencing streaming. In the context of junior cycle reform, and the positive ability testing data available within the school, it is now timely to review class formation practices, in order to maximise the potential and attainment for all students.

The principal and another member of the SMT prepare a comprehensive analysis of overall student attainment in certificate examinations. Improvements have been noted recently, in both attainment and uptake, in a number of subject areas. This is a very positive development that SMT attribute to a range of initiatives introduced over recent years. In order to build on these positive trends, SMT should oversee the implementation of action plans which should be set by subject departments and based on SMART targets for continued improvement. These plans should be informed by available baseline data and strategies should be developed to improve student attainment within levels, particularly in areas where poor outcomes have been noted. This would allow the subject departments to engage in a more structured approach to ongoing monitoring of emerging trends in attainment, as well as serving to further implement staff's view that students need to be challenged more.

As a key priority for the school, student care is prioritised through a very good range of supports. This includes a Chaplain, a psychotherapist and the services of three qualified Guidance Counsellors. Current structures also include a year head and assistant year head, as well as a tutor for each class group. Care team meetings are facilitated by SMT and Guidance features on the student timetables through a weekly period from TY onwards. Further opportunities for the Guidance team to meet periodically with junior cycle class groupings should be considered.

Very good knowledge regarding the provision of the Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) programme, as well as education on topics related to drugs and alcohol, emerged from the questionnaire findings. This is very positive for students.

Student progression to third level is tracked and monitored and the school reports an increase in those attending third-level institutions, with Blanchardstown Institute of Technology and the National University of Ireland (NUI), Maynooth, among the popular destinations for former students.

Co-ordination of SEN is divided primarily amongst two staff members, and the qualification profile of the SEN team is very good. At staff meetings, detailed presentations have been provided on a variety of SEN-related areas and the SNA provide weekly reports on individual students. This is very good practice.

The significant allocation for planning and co-ordination of SEN should be reviewed in future planning of SEN, with a view to maximising usage of the allocation. The majority of the SEN timetable and the support hours are constructed after the development of the main timetable resulting in almost half of the teachers in the school timetabled to provide support to students; this should be reviewed in future timetabling processes in order to build up the expertise of a smaller team.

A variety of SEN models is in operation in the school, including one-to-one tuition and small class groupings. The practice of withdrawing students from their base class during one of their scheduled lessons to receive support within the same subject should cease.

A portion of the current SEN resources is used to support core subjects in every year group within the school; In light of the earlier class formation recommendation, a review of such support should be undertaken in order to ascertain its overall impact.

The school is progressing a SEN policy in line with current guidelines. This policy should include the provision of support to students with English as an additional language (EAL) and this should allow for EAL to become more integrated into the overall SEN co-ordination. Overall, there is a need for a systematic review to ensure that the practices within the school are in line with the 2017 *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools* and Circular letter 0014/2017.

### **Managing the organisation**

The board is appropriately constituted, well informed, and undertakes training to fulfil its governance role. The collective expertise of board members is used to very good effect. The board demonstrated very good oversight in their discussions relating to a recent subject inspection and this included strategies to implement the recommendations arising out of that report.

The board keeps abreast of ongoing school developments through presentations they receive from teachers and the principal regarding teaching and learning initiatives within the school, and presentations from members of the students' council. It is also positive to note that findings emerging from questionnaires undertaken during the evaluation indicate that staff and parents consider the school to be well run.

It is good practice that overall student attainment is presented to the board and that concerns emerging from certificate examination results are discussed. It is commendable that improvements in attainment have been noted in a number of subject areas. In order to support similar improvements in other subject areas, it is suggested that the board should request follow up reports from subject departments where scope for improvement is identified. These reports should include strategies devised as a means to raise attainment and, at a later stage, the outcomes achieved following the implementation of such strategies.

All mandatory policies are in place and evidence was gathered that indicated very good practices that include all partners in policy review. At present, the post-holder responsible for school development planning monitors the ongoing needs for policy development and review. To further this very good practice, an overall policy framework document should be developed in order to allow for greater cyclical and systematic review of policies.

The characteristic spirit of the school is open, inclusive and positive; some aspects of the admissions policy could be usefully updated to provide greater clarity regarding the number of students admitted each year and the closing date for admission. Similarly, in the Parents Information Booklet, the annual requirement for students to re-register should be removed.

Overall, student behaviour was very good. The school's code of behaviour has been recently updated and provides a very good framework to promote appropriate student behaviour. Separate policies for suspensions and expulsions were recently ratified and clearly outline the procedures to be followed in either instance. However, the suspension policy should be further reviewed to provide greater clarity as to procedures for its implementation. The board should also receive periodic summary reports on the number of bullying cases, including instances of nil cases.

SMT have included the area of student attendance as a future focus and have devised an Attendance Strategy that clearly outlines the manner in which the school wishes to support attendance. The current system requires a significant and disproportionate amount of time and personnel to perform the monitoring of attendance for the school. Therefore, to streamline the monitoring of attendance in the future, it is recommended that the system that currently exists be reviewed.

SMT comprises the principal and three deputy principals, one of whom is recently appointed. This is a significant change for the school and the distribution of roles is being re-aligned. The SMT are a visible presence on the school corridors and operate along lines of mutual trust and respect. An open door policy is also in place for the school community to engage with SMT. In order to develop a consistent whole-school approach to teaching and learning, as well as to the monitoring of ongoing improvements in student attainment, SMT should now consider formalising annual meetings with teachers, and subject departments.

Middle management comprises nine Assistant Principal I post-holders, including one at programme coordinator level, and twelve Assistant Principal II post-holders. Overall, duties are carried out diligently and effectively. There is some duplication and inequity in the distribution of duties assigned. The board's current review of the post structure should further reflect the school's changing needs, in particular to support SMT's vision for ongoing improvement. An annual report is provided to the principal on their work and, in light of the recent Circular letter 0003/2018, this report should inform the new requirement for an annual review of their work with the principal.

The buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard, with a variety of materials on display that actively demonstrate the vibrant and open characteristic spirit of the school. The school has also been successful in infrastructural development, and plans are in place for further development in this area. The positive role of the board and SMT is acknowledged in this regard.

## **Leading school development**

The board is committed to the school and current priorities include ongoing infrastructural development and improving communication structures between staff and the board. In meetings with SMT, the school vision was elaborated on to include raising attainment, maintaining Hartstown Community School as the number one school of choice for two feeder schools, to progress the numbers of students who move into third level education, and to ensuring a safe, calm and respectful environment.

Minutes of staff meetings indicate a variety of items for discussion, including teaching and learning, administrative matters, SSE updates, policy review, as well as input from year heads. This is good practice.

The school prides itself on being a school for the community and highly successful links have been established with the local community such as paired reading with local primary schools, engagement with local companies to support school initiatives as well as links with third level institutions and a range of relevant agencies. Furthermore, the school's involvement in areas ranging from environmental awareness to positive mental health has served to lead school development in these valuable areas of concern.

Representatives of the parents' association were very positive about the school and support it in many ventures, including active involvement in policy development and fundraising for an annual prize fund in subject areas. SMT also attend meetings of the parents' association and provide good support to the association. The school endeavours to ensure good lines of communication with all parents and in doing so has a number of parent evenings, a newsletter, school website and a Parents' Information Handbook. A member of SMT has led an initiative to involve parents more within the life of the school and this was particularly successful in increasing parent attendance at recent parent-teacher meetings.

## **Developing leadership capacity**

Independent of the post structure, staff are encouraged to take on leadership roles, including subcommittees, for example, in the area of e-learning. Leadership capacity has been developed through teacher involvement in national initiatives and through a teacher who leads the implementation and co-ordination of junior cycle reform within the school. As part of the induction process, a member of the SMT oversees the induction and mentoring of new staff and a teacher induction pack is prepared.

This positive engagement has served to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning within the school. SMT also facilitates teacher participation to access continuing professional development (CPD) and staff have been encouraged to participate in both subject specific and national initiatives.

Staff have engaged in CPD in educational leadership, junior cycle reform, and other relevant areas. SMT avail of the support of national bodies that support the development of effective management and leadership practices.

A range of extra and co-curricular activities is provided in the school, including language exchanges and cultural trips, sporting activities and educational programmes, all of which is supported and co-ordinated by staff. This is commendable and impacts positively on the student experience by broadening their opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom.

There are very good opportunities for student leadership including the students' council and class representatives. The students' council is democratically elected and members receive training for their roles. The council has presented to the board and has had a role in policy development. This is very good practice. A peer mental health education programme is in operation for fifth-year students to work with TY and third-year students and this is one of a number of examples of other initiatives in the school that serve to promote student leadership.

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

Twenty seven lessons were observed over the course of the evaluation.

In the most engaging lessons the students' voice was central and evident in active questioning by students, a positive teacher-student rapport and respectful engagement. These lessons allowed students the opportunity to actively demonstrate their interest and motivation in learning.

In some lessons, there was scope to create more challenging opportunities for students that would encourage independent thinking and increase the student voice, while also further engaging students in sharing in the responsibility for their learning. Findings emerging from the parent and student questionnaires in relation to enjoyment of school and interesting lessons may need to be considered in this regard.

Teaching approaches included traditional whole-class teaching, pair and group and problem-solving tasks. In lessons where highly effective pair or group work was evident, the assigned tasks had a clear purpose and students' learning was appropriately scaffolded, enabling very good progress to be made. However, in a number of lessons, the rationale for the use of a collaborative approach required greater clarity or, in other instances, further scaffolding would have ensured that learners could make more independent progress.

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

Clear learning intentions were explicitly shared with students in the majority of lessons; in a small number of cases, greater clarity or detail in the learning intentions would have challenged students more.

Best practice in overall lesson planning was observed where the sequencing, pacing and structure enhanced the learners experience, motivation and engagement in their learning, and where learning activities were clearly linked to the lesson intentions. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons.

Overall, planning for the use of resources was very good, with all materials ready and to hand for use at key points in the learning. Assessment for learning (AfL) featured through the use of strategies including 'show-me-boards' and 'Know, Wonder, Learn' (KWL) tasks. This worked to good effect. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used in most lessons as a tool for presentation, and in others as an effective tool to support and enhance learning.

Observed strategies to promote differentiation included a mix of higher and lower-order questioning, individual support and homework that was differentiated by task. It is recommended that existing strategies to support the exceptionally able are extended and that teaching approaches ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all students to progress in their learning. The use of questioning strategies that provide a challenge to students, including improved wait-time and an appropriate balance between global and individual questioning, is also recommended.



Very good formative written feedback was noted in some samples of student copybooks. In particular, the sharing of feedback between teachers and students, currently being trialled as part of an SSE initiative within the school, is proving very positive. This should, in time, become fully embedded into the school's teaching and learning practices.

In the course of the evaluation, the use of the student journal and the consistent assignment and recording of homework was an area identified for further attention. Findings from the parent and student questionnaires, as well as from meetings with students, also indicate concerns in relation to homework and this should be further explored by teachers and SMT.

The quality of subject planning documentation varied; where planning was very good, clear learning outcomes guided the planning for teaching and there was evidence that planning was conducted collaboratively, independent of a reliance on the textbook. Where there was scope for development, the time-bound aspect of lesson delivery should be strengthened, and targets that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) should be developed in order to monitor emerging trends and improve outcomes in teaching, learning, uptake and attainment.

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

#### **Leadership and Management**

Good progress has been achieved in a number of areas, including the development and ratification of an RSE policy, a whole-school guidance plan and LCA plan, as advised in the 2010 Whole School Evaluation (WSE).

#### **Teaching and Learning**

Overall, good progress has been made in implementing recommendations relating to teaching and learning. In German, greater use of audio materials and familiarity with the marking schemes pertaining to certificate examinations, was in evidence. Formative feedback has been implemented through the SSE process and this should be further embedded in time.

Catering for the differentiated learning needs of students, as advised in more recent subject inspections, remains as an area for improvement.

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

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

Successful engagement with SSE was noted and the school has used the six step process in the initial themes of literacy and numeracy.

The current theme of learner engagement has been led by the newly-appointed member of SMT and supported by a team of staff. Projects in this area include a homework initiative, focussed on the provision of interactive formative feedback. Good exemplars of practice were observed in teaching and learning and should be further embedded in practice.

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

Based on the success the school has had with the SSE process, with further analysis of specific initiatives going forward, the school has very good capacity for improvement.

## 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 in 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**

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

The board welcomes the very positive findings in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, the positive teacher-student rapport, student behaviour, the variety of teaching approaches, the very good planning for the use of resources and the use of ICT, the improvement in student attainment levels, progression rates to third level, curriculum provision, timetabling, wellbeing, student care, guidance, pastoral care, RSE, the good running of the school, school policies, school development and planning, school self-evaluation, the characteristic spirit of the school, the high standard of maintenance of the school environment, the range and quality of items discussed at staff meetings, links with the local community, positive parental attitudes towards the school, positive engagement of staff with CPD, the range of extra- and co-curricular activities, opportunities for student leadership and the very good capacity of the school for improvement.

## **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The board of management and the SMT will continue to review and plan for the ongoing academic development of the students and to build on the very good progress made in attainment in recent years as acknowledged in the body of the report.

Arrangements for formation of classes are currently under review.

We will continue our whole-school approach to developing teaching strategies to support and motivate students, building on the work already done, on AfL, formative feedback, study skills, e-learning and differentiation, as acknowledged in the report.

Subject departments will continue to review and plan for improvement using accurate data. All subject departments have formulated short-term and long-term action plans.

The school is currently in year two of a two-year review of SEN practices in line with the 2017 guidelines.