

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Follow-Through Inspection

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/ School name	St Patrick's Comprehensive School
Seoladh na scoile/ School address	Shannon Co Clare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	81007U

Date of Evaluation: 24-10-2017



WHAT IS A FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTION?

Follow-through inspections evaluate the progress a school has made on implementing main recommendations made in an earlier inspection rather than the overall educational provision that the school makes. Inspectors also advise the school on strategies and actions to enable them to fully address recommendations.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated the progress the school has made in implementing recommendations made in an earlier inspection under the following headings:

1. Progress achieved to date
2. Findings
3. Recommendations

Inspectors describe the quality of the progress made in each of these areas using the Inspectorate's follow-through quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The follow-through quality continuum explains the terms used by inspectors when evaluating the school's progress in implementing recommendations.

ORIGINAL INSPECTION DETAILS	FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTION DETAILS
<p>Type: Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL)</p> <p>Date of Inspection: 21 April 2015</p> <p>Report Published? Yes</p>	<p>Date of Inspection: 24 October 2017</p> <p>(A previous follow-through inspection, with a published report, was conducted on 22 April 2016)</p>
Follow-through inspection activities	
<p>The following activities took place in the course of the follow-through inspection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of teaching and learning and review of plans from two subject departments selected by the inspection team • Interview with a representative group of teachers working on student support, school self-evaluation, and special educational needs teams • Interview with a focus group of students • Interview with the chairperson of the board of management • Interview with senior management team • Review of school documentation and records 	
Recommendation in original inspection report	Progress achieved to date on implementation of recommendation
<p>The board of management should ensure that a robust system of whole-school action planning underpinned by target-setting, ongoing review and consultation with all stakeholders is put in place.</p> <p>Greater involvement of parents in school life needs to be developed and the board should establish and maintain procedures to facilitate the involvement of students in the operation of the school.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p> <p>Strong leadership from the chairperson of the board has helped the new board build up its capacity to discharge its duties, most notably in accessing and implementing best practice advice in relation to aspects of governance.</p> <p>The board now requests progress reports on the recommendations from the WSE-MLL as a standard agenda item. However, no substantial progress has been achieved in putting in place a whole-school action planning system, underpinned by target-setting, ongoing review and consultation with all stakeholders</p> <p>Some increased involvement of parents in school life has been achieved through planning for the transition of students with special educational needs (SENs) into first year and through the use by the school of a social networking website. However, the relationship between the board, the student council and the parents’ association needs to be formalised and developed and parental views on areas of school life for development need to be gathered. Partial progress has been achieved in relation to increasing parental involvement.</p>

	<p>The student council along with certain senior cycle students has been empowered to survey all students on their views about specific issues. The student council works well to identify areas for whole-school improvement, guided by a very effective liaison teacher. Very good progress has been achieved in relation to students' involvement.</p>
<p>The roles of senior management and middle management should be strategically linked to the school's improvement agenda.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p> <p>Over the past year, the principal has devoted time and energy to overseeing the new school building extension. The setting up of a teaching unit for students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) has also required input from senior management.</p> <p>Recent appointments at middle management level have introduced new leadership duties in relation to whole-school areas for development, signalling good progress on this recommendation. Asking post holders, and non-post holder leaders of aspects of school life as well, to gather evidence of how their roles support school improvement would help provide targeted, learner-focused improvement information to senior management, and ultimately to the board.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the school is operating with a very limited number of middle management positions and staff engagement in task team policy development has been a great support to the school this year.</p> <p>To date, the principal and deputy principal have self-selected specific leadership responsibilities for themselves. Their communication has tended to focus on day-to-day operational matters and on the management of issues arising. They now need to establish a more strategic, shared approach to leading and managing action planning for improvement.</p>

<p>To optimise the management and care of students the code of behaviour should be reviewed, a student-support team should be established and a formal school attendance strategy should be developed.</p>	<p>Good progress</p> <p>All policies identified for improvement in the 2015 WSE-MLL report have been reviewed by stakeholders and the amended policies have been ratified by the board. The clarification within the mobile phone policy to ensure that the mobile phone can be used as a tool for learning, within strict limits, is a positive development. The next review of the code of behaviour needs to ensure compliance with mandated suspension procedures, as per Chapters 10 and 11 of the NEWB's <i>Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools</i>.</p> <p>The student support team met regularly last year and made a very significant contribution to co-ordinated, responsive student support. Very high-quality meeting minutes were recorded, evidencing the focused supports planned for individuals as needs arise. In the school year 2017/18, formal meetings of the entire team have been too infrequent. It is recommended that meetings of this team be organised by school management more regularly, to revert to the previous school year's very good practices.</p> <p>A school attendance policy has been developed and a post-holder has been assigned duties for monitoring student attendance along with year heads, and for liaising with TUSLA re attendance matters. This is good progress.</p>
<p>The school's allocation for special educational needs should be used in full for its intended purpose and to the maximum benefit of students with identified additional learning needs.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p> <p>Good progress has been made by the staff working with students in the school's unit for students with ASDs in developing their knowledge and understanding to support these students. Training is ongoing, the practice of individual educational planning for these students has commenced, and whole-staff continuing professional development has been provided on supporting students with ASD.</p> <p>The principal was not aware of in-service in relation to the new model of SEN resource allocation support last year, therefore he has not been able to lead development on this area. It is evident that more individualised supports, driven by student needs, have been put in place for a small number of students with complex conditions this year. However, general practices in relation to the timetabling of almost all support hours for special educational needs are still unsatisfactory, as they were in 2015. This area of school life needs to be immediately prioritised for improvement, informed by Circular 14/2017 and the accompanying <i>Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools</i>:</p>

	<p><i>Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.</i></p> <p>A small core team of teachers with specialist qualifications in SEN needs to be established and the expertise of that team needs to inform whole-school timetabling practices. Individual educational planning needs to be undertaken for all relevant students to target SEN resources according to the NEPS continuum of support, so that students with the highest levels of need receive the highest levels of support.</p>
<p>Collaborative subject department planning should ensure that schemes of work are appropriately detailed to guide teaching and learning and include action planning for improved attainment.</p> <p>Strategies for differentiation and assessment for learning practices need to be more widely and more consistently implemented to support learning across the range of abilities.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p> <p>Some inputs have been built into staff meetings by senior management to make staff aware of educational developments that need to feed into teaching and learning practices to meet requirements concerning school self-evaluation and the new junior cycle framework. Work on reviewing students' and teachers' views on formative assessment and on collaborative learning practices has begun. Subject departments need to be guided on how to incorporate specific strategies and other changes into their collective plans. Also, senior management needs to establish oversight measures to assess how subject department planning is developing.</p> <p>While teachers have their own individual strategies and levels of understanding of differentiation and assessment for learning practices, these are still individualised at present. The sharing of peer pedagogical expertise through planned presentations by staff members at full staff, or other, meetings needs to be established as standard practice. There is strong capacity among staff to do this work, given the school's involvement in the <i>Droichead</i> programme, and the skillset of many teachers observed during inspections.</p>
<p>Summary of findings</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are working very hard to support the variety of needs of their students. However, they are doing so largely as individual teachers or as individual subject departments. Effective systems and planned, regular meetings to support the leadership of learning are underdeveloped. • Communication between the principal, chair and secretary of the board takes place mostly on a bipartite basis at present. The introduction of some proactive discussions involving all three together in-between board meetings would further support school improvement work. • Good progress has been made on policy development, on the involvement of students in school life, and on beginning to align middle management roles with key whole-school areas for development. 	

- Partial or no progress was found in relation to three key recommendations from the WSE-MLL report: a system of whole school action planning, the roles of senior management and the allocation of SEN resources.
- It is clear that a shared model of leadership for improvement needs to be embraced and acted on.

Recommendations

It is vital that whole-school action planning involving all stakeholders be established to help the school manage the various changes that it needs to work through. The identification of needs to date has arisen from reacting to specific developments or to individual student situations. The school needs to become proactive in planning for improvement. While the leadership role of the principal is critical in ensuring success in this area, leadership needs to be shared.

A radical overhaul of school practices in relation to the delivery of support to students with special educational needs is required to ensure that students' needs drive planning for support.

Planned, regular meetings for defined teams to work on aspects of the leadership of learning need to be established and staff meetings need to be planned for and conducted in a more strategic manner to drive whole-school improvement. *Looking at our School* and the *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 Post-Primary* need to be used as audit tools to help the school identify its pathways to further improvement.

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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The principal and deputy have not self selected specific leadership responsibilities as indicated in the report. Areas of responsibility have been delegated by the Principal and have been mutually agreed following extensive dialogue regarding the overall needs of the school.

The Principal was aware of in-service re: new model of SEN in the previous academic year and facilitated the attendance of the SEN co-ordinator. The Principal attended in-service provided by the ACCS on 3/11/17.

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

An action plan team has been put in place with the responsibility of formulating a school improvement plan.

An SEN team has been established as per DES guidelines and this is currently reviewing procedures regarding delivery of support to SEN students.

School improvement planning has been included on the agenda of all staff meetings and will be reported on by members of the action planning team.

THE QUALITY CONTINUUM FOR FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTIONS
<i>Very good progress</i> indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the recommendation, and that the action has fully achieved or will achieve the required outcome.
<i>Good progress</i> indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the recommendation, and that substantial improvement has occurred, although further progress is necessary.
<i>Partial progress</i> indicates that some appropriate action has been taken to address the recommendation, and some improvement has occurred, but considerable further progress is necessary.
<i>No progress</i> indicates that no action has been taken, and that the original recommendation remains to be addressed.