

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

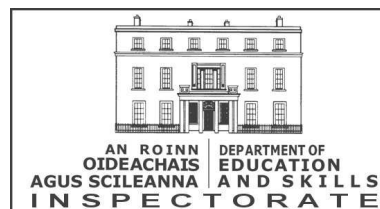
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**The King's Hospital
Palmerstown, Dublin 20
Roll number: 60272W**

Date of inspection: January 2012



Whole-School Evaluation Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in January 2012 in The King's Hospital. 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. The board of management 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.

Introduction

The King's Hospital is a Church of Ireland, voluntary, fee-paying, co-educational, day and boarding secondary school. The current enrolment is 683 students, 371 males and 312 females. The students come from twenty-one counties nationwide and fifteen countries. The school operates under the governance of a board of governors. The school was founded in Dublin in 1669 to provide education for the poor Protestants of the city and was originally known as The King's Hospital and Free School of King Charles II. The curricular programmes provided are the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Key Findings

- The board of management, the headmaster and deputy headmaster provide capable and committed leadership and have the leadership capacity to sustain ongoing school improvement.
- The students are educated in a very supportive and caring environment.
- The current six-day timetable contains a number of anomalies such as some class groups having two teachers for the same subject at different times during the week.
- While questionnaire responses reflected very well on the school in many ways, outcomes of the student questionnaire indicate noteworthy variations in the students' views of their school experience in areas such as having a say in how to make the school a better place, how well bullying is dealt with and the egalitarian treatment of students.
- The King's Hospital has a large, attractive and very well maintained campus.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall.

1.2 Recommendations for Further Development

- The status of the headmaster's membership of the board of management should be enhanced.
- Whole-school policies for gifted students and trainee teachers should be developed.
- The anomalies in the timetable such as the splitting of classes between teachers needs to be addressed.

- Strategies should be developed to assess and address students' perceptions with regard to aspects of their school experience as identified through the student questionnaire.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning should be extended.

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 presented as a capable, well informed body that conscientiously fulfils its leadership role. The board consists of five nominees of the board of governors, two parent and two staff representatives; the bursar is secretary to the board, and the headmaster and the deputy headmaster are ex-officio members. All members have received appropriate training. It is recommended that the status of the headmaster's membership of the board be enhanced given the headmaster's important role in the school community. Appointment as secretary to the board is the more common practice. Given also that increasing the size of the board with additional ex-officio members has intermittently been a subject of consideration and has never been finally decided, this task should be undertaken.

The board keeps well informed about the school through the headmaster's report to every meeting and through the established practice of inviting school personnel to meetings to inform the board about their particular areas of responsibility. The board should consider meeting with the representatives of the parents' association and the student council annually in order to further develop links with the school community. It is recommended that the board provide the parents' association with an annual report on school attendance as stipulated by the Education Welfare Act 2000, 21(6)b.

The board's effective leadership is evidenced by the School Plan 2011-12, the ongoing review of school policies, its positive response to various reviews that have been undertaken such as the 2009 review of the TY programme and the support for bodies such as the school's academic council. The academic council has a wide brief relating to curricular provision and has been reviewing the school's timetable. With regard to the latter, the decision has been taken following consultations within the school community to change the six-day school week to a five-day week. The proposed change is to be presented to the board of governors for approval.

By way of supporting the board's good work in reviewing school policies it is recommended that policies for gifted students and trainee teachers be developed; that the policy on the usage of ICT by pupils in the school be extended to all users, and the policies relating to homework and special education needs be further developed.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The school's priorities for development

The board of management's Action Plan 2010-2015 categorises the priorities for development under four main headings: academic, pastoral care, extracurricular and buildings and environment. A common element to the different categories is the further enhancement of the school's facilities. There is also a strong emphasis on curricular review,

the training needs of school personnel and the creation of additional bursary funds to support needy families in meeting the costs of school fees.

Good progress has been achieved in realising the objectives of the Action Plan. For example, the development of the school's ICT infrastructure is nearing completion and appropriate ICT training for staff has been provided; the proposed curricular reviews relating to the school's timetable and TY have been undertaken and new bursaries established. The plan could be further developed, however, by prioritising the range of objectives outlined and indicating the proposed target dates together with the person(s) or group(s) entrusted with specific responsibility for the various tasks. In the section of the Action Plan which deals with curricular review there should be greater elaboration of the intended actions in relation to timetabling, class size and staffing levels.

2.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Leadership of staff

The headmaster and deputy headmaster are an effective, and able senior management team. They have a shared vision, demonstrate a strong work ethic and maintain a visible presence in the school. Their active involvement in and engagement with the various school groups with responsibilities relating to management, pastoral care, curricular review and extracurricular activities are indicative of the quality of their leadership.

The teaching staff are given the opportunity to exercise leadership. This is evidenced for example, by the range of responsibilities that have been delegated to the postholders and the staff membership of bodies such as the board of management and the academic council. Senior management's annual plenary meeting with the postholders confirms their important role. Senior management should also consider meeting with the postholders individually or obtaining an annual report from each postholder regarding the assigned post of responsibility. This will enable senior management to remain fully informed about the progress made and issues being encountered.

Provision is made for in-service training for the teaching staff and the convening of subject department meetings during the academic year. Staff are also encouraged to enhance their professional development. Senior management lead by example through their own involvement in in-service training and professional development. The teachers can make submissions for inclusion on the agendas for staff meetings and have input into the prioritisation of training programmes.

The teachers are deployed in accordance with their subject specialisms. The good work that is being done in subject planning was evident in the subject department folders that were reviewed during the evaluation. There remains scope however, for the development of some subject department plans in respect of the planned schemes of work, strategic planning relating to the future development of the subject, subject specific literacy and numeracy strategies and the inclusion of relevant policy documents.

Leadership of students

The students are educated in a very supportive and caring school environment. The transition of students from primary to secondary school is supported by an effective induction programme. Their subsequent transitions from junior cycle to senior cycle are also carefully managed. Guidance support is provided for students at all levels and is formally timetabled for TY and fifth and sixth-year class groups. The importance of the school's ethos in the students' education is exemplified by the daily whole-school assemblies in the chapel before the start of lessons and the communal Sunday Service and other religious services that are held there.

A broad and diverse curriculum is provided for the students. Mathematics, Irish and English are concurrently timetabled for all year groups. A wide range of optional subject choices is also provided for the students. However, the current six-day timetable has resulted in some class groups having two teachers for the same subject at different times during the week. A further problem with the timetable is the limited contact that higher-level Leaving Certificate Mathematics students have with a number of non-examination subjects. Another feature is that the Study Skills lessons for students with exemptions from Irish are essentially study periods rather than formal lessons. It is essential that the anomalies in the timetable are addressed.

The year-long taster programme that has hitherto been provided for first-year students is also under review and is likely to be replaced by pre-set option blocks of subjects that will require the students to choose their optional subjects before entering first year. Given the benefits of a taster programme, the scope for students to experience the subjects in the various option blocks within a limited timeframe before final choices are made should be explored.

The school's mandatory TY programme comprises year long and modular courses. The strong focus on the personal development of the students is reflected in the extensive content of the programme, and the emphasis placed on learning. For example, opportunities are provided for the students to develop their leadership, team building and career skills, undertake work experience and to develop their competencies and personal interests. The students must also produce a portfolio of their year's work.

Students with special education needs are strongly supported. The models of support include individual and small group tuition and team teaching of a class group. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have been developed for students in receipt of resource hours. The learning support department liaises with and advises teachers and subject departments with regard to teaching students with special educational needs. While acknowledging the support provided for subject teachers with timetabled learning support lessons it is recommended that a steering group be established to oversee this important work given the relatively large number of subject teachers involved.

Extracurricular activities have a very important place in the students' education. The school's very impressive extracurricular provision is evidenced by the sports, music, drama, debating, shows, outdoor pursuits and tours that are an integral part of the tapestry of school life.

The pastoral care of the students is informed by the school's ethos and is safeguarded by the policies and structures that have been developed to ensure their well-being. The school's vigilant pastoral care team has a wealth of expertise that is informed by the experience of the team's members. There are also effective prefect and mentoring systems in place that enable selected senior students to make an important contribution to student welfare. The documentation of an overarching policy statement that encapsulates the co-ordination of the wide range of initiatives that constitute the student-support system merits consideration.

Recognition and affirmation of student achievement is a notable feature of the students' education. For example, on Charter Day, which is a significant date in the school's calendar, and during the daily whole-school assemblies meritorious students are publicly affirmed for their achievements. Similarly, the displays of the students' photographic, artistic and literary work amid the visually enriching array of the displays that adorn the school's interior demonstrate the affirmation given to students.

The encouragement given to the students to assume leadership roles is evidenced by the vibrant school council that consists of student representatives from each year group who were elected by their peers. The fifth and sixth-year students who become prefects moreover, are provided with training for their role. Mentors, whose primary task is to assist the first-year students in settling into the school, are chosen from the TY students who apply for the position. Students are also afforded the opportunity to undertake administrative roles such as secretary in the various extracurricular activities.

The King's Hospital has an effective record-keeping system in place to systematically track the students' attendance, punctuality and academic progress. Parent-teacher meetings, in-house examinations, and reports to the students' homes are well managed.

The good work that is being done to ensure the effective leadership of students is very commendable. The outcomes of the WSE-MLL student questionnaire, however, identify some aspects of the students' school experience that need to be further explored. For example, a sizeable proportion of students responded that they do not have a role in how to make the school a better place. The students' responses also indicated some disagreement with the statements that all students are treated fairly in the school and that the school deals well with bullying. Management should explore and address these findings.

2.3 Management of facilities

The King's Hospital has a large, attractive and very well maintained campus. The school has been awarded two green flags for waste recycling and energy conservation which attests to the importance of environmental awareness in the students' education. Well-placed signage on the campus grounds and within the interior of the school provides clear directions. Upon arrival at reception visitors are required in the interests of security to sign the visitor's book and are issued an identity badge. The school's website is a very good source of information about the school and is easily navigated.

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 The quality of learning and teaching

The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall with scope for improvement in some areas. Preparation for teaching was of a high standard, with attractive, relevant resources available. Lessons were well structured and movement through each phase of lessons was well managed. Teacher explanations and instructions were clear. Good use was made of questioning to assess understanding and to assist students in exploring the ideas being taught.

The variety of methodologies observed included teacher exposition, practical work, investigation, group and pair work. In the language lessons observed, teachers' use of the target language was very good. In most language lessons the students' were provided with opportunities to use the target language. Overall, student learning would benefit from greater use of active methodologies. Independent student research with group work and student presentations should be considered as an alternative to teacher-led instruction where appropriate.

ICT was used in a minority of lessons. This took the form of PowerPoint presentations, video clips and audio clips all of which were very effective. There is significant scope for an extension of the use of ICT and for more diversity in the range of ICT used in teaching and learning.

In some of the lessons observed the students played a central role in their own learning. This occurred where teachers encouraged students to think for themselves, engaged students in observation and investigation activities, facilitated discussion, and allowed students to make presentations to their classmates. In one lesson observed, for example, the class was divided into two groups, and two students, who had expertise in creating composite shapes on the computer, took a group each and demonstrated the required skills to their classmates. However, there was scope for greater student involvement in some other lessons. It is, therefore, recommended that the good practices described above be extended to all lessons.

Learning was differentiated in most lessons observed with teachers providing individual attention to any student experiencing difficulty. In a small number of lessons additional work or more challenging work was provided to better able students or to students who had completed their work. This is very good practice. Some methodologies that naturally differentiated learning, such as group work, problem solving, and investigation, were used to very good effect. These valuable differentiation strategies should be extended across the school.

Teachers have created stimulating learning environments in their classrooms with a variety of projects and posters displayed. Classroom atmosphere was warm and encouraging with teachers regularly affirming students' efforts. The standard of student behaviour was very good overall.

An analysis of student attainment in certificate examinations indicates that the school is performing well.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

4.1 Management

Management obtained feedback from the relevant departments about the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations. The vast majority of the recommendations have been implemented which is testimony to the management's and the teachers' leadership of learning in the school. In this context, it is also commendable that management has undertaken a number of whole-school actions prompted in part by the previous reports such as the improvements to the school's ICT infrastructure, assessment of the training needs of the teaching staff, the ongoing review of policies and review of the timetable. Due to timetabling constraints recommendations such as the introduction of a taster programme for modern languages and an increased amount of time for Irish in the junior cycle have not been progressed.

4.2 Learning and Teaching

Recommendations relating to the further development of subject plans and greater collaboration of the members of the subject department in that process have been successfully completed or are underway.

The recommendation that teachers share the learning outcomes with students at the start of the lessons and check their achievement at the end has been implemented to some degree. Most teachers shared the learning objectives with the students at the start of the lessons and in some instances, recapitulated on learning as lessons closed. There is still scope to extend this good practice. Similarly the recommendation that advisory comments be provided on

students' written work requires further development. While there was good evidence that students' work is regularly monitored, the inclusion of comments advising students on how they can improve the quality of their work occurred less frequently.

Increased usage and exploration of ICT in the teaching and study of Art, French and German was recommended and has been acted upon, although the designated modern language classrooms with one exception have not as yet been fitted with ICT equipment as standard features. The language teachers do however, have access to a dedicated language laboratory with ICT facilities, and the installation of ICT facilities in all classrooms is in the process of being completed. The recommended introduction of oral assessments in German for junior cycle students has been done and some progress has been made in relation to staff other than the class teacher carrying out oral assessments in the senior cycle.

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

5.1

The school has the management and leadership capacity to sustain ongoing improvement. Review and self-evaluation are inherent aspects of school life. The board of management's Action Plan 2010-2015 indicates the goals that have been set and a number have been achieved. There are very good structures in place to support learning. The strong commitment to ensuring a high quality holistic education for the students underpins the work of the school community. The school has responded very well to the recommendations made in the subject inspection reports and regards external evaluation as assisting in its own self-evaluation.

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Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The King's Hospital serves the Church of Ireland and other Protestant faiths for which boarding is the only option available if they wish to be educated within their ethos of choice.

The parents of The King's Hospital support their decision to be educated in an Anglican faith school by financially supporting the costs of their child's boarding costs. The school wishes to recognise such support and the distinction from "Private Schools" that is embodied by there being no alternative educational opportunity for a Protestant boarding family.

The King's Hospital Board of Management are delighted with the conclusion of the overall report and the actions taken by individual teachers, subject departments and school management to completely fulfil the recommendations within the report.

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 are agreed to reviewing the enhancement of the headmaster's membership of the board of management on receipt of the final inspection report.

The development of policies for gifted children is being coordinated within the school.

A new timetable is completed and splitting of classes has been addressed.

The aspects of student perception are being addressed as part of a whole school staff training initiative.

ICT infrastructure will be enhanced, as planned prior to the inspection, before the start of the 2012/2013 academic school year.