

**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>	East Glendalough School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Station Road Wicklow Town Co. Wicklow
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	81016V

**Date of Evaluation: 16-01-2020**



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An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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

Dates of inspection	14-16 January 2020
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

East Glendalough School is a co-educational comprehensive school, under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Glendalough. The school was established in 1987 to provide post-primary education for the Protestant population of east Wicklow and has a large catchment. It offers the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The school has two classes for students with autism. Current school enrolment stands at 357.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good, and the senior management team is excellent; a few specific areas, including use of the teaching resource, require attention.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good: strengths identified can be harnessed to develop and extend practice.
- The school has an exemplary lived commitment to inclusion and support for all students, and parents and students acknowledge and value this ethos.
- Teachers are affirmed in their work, they support and enable the strong sense of shared purpose that permeates school life, and are generally accepting of change and innovation.
- Recommendations in previous reports have been substantially addressed.
- The school has very good capacity to bring about any improvement necessary, such as in aspects of student voice and students' ownership of learning.

#### Recommendations

- School management should ensure the fullest possible use of the teaching resource allocation.
- Building on the good work done to date, teachers should collectively identify, implement and embed teaching and learning practices that engage, challenge and support students in their learning.
- The very good self-evaluation processes in place should be directed towards further developing student voice, and action planning to enhance students' ownership of and responsibility for their learning.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

The overall quality of school leadership and management is very good. The board of management and the senior management team operate at a highly effective level, and place the development of the school as a place where learners can flourish at the centre of their work.

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

The leadership of learning and teaching is highly effective and is driven by the evident commitment of the board of management and the senior management team to fostering a collegial learning culture in the school. This commitment has been given practical expression in the recent review of middle leadership areas of responsibility, and in support for teachers' engagement in continuing professional development and in reflective practice.

The principal and deputy principal see themselves, and are seen by teachers, as leaders of learning. They seek to maintain the educational values that the school has espoused since its establishment, while welcoming innovation and accommodating change.

The senior management team supports and affirms teachers' individual and collective work in introducing and embedding new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Initiatives such as 'methodology of the month', in which all teachers try out and evaluate the effectiveness of specific classroom strategies, support innovative and reflective practice. It would now be timely for teachers collectively to agree on, implement and embed the most effective approaches identified through this initiative so as to deepen their impact on learner experiences. The practice of involving students in identifying effective approaches to learning is in place and should be developed in a way that further emphasises students' ownership of and responsibility for their learning.

The school offers a broad, balanced and comprehensive curriculum, notwithstanding its modest size. The sciences, languages and practical subjects are well represented, and Junior Cycle Wellbeing has appropriate timetable provision. Students, parents and teachers highly value the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, which has been reviewed and further developed following a programme evaluation by the Inspectorate. The school also offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), which is taken by a minority of fifth and sixth year students. While the rationale for offering the programme is to improve the chances of accessing higher and further education for certain students, current outcomes indicate that an appraisal of the actual benefits of the programme to the cohort taking it in the school is merited.

An opportunity for subject sampling is built into the first-year timetable, and students expressed satisfaction with being able to make informed choices, and generally getting their preferred subjects. TY is appropriately used for Leaving Certificate subject sampling, and students and parents get information from the guidance counselling service and subject teachers. However, responses from the student survey conducted during the evaluation indicate some reservations with the current system, and are worth further investigation.

The commitment to student care and inclusion is exemplary, and is enacted through highly effective systems of support and communication, sustaining a culture of shared responsibility for students' holistic education and wellbeing. Regular care team meetings provide an efficient and thorough means of bringing together the relevant knowledge and expertise, sharing information, and developing appropriate support plans for vulnerable students.

The school has two classes for students with autism, and offers them a safe and supportive learning environment that facilitates regular participation in mainstream classes.

The role of the year head is valued and has been further strengthened in the post descriptions arising from the recent review of posts. The voluntary class tutors meet their groups every day, and this regular contact assists communication and contributes to the student support system. Tutors and year heads monitor students' educational progress as part of wellbeing, and this beneficial practice is worthy of increased focus, using the rich data available in the school.

### **Managing the organisation**

The board of management operates at a highly effective level, both in its governance and oversight responsibilities and in its awareness of and support for educational developments, including Junior Cycle curriculum reform. The board carries out its responsibilities as employer and as advocate for the school very conscientiously and knowledgeably, and has energetically pursued a school building and infrastructure development programme. Strong and productive links with the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools support and inform its work.

The board is very supportive of the principal and deputy principal, and highly values the very detailed principal's reports to it. The principal and deputy principal co-operate very effectively as a senior management team to achieve the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Their success in this regard is deservedly recognised by the whole school community. The board and the senior management team greatly value the school staff and take very seriously their duty of care as employers and responsibility to support teachers' professional growth.

Professional and planning time is used very well, and teachers' admirable commitment to working collegially is evident in the value they attach to the longstanding practice of a weekly whole-staff meeting during one lunchtime. However, some teachers' timetabled hours are below the contractual minimum and almost all are well below the current maximum, even taking into account the professional time allowance to facilitate the implementation of the Junior Cycle programme. School management should use the teaching resource allocated to the school as fully as possible when drawing up the school timetable.

The school also has a considerable allocation of resource hours to support students with special and additional needs, and these are very well planned for and used. It is commendable that school management has made the necessary adjustments in deploying resource hours to ensure substantial compliance with the principles of the 2017 Resource Allocation Model.

The school buildings and facilities are fully used during the school day, and by community groups outside school time. They are generally well maintained and the board has overseen substantial improvements in facilities for teachers and students. Some of the communal spaces provided for year groups looked cluttered during and at the end of the school day. The student body, and senior students especially, should be asked to take a more proactive role in keeping these much-used areas in good order.

### **Leading school development**

The senior management team has a very clear vision for the school, and the leadership qualities necessary to create and maintain a strong sense of shared purpose. Awareness of the guiding vision for the school is exceptionally strong at all levels of the school community, and is evidence of how well the values of inclusion and respect have been communicated and embraced.

The school has engaged well with the school self-evaluation process, and has applied it in an increasingly purposeful way to reflect on and improve teaching and learning practices. An increasing focus on monitoring the implementation of actions for improvement, and assessing their effectiveness is now the best next step to take in the current process.

The school has experienced change at local level and also in the context of changes to the national curriculum and leadership structures in schools. Change has been managed effectively and reflectively. In particular, the why and the how of curriculum change have been carefully considered as the school engages with the principles and purpose of junior cycle reform, and the logistics of new assessment practices. Areas of agreement but also differing views and concerns have emerged during this engagement. As this process of working towards sustainable and sound junior cycle teaching, learning and assessment practices continues, it will require ongoing purposeful collaboration and possibly compromise, in the best interests of all students.

The central role of parents in their children's education is a key aspect of the school's ethos; parents highly value their level of access to teachers and to the senior management team, and almost all respondents to the parents' survey said they feel welcome in the school. The school's parents' association is active and committed, and supports the school through funding specific initiatives, input to relevant policies, and hands-on maintenance work. Parents responded positively when asked about their satisfaction with the information they received from the parents' association. Building on this good base, the association could aim for the active involvement of parents from all year groups.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

The principal and deputy principal demonstrate a strong commitment to developing the leadership capacity of the teaching staff. Meaningful distributed leadership is evident, and has been enhanced through the recent review of posts. The review has also served to highlight the developmental nature of roles and responsibilities, and it is worth ensuring that this is clearly reflected in post descriptions and contracts, including those traditionally defined as tasks and duties. The role of the middle leadership layer as a consultative group in the development of policies indicates that its collective wisdom is recognised as a valuable resource.

The school provides various opportunities for students to develop and exercise leadership, including student council involvement, the prefect system, and leadership roles in the wider curriculum involving sports and clubs. Students recognise and value these opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. The student council would benefit from closer links with the parents' association and board, to enhance its role as a consultative body and sounding board.

As the school develops existing practices, it should consider, with the students as consultative partners, ways to further extend students' leadership opportunities and, more broadly, to further extend student voice so they can play a part in key decisions about their own learning and development.

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

Nineteen lessons were observed, covering core, optional, practical and non-examination subjects, and all programmes offered. The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was effective, with some instances of exemplary practice, and some scope for improvement noted. A key strength observed in lessons was the emphasis placed on high-quality relationships to support effective learning and teaching.

### **Learners' Outcomes and Experiences**

In all lessons observed, students demonstrated positive dispositions to learning, and engaged diligently with assigned tasks. Interactions among students, and between students and teachers, were respectful and conducive to wellbeing. Lessons were characterised by exceptionally high

quality teacher-student relationships; the teachers' knowledge of each learner as an individual, including their needs and strengths, had a positive impact on learner outcomes.

The learning environment was inclusive, supportive and affirming. In all instances students were encouraged to apply themselves well, and lessons were student-centred.

Best practice was observed when students were afforded opportunities to engage with interesting and purposeful resources and stimuli which activated students' interest in topics while enriching the learning experience. Given students' very positive response to the use of digital learning, it is worth considering the further use of digital strategies across the school to enhance learner outcomes.

Students were confident and productive in their learning. The supportive environment made them willing to engage with challenging material when it was presented. Students would benefit from the further use of challenging material, to enable and encourage them to move from a place of comfort to one where learning presents opportunities for them to grapple with their learning, and to experience success.

In some instances the high quality materials, resources and methodologies selected by teachers provided students with opportunities to think creatively while also encouraging an authentic student voice. In these lessons students had opportunities to link their prior learning to new learning, which led to high levels of interest and enthusiasm, often allowing for deep engagement with topics. This highly effective practice should be harnessed to develop and extend practice.

Students clearly enjoyed active learning. Motivation and enjoyment levels were high during active learning tasks and this was when students were most likely to take ownership of their learning. Students displayed very good collaborative skills and worked comfortably and competently during collaborative learning tasks.

In most lessons the sharing of clear learning intentions brought clarity to the lesson. In the most effective lessons learning intentions were achieved to a high standard as students used the supports provided to gain understanding and develop key skills. In a small numbers of lessons the use of inquiry-based tasks tapped into the natural curiosity of students and led to the development of problem-solving skills. This practice should be shared across the school.

While students' organisation, production and maintenance of their work was generally good, this area is worth attention and development, particularly in relation to reinforcing students' ownership of and responsibility for their learning.

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

All lessons were characterised by the creation of an inclusive, caring and positive learning environment, built on mutual respect. Teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge which they were able to call on with ease in their presentation and explanation of key concepts and skills. In the most effective lessons, teachers modelled enthusiasm for their subject, and for learning, which had a visible impact on students' engagement and participation levels.

Almost all lessons were well planned with clear learning intentions. The most effective practice was noted where teachers stated learning intentions in terms of learning and skills to be attained by the end of the lesson, and used them to review and consolidate learning at the end of the lesson. This practice should be extended to all lessons.

The highly effective practice noted in some lessons was characterised by thoughtful planning and preparation which included individual and collaborative activities. In these lessons there were high expectations for students which supported independent learning and the development and use of key skills. These lessons were very well structured with well-sequenced learning activities.

Group work was most productive when students were given time to reflect on their learning and discuss their learning with others, and students enjoyed learning with and from each other. Teachers incorporated a good balance between teacher input and student activity. There was very good classroom management in almost all lessons, and appropriate levels of support and challenge were afforded to students to optimise levels of engagement and success.

In the most effective lessons teachers designed specific learning activities to elicit an authentic student voice, and built reflection time into the lesson to deepen students' engagement with topics and skills. In these lessons teachers prepared effective resources, tailored to the student's needs, which supported high quality learning. Many lessons would have benefited from greater use of more interesting and engaging stimuli to enhance the learner experience and raise attainment levels.

Digital learning was skilfully deployed in some lessons to stimulate interest and enhance learner outcomes. However, there is scope for improvement in the creative use of digital learning across the school.

Questioning was used effectively to assess students' recall and progress and, at a more proficient level, to encourage the use of higher-order thinking skills and a deeper engagement with the content of the lesson. In some instances teachers probed the initial response and encouraged students to extend and develop their responses. Best practice was noted when students were expected to justify their responses, sufficient wait time was given, and questions were targeted to individuals rather than the whole class. Teachers could profitably share their skills and expertise in this area.

In the most effective lessons, teachers achieved a good balance of support and challenge for their students by differentiating tasks, questions and homework. The high levels of support given to students through the use of scaffolding, individual support and group work enabled students to be actively engaged in learning while also being aware of how to improve.

In some highly effective lessons teachers shared or co-created success criteria with students, and afforded student's opportunities to reflect on their learning. It is recommended this very good practice is extended and that reflection time is built into lessons to encourage independent learning while allowing for deeper engagement with learning intentions.

In the majority of lessons oral feedback was central to formative assessment. While there were some very good examples of written formative feedback in the students' copybooks, overall it was identified as a key area in need of improvement. It is recommended that the school develop a strategy in response to this need in order to establish high expectations and a path to improvement, and to encourage students' to take ownership of their learning.

There is a culture of highly effective teacher collaborative practice in the school. Subject planning is well developed in a number of subjects, while others are in need of development. High-quality subject plans included reflective practices, shared resources and collaborative practices integrated into the planning process. The teaching staff meets weekly to share best practice and discuss ways to support students in their learning. This is a highly effective use of their professional time. It is commendable that teachers are involved in peer observation, and are participating in teach-meets to upskill and develop their practice. This is very worthwhile and should be developed and extended.



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

Overall, recommendations from previous evaluations have been well implemented.

#### **Leadership and Management**

Significant recommendations on aspects of provision and planning arising from a whole-school evaluation in 2010 have been addressed; optimal use of the teaching resource was also recommended and this still requires attention.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

Subject inspections in Metalwork and Engineering, Business subjects, Religious Education, and a programme evaluation of TY have taken place since 2014. Key recommendations related to incremental skills and concept development, building literacy skills in context, and formative assessment practices. In lesson observations in the present evaluation, some very good practice was noted in these areas, and a continuing focus is desirable to further enhance deep learning.

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

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

The school has engaged very well with the process of self-evaluation as required by circular, and has used it effectively to support implementation of Junior Cycle, and to introduce and reflect on innovative teaching and learning methodologies. The school's experience of the process should now inform the further development of student voice, and action planning to enhance students' ownership of and responsibility for their learning.

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

The school has very good capacity to bring about improvement where necessary, and is very open to further developing its practices.

## The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <i>outstanding</i> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	<i>Good</i> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	<i>Fair</i> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	<i>Weak</i> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management are delighted to receive this excellent WSE Report and congratulate all the members of the EGS school community who were involved, noting the emphasis throughout the report on the strong sense of common purpose between students, staff, parents and Board. The observation of high standards of teaching and learning, founded on the excellent relationships fostered by our staff is most welcome. These high standards are also reflected in the commitment and dedication of our teachers, our middle leaders and senior leadership team in nurturing the common the vision of the school and ensuring that it remains a daily reality. It is most encouraging to read about the exceptional practice in areas of teaching and learning, pastoral care and school self-evaluation which can be built on in to the future. We are also delighted to see the high praise for the Board of Management's support for staff, CPD and sharing of best practice and expertise which leads to a culture of community and collaboration as outlined in the report. We thank the members of the Inspectorate for their engagement throughout the weeks of the inspection and greatly appreciate the positive interactions, the rich feedback and their professional collaboration.

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

The Board notes the following in relation to the recommendations outlined in the report:

1. All teaching contracts now reflect a minimum of 18 hours, even in circumstances where an allowance is given for AP1 *and* Junior Cycle Professional time.
2. The School is engaged in planning around the increase of use of student voice for the next cycle of SSE.
3. Building on the good practice in developing Teaching and Learning, the School is seeking to deepen understanding and implementation of a core few strategies – engaging with student and teacher voice – to continue to challenge, engage and support students in their learning. This also will form part of the School's next cycle of SSE.

It is also worth noting that a full review of the School's LCVP programme has also been undertaken on foot of the inspection, and that a review of both student responsibility in relation to common areas and subject choice considerations were begun in February and March of 2020.