



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Joseph Of Cluny Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballinclea Road Killiney Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60260P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	11/03/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	01/09/2026

What is a 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. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Bí Cineálta</i>
1. The name of the DLP and the child safeguarding statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS. 2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment. 3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern. 4. The school's child safeguarding statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 5. The minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child protection oversight report in line with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it. 2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and pupils/students. 3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta. 4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment. 5. All staff visited report that they have read the school's Bí Cineálta policy and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 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 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE) 8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location	
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Dates of inspection	09/03/2026 - 11/03/2026
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with Board of Management • Meetings with principal and deputy principal • Meeting(s) with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus group	• Meeting with parents • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

St. Joseph of Cluny Secondary School is a Catholic fee-charging, co-educational school under the patronage of the Le Chéile Schools Trust and the St. Joseph of Cluny Religious Order. It has a current enrolment of 271 students. At the time of the evaluation the school provided the Junior Cycle (JC), the Leaving Certificate (LC) and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of learning, teaching and assessment was of a high quality; most lessons were good or very good with a few requiring improvement.
- Very high-quality, respectful, and supportive relationships among students, teachers, and senior management contributed significantly to the school's positive and welcoming atmosphere.
- The overall quality of leadership and management was good with aspects of very good practice noted.
- The senior management team, supported by the board, provided a very broad range of subjects to meet students' interests and needs.
- The school's transition to co-education, commencing with the enrolment of boys in first year, had been effectively enabled by strong collaboration between the trustees, board, senior management team, and school staff.
- The overall quality of supports for students' wellbeing was very good; highly effective structures including the student support team meetings and initiatives, such as the house system, fostered a strong sense of community and belonging.

Recommendations

- Teachers should further develop formative assessment practices to include revisiting and assessing students' progress in achieving the intended learning during lessons, the use of success criteria, increased opportunities for peer and self-assessment, and the regular provision of written feedback on students' work.
- Senior management should support the implementation of digital strategies in the school by re-establishing a digital strategy team and prioritising the development of a whole school e-learning plan, which will promote the consistent use of digital technologies to enhance students' learning experience in the classroom.
- Leadership of teaching and learning within the school could be strengthened by re-establishing a teaching and learning committee, to lead this area. This would support

the effective use of data and practice sharing at whole-school and subject-department levels.

- The strong foundations provided by senior management in supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) would be enhanced by establishing a smaller core team of specialist teachers to deliver special education teaching (SET). Student support plans should be reviewed, and targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (SMART) and clearly aligned with students identified needs.
- To strengthen school self-evaluation (SSE) and develop leadership opportunities for non-post holders, the senior management team should ensure a systematic approach in which targets, actions, responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are clearly documented and used to guide ongoing improvement.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of learning, teaching and assessment was of a high quality. Most lessons were good or very good with a few requiring improvement.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Overall, very high-quality relationships between teachers and students were evident in lessons, and this supported students' enjoyment in learning. Students' engagement was further enhanced by teachers' strong enthusiasm for their subject areas. Very good student behaviour was observed throughout the evaluation. Students were consistently very well organised for lessons and demonstrated very high levels of motivation to progress their learning.

In the majority of lessons, there was a good balance between student and teacher voice. Teachers encouraged students to answer questions, and at times there was very effective prompting and probing to help students extend and develop their responses. In a significant minority of lessons, a better balance was needed between global and directed questioning to ensure that all learners were enabled to contribute.

In a few lessons, students used digital technologies as a tool to enhance their learning which included students undertaking research, completing digital quizzes and developing digital transferrable skills. They spoke very positively about such learning experiences and their enjoyment of using digital technology to support their learning. There was scope for teachers to provide additional opportunities for students to use digital technology to enhance their learning.

It was positive that students learning English as an additional language (EAL) were provided with digital technologies and assistive tools to support their learning and engagement in lessons. Highly effective practice was noted where subject teachers liaised with their colleagues to ensure that essential subject-specific terminology was identified and pre-taught during EAL lessons.

In the majority of lessons observed, students had opportunities to work with their peers. Students' learning was best when the following were observed: clear tasks were set which required students to discuss and share ideas; roles were assigned by the teacher or by students within their groups; timeframes for completion were shared; students provided feedback to the class; and sufficient time was given to processing students' answers so that learning could be clarified and consolidated. When less effective practice was observed, students often chose to complete the task independently of others or there were insufficient whole-class discussions to clarify and consolidate learning. To enhance students' learning, all teachers should incorporate key collaborative learning strategies such as those observed in the more effective lessons.

In all classrooms visited, the learning environments were print rich through the use of commercial posters. In many instances, students' work was also showcased, which greatly enhanced the learning space. In some classrooms, books linked to the subject were displayed and were available for students to borrow. A good focus on the development of students'

subject-specific literacy was evident in some lessons through the explicit teaching of relevant vocabulary. Overall, there was scope to extend this practice.

Teachers individual and collective practice

Overall, teachers displayed high levels of preparation for lessons. A range of resources was observed across lessons and included teacher designed handouts, music excerpts, exemplar student work and video clips. In the majority of lessons, teachers shared clear learning intentions with students, outlining what students should know, understand, or been able to do by the end of the lesson. High quality practice was observed in over half of the lessons when teachers explicitly assessed students' achievement of the intended learning during or at the end of the lesson.

In most lessons, teachers used digital technologies to share presentations. It was positive that the presentation slides were not text-heavy and included visuals to support understanding. Very good practice was observed in a lesson when online graphing tools were used effectively to enhance understanding of trigonometric concepts. Teachers should explore and share strategies for the creative use of digital technologies to enhance and support teaching and learning.

In a small number of lessons, very high-quality practice was observed when teachers prepared higher-order questions or tasks, provided sufficient input before students began the activity, and allowed adequate time for students to think critically before sharing their responses. There was scope to extend this very good practice, which provided an appropriate level of upward challenge for students.

The school identified differentiation as an area for development in their SSE process. Two differentiation strategies were identified to be implemented at whole-school level. In the lessons observed, there was very limited usage of these approaches. This very worthwhile SSE focus to support all learners to achieve success should be further supported at whole-school, subject department and classroom level.

In many lessons, teachers provided high quality oral formative feedback to students. Regular written formative feedback from teachers was observed on students' work in a few instances, however, in the majority of lessons this was identified as an area for development. In discussions with students, they noted the value of written formative feedback in supporting them to improve their work. There was also scope for teachers to provide opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment and peer assessment, which would enhance their learning and strengthen their ability to critique work. The use of clear success criteria would further support this process.

Teachers reported very supportive and positive collaborative working relationships at whole-school level and within subject departments. In a sample of subject and programme plans reviewed, the overall quality of planning was good. High quality practice was noted when minutes of subject department meetings reflected discussions about teaching approaches, however, many meetings were more focused on procedural matters. Good practice was noted where units of learning provided integrated learning experiences for students, and teaching approaches and resources were recorded. However, more than half of the plans reviewed promoted a linear, chapter-based approach to students' learning and this should be reviewed. To support ongoing developments in learning and teaching, teachers should use students' work, professional reflections, students' feedback and attainment data to identify strengths and inform action planning for ongoing development.

2. Quality of school leadership and management

The overall quality of leadership and management was good with aspects of very good practice noted.

Leading learning and teaching

The board of management and principal fostered students' academic development through the provision of a broad and diverse range of subjects. The school offered a range of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) with first-year students sampling French, German and Spanish on rotation for the first six weeks of term before confirming their choices. School management had introduced new subjects such as Technical Graphics to the curriculum, in response to student needs and interests.

An audit of the TY programme was carried out in advance of the Programme Statement coming into effect. It was very good practice that teachers' interests and student feedback informed the evolving content of the modules and activities, providing high quality opportunities and learning experiences for students.

Access to digital resources was good and included two sets of digital devices and a computer room. It was good that first and second-year students had an Information Technology (IT) class to support them in developing digital skills. To maximise student learning using digital media, it was recommended that senior management re-establish a digital learning team and create a digital learning plan, with SMART targets, aligned with the *Digital Strategy for Schools 2027*.

Year heads reviewed student attainment in in-house assessment and where necessary followed up with individual students about their progress. To further enhance this process, senior management, in collaboration with subject departments, should develop a systematic approach to academic monitoring through more regular and structured tracking of student progress and goal setting across the school. It was suggested that these processes be formalised and developed to ensure that all students are supported to reach their full potential.

A significant minority of teachers were timetabled for a small number of learning support lessons providing subject specific support. It was positive that a teacher was upskilling in a SET qualification, however, a few lessons were delivered by personnel who were not qualified to teach. The SEN coordinator, who had specialist qualifications, was not deployed to deliver support. The school should work towards developing a small core SET team with the requisite skills and ensuring that the SET specialism in the school is maximised, so that students with the greatest level of need receive support from teachers with the highest levels of expertise. It was good that student support files had been developed for most students with SEN, however, there was scope to further streamline the contents of the files for ease of access to relevant information for teachers.

It was positive that the school had commenced the development of an EAL policy and a teacher-led input with accompanying strategies to support students with EAL needs was shared with teachers. To further this good practice, student support plans should be developed for students in receipt of EAL support.

Senior management had supported teachers to avail of teacher professional learning (TPL) provided by Oide and National Council for Special Education. Staff had opportunities to share learning at staff meetings, including the Universal Design for Learning and the new TY programme statement. In addition, events led by teachers such as the Sci-Fest exhibition, observed during the evaluation, reflected a commitment to enhancing the learning experiences of students. To support ongoing developments in teaching and learning, senior management should undertake an audit of teachers' engagement with TPL and oversee the provision of inputs in this regard.

The principal had allocated appropriate time for most subjects in line with subject specification guidelines. Management should review the timetabling arrangements for Physical Education in senior cycle and Mathematics and Irish in TY to ensure that the class time allocation for each of

these subjects is appropriate. A large team of teachers was delivering Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons, making it challenging to coordinate the subject effectively. The provision of SPHE should be strengthened by creating a core team and ensuring training for teachers delivering the SPHE programme. Students indicated in the inspectorate surveys and in focus groups that their learning of the subject would be enhanced by opportunities to explore certain SPHE topics in greater detail. TY students were being taught the LC SPHE specification. As this specification was designed for 5th and 6th year students, the programme designed for TY should be reviewed. Resources on the NCCA website [Transition Year \(TY\) SPHE Toolkit | Curriculum Online](#) would support this.

Managing the organisation

Members of the board of management were highly committed, with a very good level of educational expertise and experience. Board meetings were held regularly and were informed by the principal's report. There was scope for board minutes to better reflect the discussions held and actions agreed during meetings and provide greater oversight on the leadership of teaching and learning.

The board had a three-year calendar for policy review and recently completed a review of the school's admission policy. Planning to review the Code of Behaviour was underway and this was welcomed. The very positive behaviour of the students observed in the school should be promoted in the new code. It was positive that input had been sought from the teaching staff on the feasibility of the Merit system. Views of parents and students should also be sought in the review and development of relevant school policies.

The principal and deputy principal operated as an effective team and lead the day-to-day management of the school. They fostered a very positive school culture that encouraged respectful interactions at all levels within the school community. They exhibited a commitment to school development with very strong levels of student care. Findings from the surveys and meetings with students, teachers and parents showed very positive views about the school atmosphere, respect and high levels of care provided for students.

The principal and deputy principal held weekly meetings with the year head team, the student support team and the SEN team. Senior management was well supported by a strong middle leadership team whose roles and responsibilities had been aligned to meet the needs identified by the school. All post holders completed a reflection of work at the end of each year. This was very good practice. The principal should further develop this reflective practice by meeting with the teachers annually to review their roles.

Leading school development

The trustees, board of management and principal were proactive in establishing and maintaining a very strong guiding vision grounded in tradition and ethos. A significant development in the life of the school was the phased introduction of co-education. Those in leadership roles approached the management of change in a strategic, collaborative, and sensitive manner, through consultation with all key stakeholders. This was very effective in ensuring the smooth transition of the introduction of boys and in increasing the school population.

There was evidence of ongoing engagement with SSE. While there were good systems in place for gathering data and some actions or strategies were identified, there was a lack of clear and implementable targets and systematic monitoring of progress. There was a need to consolidate the focus of SSE, establish clear targets and systematise monitoring. Senior management should deploy a teacher or staff team to oversee this process. This team should support the development of the School Improvement Plan and contribute to the commendable work being undertaken by the board in developing a five-year strategic plan which outlined the school's vision for continued improvement across key areas: teaching and learning, wellbeing, leadership and management, and facilities and resources.

Engagement with parents was very positive. Effective communication systems ensured that parents were well informed about all aspects of school life and of their students' progression through school. A committed parents association played an important role in supporting school initiatives and organising events such as a parent hub for the open evening, graduation lunch

and guest speakers. The parents' association, with significant past pupil involvement, also supported ongoing development by arranging and contributing to the careers evening.

Transition year students had developed caring and respectful relationships with the local retired people's association, participating in and supporting events such as their tea-dance and by contributed to fund-raising initiatives in aid of the local hospice. Senior management had also built strong relationships with a significant number of primary schools. In addition, the school made its sporting facilities and the assembly hall available to local schools and clubs for larger events, further enhancing community engagement.

Developing leadership capacity

The senior management team supported the development of leadership capacity through the school's formal post structure. During the evaluation, teachers noted that they were encouraged to undertake various projects and initiatives, mainly within the school's extra- and co-curricular activities. There was scope to develop teachers' leadership skills outside the formal post of responsibility structure. The principal should empower teachers to take on leadership roles and create staff teams to lead key developments in teaching and learning and in leading SSE. It was recommended that management re-establish the teaching and learning team.

Newly appointed teachers were well supported through the Droichead programme and school-based lesson observation. The school regularly provided placements for student teachers. Engagement in the initial teacher education programmes provided valuable professional benefits for all involved.

Commendably, opportunities for student leadership were provided across all year groups. These included roles such as senior prefects, elected student council, house captains, green schools' team and class prefects. A student mentoring system was in place where senior students assisted younger students in their transition into post-primary school. It is recommended that management further support the student council by facilitating relevant training. Further opportunities for student and staff leadership were provided through participation in, A Better Community (ABC) committee, which comprises elected class representatives and was supported by a staff coordinator.

3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

There was a very high level of commitment to the promotion and support for student wellbeing. A key strength of the school was the strong sense of community supported by a positive and affirming learning environment. School leaders modelled and promoted a strong culture of respect underpinned by the school ethos. Student survey data indicated that students felt very positively about being cared for in the school. This was also strongly reflected in the parents' survey.

The wellbeing of students was very well supported through a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities. In the student survey conducted during the evaluation, a very high percentage of students indicated that they had the opportunity to participate in any school activity in which they were interested, reflecting the wide variety of opportunities available. The strong sense of community within the school was further reinforced through activities such as football and the annual school musical, to which pupils from local primary schools were invited.

Students transitioning from primary school were very well supported. Supports included an open night, visits around the school in August, and information meetings with parents. Students in the focus group recalled seeing very positive relationships between teachers and students at the open night. This was an influencing factor in choosing the school. In addition to these supports, the principal and guidance counsellor visited a significant number of primary schools to build and maintain productive relationships with feeder schools.

The board and school staff maintained the school building and grounds to a very high standard. Students had access to hockey pitches, a PE hall, and a re-purposed football pitch. The school's library was excellently maintained and offered a quiet space for students to congregate

informally and for other formal activities. There was a newly developed and much appreciated sensory room.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board and school welcomes the positive findings of the report:

- Overall, the quality of learning, teaching and assessment was of a high quality; most lessons were good or very good with a few requiring improvement.
- Very high-quality, respectful, and supportive relationships among students, teachers, and senior management contributed significantly to the school's positive and welcoming atmosphere.
- The overall quality of leadership and management was good with aspects of very good practice noted.
- The senior management team, supported by the board, provided a very broad range of subjects to meet students' interests and needs.
- The school's transition to co-education, commencing with the enrolment of boys in first year, had been effectively enabled by strong collaboration between the trustees, board, senior management team, and school staff.
- The overall quality of supports for students' wellbeing was very good.

We note the following recommendations

- Teachers should further develop formative assessment practices, increased opportunities for peer and self-assessment. Senior management should support the implementation of digital strategies in the school by re-establishing a digital strategy team. There should be the reestablishment of a teaching and learning committee and the establishment of a smaller SEN team. Senior management should further enhance school self-evaluation (SSE)

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

Recommendations already implemented:

- We have reconstituted a Teaching and Learning Committee.
- We have been selected for OIDE programme on enhancing SSE for School Leaders for 2026/27. Our focus will be on peer evaluation and self assessment.

Recommendations with a plan for implementation in the 2026/27 year:

- Timetabling recommendation regarding Physical Education at Senior Cycle has been implemented.
- We will also be reconstituting a whole school e plan.
- Recommendations regarding SEN size of TEAM and SMART targets will also be taken on board for next year 2026/27.
- The SET coordinator will be deployed to deliver support to students with AEN.
- Recommendations regarding the effective use of data and practice sharing at whole school level will also be taken on board for 2026/27.
- Plans are in place to activate a Digital Strategy Team.

Other recommendations:

- All other recommendations will be considered early in the 2026/27 and plans put in place for the future.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	Provision that is very good is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective