

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**St Kilian's Deutsche Schule  
Clonskeagh, Dublin 14  
Roll number: 60630W**

**Date of inspection: 18 April 2013**



**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS  
AGUS SCILEANNA** | **DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION  
AND SKILLS**  
**INSPECTORATE**

## **Whole-School Evaluation**

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in April, 2013 in St Kilian's Deutsche Schule. 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 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.

### ***Introduction***

The origins of St Kilian's Deutsche Schule go back to 1952 when it was first opened as a preparatory school. The school has grown and developed considerably since that time and is now part of a unique linguistic educational campus comprising of a Kindergarten, a primary school, St Kilian's Deutsche Schule/Europcampus secondary school and the Lycée Français d'Irlande (LFI). The school offers an expanded programme in German through Kindergarten, primary and secondary school.

St Kilian's is a fee-charging co-educational recognised secondary school with a current enrolment of 365 students. St Kilian's avails of co-funding from the German government and is affiliated to the network of German Schools Abroad. The school community describes St Kilian's as a German-Irish school in a European context.

## **1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

### ***1.1 Key Findings***

- The board of management presented as a cohesive, motivated and effective group, all of whom bring a wide range of skills and competencies to their work for the school.
- Arising from the school's origins, the board of management has a composition that does not accord fully with the Education Act, 1998, in that teacher nominees on the board do not have a vote.
- Strategic planning is a strength of the board and a five-year plan is being systematically progressed with the support of a range of subcommittees.
- The school community has succeeded in establishing a European model of education in an Irish context.
- St Kilian's is providing a very good education for its students.
- The principal and deputy principal work exceptionally well together, have clearly defined roles and have a shared vision for re-energising the unique German aspects of the school, both cultural and linguistic.
- Fostering the complex links between three different schools and two funding governments is effectively managed by the principal.
- Staff members demonstrate a strong commitment to the school evidenced by their flexibility and willingness to take on a range of responsibilities.

- Students are supported and encouraged by an effective year head system and a range of affirmations and mentoring systems.
- The parents' association is active and dedicated to the aim of building a sense of community in a context of linguistic and cultural diversity among the parent body.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good, very good or exemplary in almost all lessons but there was some scope for further development of teaching and learning strategies in a very small number of lessons.
- Teachers' subject expertise was evident and this supported high quality learning.
- School self-evaluation and systematic review is central to the shared vision of the school.

### ***1.2 Recommendations for Further Development***

- The board should examine its structure for the patronage and governance of the school with a view to ensuring the participation of teachers in the management and governance of the school.
- Recommendations to further progress some effective teaching and learning strategies should be discussed and implemented.

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

### ***2.1 School ownership and management – the Board of Management***

St Kilian's Deutsche Schule has a board of management which is a charitable incorporated company, *Der Deutsche Schulverein Limited*. It has nine elected parents' representatives, divided between German and non-German parents. There are also six attendees without voting rights which include the principal of both the Kindergarten and St. Kilian's and two teachers. The head of the German department and a representative of the German Embassy are also attendees in order to recognise the unique place of the German language in the school. The board operates on a model of consensus which is laudable. While teachers' opinions are sought and welcomed, their presence at board meetings is in a non-voting attendee capacity. In this way, the composition of the board does not accord fully with that outlined in the Education Act, 1998. The board should examine its structure for the patronage and governance of the school with a view to ensuring the participation of teachers in the management and governance of the school.

The board of management is effective, motivated and members bring a wide range of competencies and skills to their work on behalf of the parent body. The board meets regularly and members have availed of training in all relevant areas. The board is well informed and is aware of its statutory responsibilities. The work of the school is supported by the board in different ways. For example, the board provides a school administrator who reports to the board through the principal, and the board also provides additional guidance. A range of policies is available and a number of policies are reviewed by the board each year. The quality of communication, collaboration and sharing of information between the board of management and the principal is excellent.

The board has a good quality five-year plan which is being progressed systematically. Sub-committees are established to address specific goals identified in the plan. Current priorities include: the development of teaching and learning; widening the scope of information and communication technology (ICT); the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy; the drafting of a school improvement plan as part of school self-evaluation; strengthening the German language provision; improving the links with the LFI; and the consideration of adding an additional class group in junior cycle. Other areas for development include progressing communication strategies with external bodies and a

marketing strategy for the school. Priorities are identified by a wide range of methods, such as in-school systems of review, feedback from the parents' association, collaborative planning with board subcommittees and work with the school's German government advisor from the Zentralstelle fuer Auslandsschulwesen (ZfA).

An active and dynamic parents' association organises social events for parents and students and fosters a strong sense of identity in the school. The parents' association is dedicated to the aim of building a sense of community in the context of linguistic and cultural diversity among the parent body. Communication between the parent body, the teaching staff and the board is reportedly very good. An agreed written report is issued to staff following board meetings and it is recommended that an agreed written report be issued to the parents' association also.

## ***2.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning***

The principal and deputy principal work exceptionally well together and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities as the senior management team. A considerable strength of the senior management team is its shared vision for St Kilian's and the development of the uniquely German aspects of the school both cultural and linguistic.

An added challenge for senior management is the fact that the Lycée Francais d'Irlande (LFI) co-exists on campus and that LFI students attend lessons in St Kilian's for the three years of junior cycle, in order to benefit from and to sit the Junior Certificate examinations. This arrangement brings additional linguistic challenges as many LFI students have French or another language as their mother tongue. Timetabling to facilitate this arrangement is also complex and time consuming as some teachers move between the schools. The four schools, the LFI, the Kindergarten, the German primary school and St Kilian's share the same campus and operate in close proximity to each other with many interwoven links. Fostering the complex links between three different schools and two funding governments is effectively managed by the principal with the support of the deputy principal.

Leadership of learning is effectively directed by senior management. The principal and deputy principal maintain some teaching hours in order to strengthen their instructional leadership role. Considerable time and effort is dedicated to in-school probating and mentoring of new staff members. This is good practice. There is substantial support for and provision of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for all staff in both Irish and German contexts. A process of peer review is being initiated and team teaching is a feature of some subject areas. ICT initiatives such as the use of 'tablets' are being undertaken in certain subject areas and these are fully supported by management. The principal and deputy principal encourage and promote teacher reflection and innovation. Teachers are encouraged to progress initiatives or strategies that will improve the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas. The development of joint pedagogical projects with the LFI and other German schools abroad is an ongoing objective of senior management. Two short courses for the new Junior Certificate Framework will be piloted in the school from September 2013. The instructional leadership of the principal is acknowledged and commended.

Teachers demonstrate a commendable flexibility and willingness to take on a range of responsibilities outside the formal post structure. A review of posts was carried out earlier in current school year and posts were seen to be meeting school needs during the evaluation. Staff is encouraged by the principal to lead in areas of particular interest. The principal meets with year heads weekly and with other key post holders on a regular basis and is fully conversant with ongoing developments in their relevant areas of designated responsibility.

There are effective communication channels in operation. There is a dedicated book in the staffroom in which all relevant information is recorded and which teachers can check daily. A television screen in the main hall provides students and parents with up-to-date information on all school events.

There is an effective year head system in place. Students are carefully managed at key transitional stages in the school and between schools. The LFI students return to the Lycée Français d'Irlande after three years in junior cycle in order to pursue their studies through French for the Baccalaureat. Both the Sprachdiplom and the Diplome d'Études en Langue Française (DELF) are undertaken by students in St Kilian's in order to ensure a high level of linguistic achievement in both German and French. A similar examination, Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG), is being considered for the Irish language and this is commended.

Pastoral care responsibilities are effectively and efficiently managed by the year heads. The pastoral care team operates a support service for carefully targeted classes, year groups or cohorts of students who present with problems or support needs and this provision is commended. Staff conferences take place four times a year and individual student progress and difficulties are tracked very comprehensively at these conferences. There is a student mentoring system in place for incoming first years which was highly praised by students interviewed during the evaluation. There is significant promotion of study skills and students are affirmed and rewarded for good work by bi-annual trips with their year head. Considerable emphasis is placed on anti-bullying strategies and both staff and students referred to the anti-bullying strategy as a strength in St Kilian's.

There is a students' council in place and there are plans to develop the council and its role in the school. This should be progressed as soon as possible as some students interviewed were slightly ambivalent about their voice and ability to effect change.

There is a wide range of extra curricular and co-curricular activities comprising sporting, social and cultural activities and clubs providing students with valuable opportunities to participate and socialise. Debating and music are also strengths in the school and students can take part in national and international competitions. School exchange programmes enable students to spend time in France and Germany which is of considerable benefit in language learning.

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*.

### **1.3 Management of facilities**

School facilities are well maintained. Recent additions to the campus have ensured a bright and welcoming educational environment for students and staff alike. The linguistic diversity of the euro campus is evident in student work and other educational materials on display on corridors, in classrooms and in common purpose areas. The principal meets regularly with the school administrator to ensure that health and safety issues are identified and addressed. A highly effective ancillary staff contributes to the smooth operation of a complex multi-school and multi-lingual campus.

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

### ***3.1 The quality of learning and teaching***

Twenty four lessons were evaluated which included three double lessons. In almost all lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good, very good or exemplary. There was convincing evidence of good quality learning in the vast majority of the lessons observed.

Individual teacher planning of work and for resources in advance of lessons was very good overall. Intended learning objectives were clear and were shared with students at the outset and revisited at the end, in almost all lessons. The majority of lessons were very well planned and structured. A very small minority of lessons required more structure and better classroom management to further engage all students in learning.

Students displayed very good aptitude in applying their learning, whether in the use of language, the completion of experiments and tasks, or the solving of practical problems. Best practice was observed when differentiated tasks were implemented to support increased levels of student participation and engagement. The atmosphere for learning was very good in all lessons, students were courteous and respectful and teachers were caring and supportive. It was evident that students were highly motivated to learn and enjoyed many of the learning experiences. Teachers' clear subject expertise was apparent in all lessons and this supported high quality learning for students.

The physical classroom environment played a positive role in supporting learning. The presence of an additional board where teachers recorded lesson objectives ensured that this record remained for the entire duration of the lesson. This is good practice. Classrooms were in the main thematic to the lesson, were bright and spacious, and the walls displayed evidence of students' work together with subject-relevant material.

There was a very good balance between teacher instruction and student activities, in almost all lessons. The most successful lessons facilitated students' self-directed active learning, often through pair work, group work and practical activities. In these lessons, students were encouraged to think, to reflect and to provide considered responses to questions posed. In a small number of lessons, the appropriate organisation and facilitation of meaningful group work would have further supported student autonomy, activity and contribution to learning. The reorganisation of classroom furniture to prioritise active group work was recommended in a few lessons.

Teachers used a range of student-directed questions to test understanding and recall and to develop higher-order thinking skills. Teachers checked the quality of students' understanding at intervals throughout lessons through appropriate use of questioning while students made best use of teacher expertise to develop their understanding of lesson objectives. Almost all student responses were articulate, knowledgeable and meaningful.

The development of key skills in observation and critical thinking was a positive feature of lessons. Students' literacy and numeracy skills were developed through good use of the board to record key vocabulary and through problem solving. In a few lessons, further differentiation would be necessary to enhance support for all students and more challenging tasks should be set for able students. In some instances, teachers should have further planned for the teaching of small discrete groups.

ICT was best utilised when it was used to aid the understanding and the visualisation of key ideas and more difficult concepts and when it was integrated into the instruction phases of the lesson. Where relevant, a clear focus on the use of subject-specific terminology or vocabulary was evident, often reinforced by visualisation on the board or screen. There was

scope for the further appropriate and focused use of ICT in some lessons, for example as an aid to developing oral skills in languages.

Team teaching was a very positive feature of some lessons observed. Inspectors witnessed exemplary practice in this regard. Teachers' joint expertise and prior planning and collaboration ensured that student learning was seamlessly supported and exemplified.

The target language was well utilised in many language lessons. However, in a small minority of lessons opportunities should have been created to facilitate students using the target language so that learning would be more engaging and relevant.

A range of assessment modes were employed including questioning, facilitated discussion, oral feedback and in-class testing. Homework was observed to be assigned and corrected regularly in most subject areas as evidenced in student copybooks. Best practice was observed when teachers recorded directive, meaningful and positive feedback for students in their copybooks. Parents receive comprehensive reports on their childrens' progress four times a year and this is good practice.

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

### ***4.1 Management***

Following a number of subject and programme evaluations in recent years, significant improvements have been achieved: chemical storage issues have been addressed; a new English resource classroom and the school library have been developed; ICT use in teaching and learning is being progressed and there has been a comprehensive review of TY. Significant work has been carried out in relation to subject planning and this was noted in the subject plans examined. Subject co-ordinators are now in place and this is good practice. In order to further progress subject planning, a common school curricular planning template could be developed with scope to integrate information on topics, learning outcomes, methodologies, resources and modes of assessment.

### ***4.2 Learning and Teaching***

Recommendations from previous subject inspections have been very satisfactorily addressed. Improved questioning strategies and higher-order thinking skills were noted in lessons observed. The sharing of learning objectives with students is embedded in classroom practice and there is more consistency in correction of homework. There is scope for further development of ICT as a valuable tool in teaching and learning in some cases.

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

### ***5.1***

School-self evaluation, critical analysis and ongoing reflection are all key features of how St Kilian's operates. Subject improvement plans have been developed this year following the introduction of end-of-year subject reviews. Targets across the curriculum are being identified for the development of the school's literacy and numeracy strategy. Questionnaires for staff, parents and students were being planned during the evaluation for implementation during May 2013. A new bi-lingual History subject has been introduced for Leaving Certificate, "German History and Literature" and its introduction has been a

huge achievement for the school. Two newly developed short courses are being piloted as part of junior cycle reform. School improvement is a philosophy in St Kilian's and this philosophy was observed at board level, among parents and most strikingly at senior management and staff level. The school community is commended for its openness to change, flexibility and dedication to the pursuance of excellence.

*Published November 2013*

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

The Board of Management of St Kilian's Deutsche School commends the professional approach of the Inspectors to their work in examining and reporting on our school.

The Board would also like to thank the Inspectors for their affirmation of the quality of teaching and the commitment of the teaching staff of the school. In particular, the Board was very happy with the key finding of the Inspectors that

*“The quality of teaching and learning was good very good or exemplary in almost all lessons”* and that *“Teachers’ subject expertise was evident and this supported high quality learning”*.

The Board also welcomes the positive comments regarding, the management and leadership of the school, the strategic planning undertaken by the school and the school's achievement in creating a European model of education. The Board acknowledges the inspectors' recognition that parents' association is active and dynamic and endeavours to create a sense of community in a context of linguistic and cultural diversity.

The Board believes that the report recognises the effective partnership that has been achieved by the school community through the commitments of all the stakeholders working together.

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

In regards to the Key Findings and the associated Recommendations, the report states:

*“Arising from the school's origins, the Board of Management has a composition that does not accord fully with the Education Act 1988, in that teacher nominees on the Board do not have a vote.”*

The Inspectors went on to say that:

*“The Board should examine its structure for the patronage and governance of the school with a view to ensuring the participation of teachers in the management and governance of the school.”*

The Board operates under the patronage and different traditions of two governments and practices, the Irish Department of Education and Skills and the German Zentralstelle fuer Auslandsschulwesen. The school's constitution and Board voting rights reflect the very different nature of the school, its ownership, and the close links with Germany as a school of encounter within the family of schools of Deutsche Auslandsschulen International (German Schools Abroad).

In order to ensure compliance with the Irish Act, the Board took legal advice in 2010 which confirmed that the constitution of the school does accord with the Education Act 1988.

The Inspectors have acknowledged that the business of the Board is operated on a consensus model. The Board will continue to work on an inclusive basis for the

management and governance of the school in keeping with the ethos of the school and the wishes of the stakeholders.

In regard to the Inspectors' second Recommendation, as part of the school's self-evaluation process and in the context of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, there has already been discussion and agreement on how best to progress and implement effective teaching and learning strategies across the school curriculum to deliver on identified learning target.

Since completion of the MLL, there has been extensive discussion and in-service on the phased introduction of a skills-based curriculum (Kompetenzcurriculum) to complement the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and to reflect the requirements for effective teaching and learning towards the new Junior Certificate.