Programme Evaluation in Transition Year

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Sacred Heart School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Westport Co Mayo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>64710R</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 19 December 2016
WHAT IS A PROGRAMME EVALUATION?

The programme evaluation model of inspection is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the following programmes and to provide advice and support to teachers, principals and school management in post-primary schools and centres for education:

- Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)
- Transition Year (TY) programme
- Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in TY under the following headings:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Programme provision and whole-school support
3. Programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation

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.
Transition Year

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>19 December 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</td>
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<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT

Sacred Heart School, Westport is an all-girls secondary school which has a current enrolment of 563 students. Transition Year (TY) is offered as an optional programme and in the current academic year there are ninety-three students following the programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

• The quality of teaching was good or very good in the majority of lessons observed and satisfactory methodologies were employed in the remaining significant minority.

• The student learning experience ranged from very good to satisfactory.

• Educational provision in the school is enhanced by the provision of TY, and a whole-staff approach to the delivery and implementation of TY is fostered in the school.

• The practices employed to assess student learning were satisfactory.

• Significant strengths characterise the co-ordination, planning and evaluation of the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• To cater for the full range of student abilities and learning styles, an improved and extended use of differentiation strategies and active methodologies is recommended.

• A TY-specific assessment policy should be developed and implemented across all subject areas.

• The very good or good practice observed in the majority of the curricular plans should be extended to plans for all areas of learning in TY.

• A time-bound strategic plan should be drawn up to support the continued development of the programme; this needs to be done in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment in particular.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In the majority of lessons observed, good or very good teaching methodologies were employed and satisfactory techniques were used in less than half of the classes.

- Where the level of preparedness for lessons was good, lessons were well sequenced and paced, had differentiated learning intentions and made links with previous learning using brainstorming techniques. Such characteristics should be incorporated into all lessons.

- Ample time for recapitulation of learning intentions should be allocated and facilitated by all teachers. Such an approach provides opportunities for differentiation and for consolidation of the learning achieved and it inculcates independence in learners.

- Among the strengths observed in the teaching methodologies were the creation of experiential and collaborative learning opportunities, good student-teacher questioning strategies, a focus on skill development, variety in the learning styles catered for and the effective use of peer teaching. It is recommended that such methodologies be employed across all lessons.

- The student learning experience was good or very good when there was an appropriate balance between student activity and teacher input. In these lessons students were facilitated to work both independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner.

- In less than half of the lessons evaluated, student learning was satisfactory as the lesson content was not differentiated sufficiently to engage all students, opportunities that existed for peer teaching were not exploited and adequate preparatory work was not carried out for class tasks to engage students in a productive manner.

- There was a very good print and image rich learning environment in all the classrooms visited.

- An atmosphere of positive regard and mutual respect was evident in all classes. Students’ efforts and contributions were affirmed and encouraged.

- The agreed procedures for warranting an ‘exempt from class’ status should be reviewed to ensure that all students engage with the planned programme across all areas of study.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- TY has a strong whole-school profile. Most staff are involved in the delivery of the programme and the rate of transfer to the TY programme is very high.

- Senior management strongly supports TY and has a very good understanding of the implementation and promotion of the programme.

- Very good systems have been developed to support the exchange of information between all staff members in relation to TY.

- Commendably, the school has developed a mission statement for TY rooted in the core national philosophy of the TY programme. This statement is supported by ten over-arching school aims that set out high expectations for students’ learning in thinking, technology and
teamwork in an autonomous and experiential way. It is recommended that this tailored framework be used as a guide within which curricular plans for all areas of study should be devised.

- All teachers involved in TY meet annually. In order to build capacity across the staff and to develop further the TY experience in the school; consideration should be given to the training and induction of staff in relation to the planning for, and delivery of, the different areas of study on the TY programme.

- A broad and very well balanced programme of study encompasses the four layers of the TY curriculum. Management is commended for the priority given to timetabling TY modules and calendar events in co-operation with the nearby boys’ secondary school; providing rich learning experiences for both groups of TY students.

- The quality of communication with parents and guardians during TY is very good and parental and guardian support is perceived as a key success factor of the programme. In this context, it is recommended that an annual parent-teacher meeting for TY be introduced and that a TY specific report template be reconsidered.

- Students are provided with four separate work experience opportunities during the year. A combination of a one-week block and three one-day placements over six weeks is the current model employed. In addition to good guidance provision, a dedicated weekly work experience class is in place to support this central aspect of TY.

- Systematic procedures for the selection and induction of students are in place. Students’ achievements, successes and awards are appropriately celebrated at the end of the year.

- The general criteria for project-based assessment, end-of-year portfolio assessment and multi-media presentations should be agreed across all areas of study and be explicitly taught to encourage students to further engage in self and peer-assessment.

- A programme specific assessment policy for TY should be developed within the framework of the school’s whole-school policy for assessment. This policy should seek to develop a programme-wide accreditation system and agree guidelines for homework to foster consistency in this regard.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Good quality work has been carried out to date in terms of planning for TY. The written plan for the programme contained very good quality organisation details.

- The quality of curriculum plans varied; the majority were of a good or very good quality. In a small number of cases, however, there was a need for substantial development. It is recommended to develop this minority by including content related to the school’s aims for the programme, specific learning objectives and detailed cross-curricular learning.

- All curricular plans included strategies for assessment, however the strategies being employed represented practices that ranged from very good to fair. A variety of assessment methods should be included in the curricular plans. An outline of the number of credits allocated to each assessment mode should also be included to support the implementation of a programme-wide accreditation system as recommended above.

- Programme coordination was of a high quality and was supported by a dedicated and active core team.

- The quality of programme evaluation is very good and is informed by myriad forms of both formal and informal sources as well as qualitative and quantitative evaluation types. These
forms of evaluation are carried out at various times during the TY year and, in line with best practice, they inform future planning for the programme.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and relevant key staff at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.
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 the school’s provision of each area.

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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