An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in JCSP

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Piper’s Hill College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Kilashee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co. Kildare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>70710D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Evaluation: 26-10-2016
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 JCSP 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.
Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)

**INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>25 &amp; 26-10-2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td><strong>• Meetings with the programme co-ordinator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td><strong>• Interaction with students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
<td><strong>• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and teachers</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Piper’s Hill College is a co-educational second level school in Naas. The school offers a broad curriculum and has an enrolment of 1,008 students. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Our Schools (DEIS) scheme and offers all curricular programmes.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good.
- Teaching approaches were student-centred and focused on the individual learner needs.
- Assessment for learning (AFL) strategies featured in the majority of lessons.
- There is very good support from management for JCSP.
- Overall co-ordination of the JCSP is of a high quality, however, school management should prioritise the specific roles and responsibilities attached to the post of Programme Co-ordinator in relation to JCSP.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should agree and implement a consistent approach to written formative feedback in students’ copybooks, in order to ensure that there is clear guidance provided to students on how their work can be improved.
- JCSP teachers should ensure that students’ JCSP statements are regularly reviewed and updated to include the commencement and completion dates of the work.
- A core team for JCSP should be established in order to ensure the ongoing development and review of the programme.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons was very good or good.
- Lessons were well planned and facilitated very good student learning. Learning intentions were established and this provided very good overall structure to the lessons. There were very good examples of the learning intentions being reviewed at the end or during the lesson.
- Highly effective practice was noted in the case where the teacher divided the lesson content into sections, based on the learning intentions. This enabled students to experience success as the lesson progressed.
- In all lessons high expectations of students’ learning and behaviour was noted. A positive atmosphere prevailed in all lessons and the individual needs of students were addressed. Teachers circulated, encouraging students to remain focused and on task, and when necessary interjected to offer encouragement and support to individuals.
- Very effective practice was noted in the use of subject-specific terminology by students. In some lessons, teachers took time to elicit a definition for the key word, further promoting students’ literacy skills. Of particular note was the use in one lesson of a keyword sheet which was differentiated to support the specific learning needs of JCSP students.
- Teachers regularly build on students’ prior knowledge and use a range of techniques such as memory aids to support learning. This was seen to very good effect in a science lesson, when a topic was being revised.
- Teaching approaches used were student-centred with a strong focus on individual learner needs. In practical lessons, the teacher provided instructional guidance which led to some paired or group work reinforcing learning intentions. In other lessons, brainstorming activities enabled students to develop as independent learners. Further examples of very effective practice were noted where students were encouraged to note make rather than note take.
- Questioning strategies were very effectively used in the majority of lessons. Higher-order questioning was used to probe students’ understanding. A very good balance was noted in a lesson where a combination of global and directed questions was used.
- A range of resources was selected by teachers and these were effectively integrated into the lessons. Information and communication technology was used in some lessons to project the learning intention, or to review their outcomes and in others as a visual aid to support learning. Highly effective use was made of a short video to consolidate student learning.
- The learning environment was enriched with displays of student work, and a range of subject-specific visuals. JCSP subject statements were displayed in almost all classrooms. However, these could be used more regularly during lessons to provide a greater focus on JCSP.
- Assessment practices were very good in the lessons observed and included; in-class questioning and oral feedback. A range of student copybooks was reviewed and there was evidence that teachers are providing some written formative feedback. This is, however, an area for continued improvement to ensure consistency in the application of written formative feedback.
- Students’ JCSP folders were also examined during the evaluation. It is recommended that all JCSP statements are updated to include the recording of the commencement and completion dates.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for JCSP. This includes a generous allocation of time for the co-ordination of the programme, the availability of a co-ordinator’s office and additional supports in terms of deployment of teachers to the programme.
• JCSP students’ access to the school’s junior cycle curriculum is very good. A discrete class of JCSP in both second and third year has been formed this year, with the remaining JCSP students dispersed amongst their peers. Management’s continuous monitoring of the criteria in place needs to continue to ensure that there is a clear distinction between the creation of a JCSP discrete class and a learning-support class.

• Continuous professional development is facilitated and encouraged by management. The rotation of teachers to teach the JCSP facilitates capacity building among staff and benefits the programme. This is very good practice.

• Clear links are in place between the school and the wider community and supported by the services of the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator. To further enhance communication between school and home, the school should seek the views of parents on a more regular basis.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

• The overall co-ordination of JCSP is very good. Staff are kept very well informed about the programme and events through a staff noticeboard, emails and through presentations at staff meetings.

• There is a JCSP co-ordinator and also a Programme Co-ordinator who holds a post of responsibility at Assistant Principal level as per Circular Letter 19/02. Roles and responsibilities for the co-ordinator of JCSP are clearly outlined. However, further clarity to identify specific roles and responsibilities which the Programme Co-ordinator undertakes in relation to JCSP should be prioritised and clarified by management.

• No core team for JCSP is in place, this should be addressed. Once established the core team should meet regularly in order to allow for the ongoing review and development of the programme and to facilitate the tracking and monitoring of the attainment of JCSP students.

• A JCSP plan is in place and requires some development. Priority areas identified by the JCSP co-ordinator should now be progressed with action plans prepared to support this work.

• Information gathered from the tracking and analysis of the JCSP students’ attainment in examinations and other data available in the school should be used to further inform the development of the JCSP.

• As there are significant themes common to both the JCSP and DEIS plans, there is scope to develop clear links between both plans.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals 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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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 <em>outstanding</em> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td><em>Good</em> 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 <em>very good</em> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td><em>Fair</em> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td><em>Weak</em> 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>