

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in Transition Year

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Bridgetown College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Bridgetown Co Wexford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71610E

Date of Evaluation: 9 November 2017



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.

The board of management 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.

Programme evaluation in TY

Dates of inspection	8 and 9 November 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meeting with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, and teachers

School context

Bridgetown College is a co-educational post-primary school run under the auspices of Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board. It has a current enrolment of 558 students and provides the following programmes for the local community: Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate School Programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Transition Year is in its third year and is very well run by a committed co-ordinator who provides excellent leadership for the core team.
- The quality of the TY programme and the range of experiences provided is very good overall; senior management is very supportive of the programme and recognises the value of the educational and life experiences provided for students.
- Teaching was good overall with elements of excellent practice observed in some lessons and some scope for development in others, particularly in relation to differentiation and lesson pace.
- Learning was good or very good in lessons observed.
- Students were enthusiastic and engaged in learning and spoke positively about their experiences of the programme.
- Planning for TY overall is very good; however, there is scope for development in giving more specific detail about what students will be doing during the year in some subject plans.

Recommendations

- Teachers should give some additional consideration to lesson planning so that the learning needs of all students are provided for.
- Subject plans for TY should provide clear information about what students will be doing at different stages of the year and should include the learning intentions for the various elements of the courses.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was good overall with some excellent practice observed in some lessons and scope for development noted in others.
- Learning was good or very good overall in the lessons observed. Students were engaged and enthusiastic about their work and clearly enjoyed the challenges posed in many lessons.
- In some lessons students were directed to additional work when they had finished individual or pair tasks. This ensured that all students were appropriately engaged throughout and is very good practice. There was scope for development in a minority of lessons where some students finished tasks early and were not provided with additional stimulating work. Teachers should plan for differentiation to ensure that the learning needs of all students are being met.
- Students demonstrated appropriate knowledge and skills in many lessons and were able to apply their knowledge in a meaningful way when engaging in pair or group work.
- Students were given opportunities to work individually, in pairs or in groups in most lessons and this was very successful in motivating them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- In some instances students were given the opportunity to make presentations and to then reflect on the presentations with a view to improvement through peer evaluation. These positive interactions were skilfully guided by the teachers.
- In the majority of lessons students engaged with material that allowed them to make meaningful connections between learning across the curriculum and in other situations outside of school. This ensured their interest in and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers had high expectations for students and expected them to develop their learning across and beyond the curriculum.
- There was good preparation for lessons overall.
- Students were respectful and positive in lessons and a good learning atmosphere prevailed throughout.
- There was some use of information and communication technology (ICT) during lessons observed. However, this was limited and not always very interesting or stimulating for students. Where appropriate teachers should plan for increased use of ICT and ensure that the material is relevant and interesting.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of the programme and the range of experiences provided is very good overall. Uptake of the programme is good and the programme is well regarded by the student body.
- TY is very well supported by senior management, which recognises the value of the educational and life experiences provided for students.
- Teachers are well deployed to the programme. An enthusiastic and committed co-ordinator has been appointed who provides excellent leadership for the core team and other teachers.
- A number of small timetabling issues have arisen in relation to the provision of time for modern languages and Relationships and Sexuality Education. These issues should be addressed as part of the annual review of the programme.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The co-ordinator and core team work very effectively to provide a stimulating, varied and valuable TY experience.
- The TY programme is in its infancy in the school. Considerable time and effort by the whole school staff went into deciding to provide TY and then designing an overall programme. Subject departments also provided courses for individual subjects. Some subject plans would benefit from more specific information about what students will be doing at different times of the year. The purpose of the planned coursework could be made clear by linking it to specific learning intentions.
- The overall TY programme has been very well planned to include core and taster subjects, modules, once-off lectures and trips. It also includes opportunities for students to participate in paired reading and maths programmes. Students also engage in work experience and can obtain certification in some short courses. Students interviewed spoke positively about their experiences of the programme.
- A dedicated booklet outlining the programme and its benefits would be a valuable asset in further informing students and parents about TY.
Student progress is monitored through a comprehensive range of assessments including monitoring of portfolios and end-of-year certification.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

WWETB and the Board of Management of Bridgetown College are delighted that the *Programme Evaluation Transition Year Report* is overwhelmingly positive and that it acknowledges the coordination, whole-school planning and support from senior management which facilitated the programme's development over the last three years.

We welcome the fact that what we perceive to be strengths have been identified in the course of the evaluation and we are particularly pleased that the Inspectorate has acknowledged the following:

- the commitment and leadership of the TY Coordinator
- the quality of the TY programme and the range of experiences provided
- the enthusiasm, positivity, engagement and learning evident in classes
- the high expectations held by teachers and the quality of their preparation and teaching
- that students interviewed spoke positively about their experience of the programme
- the comprehensive range of assessments

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 management and staff of Bridgetown College, with the support of WWETB, have embraced the school improvement process and are committed to improving programmes wherever possible. We welcome the recommendations contained in the *Programme Evaluation Transition Year Report* and plan to build on the programme's success by means of their implementation.

The following improvements have been planned or implemented:

- We have prepared a TY brochure for JC3 students and their parents.
- We are reviewing our approach to TY subject planning and will be updating our TY subject planning template to take account of current best practice.
- A review of timetabling arrangements for modern languages and RSE will be completed before next year's timetable is created.
- Teachers will continue to hone their skills in relation to differentiation by collaborating with their colleagues and completing courses organised by PDST or WWETB. Over the past two years, seven of our teachers have participated in the 'Magenta Principles' Project, which was organised by WWETB, and facilitated by Mike Hughes, educationalist and author of this inspirational and innovative approach to teaching and learning.
- All WWETB staff and students have access to the organisation's Office 365 infrastructure. It offers teachers opportunities for sharing and collaborating in relation to lessons and projects. We will continue promote this use of IT by teachers through CPD and the IT support provided by WWETB.
- To improve the functionality of the tablets being used by TY students, the operating system has been upgraded to Windows 10 to provide a more seamless interface with Office 365 applications and storage. This development has encouraged greater use of the devices.
- We look forward to wireless broadband being available and, in this regard, we are working with WWETB, in advance of the planned large school extension, with a view to that infrastructure being significantly enhanced.

We are pleased to report that enhanced use of ICT in the classroom, to support teaching and learning, is an important element in WWETB's soon to be published five-year 'Statement of Strategy'. These improvements will be embraced enthusiastically.

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;