

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation of Transition Year (TY)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Hazelwood College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Dromcollogher Co. Limerick
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71850B

Date of Evaluation: 29-03-2019



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agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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 Transition Year 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; a response was not received from the board.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Programme evaluation in Transition Year

Dates of inspection	28 and 29 March 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal, deputy principal and TY co-ordinators• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team and co-ordinators

School context

Hazelwood College is a post-primary, co-educational school operating under the trusteeship of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. Total enrolment at the time of the evaluation was 513, including 59 students participating in the school's optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school also offers the Leaving Certification Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme as well as the Junior Cycle and established Leaving Certificate programmes. A new programme co-ordinator had been appointed two weeks prior to the inspection visit. This position now incorporates the role of TY co-ordinator. The previous TY co-ordinator had fulfilled the role in a voluntary capacity for a number of years.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good during some lessons; however, a significant proportion of students did not identify with the desired learning intention of the lesson and, as a result, were noticeably passive.
- Outcomes for students who engage fully with the TY programme are very positive and diverse.
- In addition to sampling subjects not studied previously, students are challenged to develop new skills and understandings in a wide range of areas.
- Students' experience of TY includes many valuable inputs which they clearly enjoy; nonetheless, the extent to which students displayed a personal sense of responsibility for their growth as learners or could communicate the learning achieved during TY was limited.
- The quality of programme provision and whole-school support is satisfactory; deficits in the approach to timetabling non-core elements of the programme create excessive interference with teaching and learning in core areas.
- Overall, the quality of planning, co-ordination and review is satisfactory; the absence of a robust self-evaluative dimension has restricted optimum development of the programme.

Recommendations

- The development of a more systematic approach to the collation, storage and assessment of students' work is required so that students can clearly articulate and demonstrate their learning.
- Amendments to timetabling and to pastoral systems and supports are necessary so that students can take greater ownership of their learning.

- A comprehensive review of the school's TY programme, which focuses particularly on the consolidation of its non-core components and provides for on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme, is recommended.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good.
- Outcomes for students who engage fully with the TY programme are very positive and diverse. In addition to sampling subjects not studied previously, students are challenged to develop new skills and understandings in areas including drama, music, event management, driver safety, enterprise, sport, citizenship and digital technology.
- During many of the lessons observed, students demonstrated a strong ability to work collaboratively, to think both critically and creatively and to apply new learning to the practical areas of their lives.
- Approaches to collating and presenting the many and diverse outcomes for students, as a result of their participation in the TY programme, require development. The potential for using digital technology to allow students store and reflect on their work should be explored.
- All students describe the outcomes of the TY programme for themselves as individuals during an end-of-year interview that is conducted by a guest to the school. Students' performance at this interview could be enhanced if they were provided with regular opportunities for self-reflection throughout TY.
- Learning experiences for students were positive and purposeful in the majority of lessons observed. In these cases, students utilised and developed a range of skills as they confidently engaged with new and challenging areas of learning. In a significant minority of lessons, however, students were not sufficiently engaged in the main learning activity and did not participate meaningfully in the lessons. In these cases, teaching, assessment and classroom-management strategies that motivate students to engage with less appealing areas of learning were recommended.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for the TY programme is satisfactory.
- The TY programme is open to all third-year students who wish to participate and there is an approximate uptake rate of 60% each year. While there is no formal application process, a request that all students articulate and record their motivation for choosing the TY programme would support assessment and evaluation processes at student, staff and whole-school level.
- A very good effort is made by the senior management team to support the provision of a diverse programme that sees students participate in a very wide range of activities that span the four layers of the TY experience, both on the school premises and in other settings.
- The general teaching staff is also very supportive of the programme and the scheduling of a roster assigning teachers to accompany groups on various outings is a good way of minimising interference with teaching and learning across the school. Notwithstanding this measure, the absence of dedicated times on the timetable for the non-core elements of the programme, such as the martial-arts or car-maintenance modules, leads to confusion and disturbance. It is therefore recommended that the TY timetable be reconfigured to allow for consolidation of the programme's non-core components.

- Development of the modular element of the TY programme will require a corresponding expansion of the teaching personnel involved in the day-to-day delivery of non-core elements. A skills' audit to determine the school's internal capacity to increase the modular component of the programme may therefore be required. A core TY team should also be established to enable teachers with the interest and capacity to improve the school's TY experience to envision, plan and execute a programme of change.
- The provision of dedicated class periods on the TY timetable for pastoral interventions that prompt students to reflect on their growth as learners and to assimilate the learning derived from their varied learning experiences is also needed.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review is satisfactory.
- To date, responsibility for co-ordination and the day-to-day planning of the programme has rested primarily with the TY co-ordinator who is supported by the senior management team, as required. Documentation reviewed as part of the evaluation reflects very high levels of organisation and output to ensure that students' experience of TY is broad, balanced and beneficial.
- The school's TY programme enjoys a high level of support from the school community and there is a good level of openness to new initiatives and approaches. Further development of the programme, however, requires more formal collaboration, particularly between members of a TY team. This team should have a strong pastoral role, linking in with students regularly and supporting them to take responsibility for the realisation of individual goals set at the beginning of their TY learning journey.
- While changes have been made to the content of the programme from year to year, these changes have not been informed by an overarching vision for the programme. The absence of an established mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of the programme is another shortcoming. Actions to address both of these issues should form part of a comprehensive review of the school's TY programme. Furthermore, outcomes should reflect the voice of students with a particular focus on supporting their needs within the context of the four layers of TY (core-subject layer, subject-sampling layer, TY-specific layer and one-off calendar events).
- The quality of planning for individual lessons observed was generally very good and informed by the principles of TY. However, in some lessons and for a variety of reasons, students were simply not interested or sufficiently involved in the lesson task and, in these instances, high levels of student passivity were a concern. In many of these cases, a reconsideration of the extent to which the actual content meets the students' needs within the context of the overall TY programme is required.
- Planning for curricular subjects that were provided as part of the subject-sampling layer was generally very good with a commendable effort made to give students a genuine sense of what further study of the subject could potentially entail. Nonetheless, a review of planning documentation and of samples of students' work indicated that there is an over-emphasis in a small number of subjects on preparing students for some elements of the Leaving Certificate examination. This should be discontinued.

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;