Programme Evaluation in TY

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Aímn na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Tiernan's College</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Mullinmore Street Crossmolina Ballina County Mayo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>72100J</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 14-02-2019
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 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.

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 TY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>13 &amp; 14-02-2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons and three TY-related activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meetings with principal and deputy principal</td>
<td>Examination of students' work</td>
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<td>Meeting with key staff</td>
<td>Interaction with students</td>
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<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Feedback to senior management team</td>
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<td>Student focus-group interview</td>
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School context
Saint Tiernan’s College is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 223 students. It operates under the auspices of Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). All the curricular programmes are offered. Eleven students are following the optional Transition Year (TY) programme, introduced four years ago. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department’s action plan for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:
Findings
- Strengths of the TY programme include purposeful learners, consultation with students on each year’s TY theme and areas of study, and strong support for personal and academic development and preparation for the world of work.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good, with satisfactory practice observed in one lesson; there was scope to improve aspects of differentiation support in some lessons.
- The integration of a broad range of assessment modes into the teaching and learning experience for students during TY was the area of the programme requiring most improvement.
- The overall standard of provision and whole-school support is very good; strategic promotion of the achievements of TY learners among parents and the general student body is needed.
- The overall quality of programme provision and whole-school support was good, based on very good programme planning and co-ordination, mixed levels of subject and module plan quality ranging from very good to fair, and satisfactory review processes.

Recommendations
- Learning activities, materials, and questions should be differentiated for learners according to their abilities.
- An agreed programme-wide approach to assessment should be devised to include clear success criteria and quality descriptors in the overall programme plan and subject and module plans.
- A systematic end-of-year review of TY, inclusive of all stakeholders, should be conducted on an annual basis and agreed improvement priorities identified to inform action planning in a cyclical manner.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good, with satisfactory practice observed in one lesson.

- Students were respectful and positive in lessons and a good learning atmosphere prevailed throughout. Student participation in tasks and activities was very good overall and the learning activities, both individual and group tasks, were highly productive. In these lessons, student were engaged by the tasks and were motivated to progress and achieve as learners.

- The quality of lesson planning and level of preparedness for teaching and learning was very good in most lessons observed.

- Very effective teaching methodologies were used in most lessons. Effective practice in relation to the sharing of learning intentions was a characteristic of most lessons. Students were given clear tasks and had opportunities to discuss, think and be active in their learning.

- In a minority of instances, learning activities did not provide opportunities for all students to engage with tasks in a meaningful way. Lesson material should be differentiated sufficiently to engage all students.

- In general, teachers employed good questioning strategies including the use of higher-order questions to help students develop their learning. In other instances, questioning strategies were less effective and not all students contributed purposefully to the lesson. Global questioning should be avoided and differentiated questioning techniques that engage a wider range of students should be used in all lessons.

- Digital learning technology was used in a stimulating manner to deepen learning in half of the lessons observed. Where appropriate, teachers should plan for increased use of ICT to enhance learning.

- Students were provided with good-quality reflection sheets at the end of two lessons and they completed these independently. It is recommended that a whole-class debriefing phase be facilitated to allow students to discuss and share their learning and to extend the use of self and peer assessment practices.

- There was limited evidence of whole-school strategies in relation to literacy and numeracy at classroom level.

- A review of students’ copybooks and journals, as well as lessons observed and interviews held, indicated that homework was not a common feature of the TY experience of learning. It is recommended that this practice be reviewed.

- In the context of no end-of-term formal examinations being conducted during TY, the range of other assessment modes used to evaluate students’ achievement during TY is fair. These include project-based assessments, student presentations, students’ reflection on work placements, and evaluations of the students’ folders of excellence. There was not adequate evidence that clear success criteria and quality descriptors had been developed to support the use of these assessment methods in the overall programme plan and subject and module plans reviewed.

- An agreed programme-wide approach to assessment should be devised to include a blend of formal and informal assessment methods as well a balance of summative and formative
techniques. The use of an accreditation system would further support the integration of assessment into the teaching and learning experience for students during TY.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision and whole-school support for the TY programme are very good. Clear criteria to allow for student participation in the TY programme are specified in the school admissions policy.
- Almost all staff are involved in the delivery of TY according to specialist qualifications, areas of interest and expertise.
- Good-quality communication systems support the delivery of the programme. Consideration should be given to including a regular TY news update on the school website and social media platforms. Producing a dedicated booklet outlining the programme and its benefits would be another valuable asset in further informing students and parents about TY.
- In line with programme guidelines, the curriculum comprises four programme layers delivered in a balanced manner throughout the year. It is praiseworthy that students are asked to choose a theme for their TY year and are consulted on areas of study to be included in their TY programme.
- Very good procedures are in place between the school and employers to support the preparation for and communication during and after work placements. It is advised that an individual debriefing session be facilitated with each student after each work experience period. A dedicated weekly work experience period on the timetable would support this central aspect of TY.
- The community, social and volunteering dimension of the programme is well provided for as part of the TY core layer and includes two excellent year-long timetabled programmes; a programme facilitating the mentoring of first-year student by TY students and a personal development programme. Students are also provided with opportunities to obtain certification in some externally provided short courses.
- There are appropriate opportunities for communication with parents. Regular reports are given and the celebration of students’ achievements, including information evenings and the TY graduation, are provided. It is advised that the calendar of planned activities be made available to parents and that an annual parent-teacher meeting for TY be introduced.
- The TY programme has forged many mutually beneficial links between the school and other educational providers as well as the wider community.
- The programme is provided in classrooms ranging from excellent, vibrant and contemporary learning spaces to rooms in need of significant improvement. In line with recommendations made in previous inspection reports, most recently in a 2017 WSE-MLL report, it is advised that all classrooms be made compliant with current health and safety regulations.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The overall quality of planning and organisation for the implementation of the programme is very good.
- The quality of curriculum plans varied with examples of very good-quality subject planning available while other plans required significant development. A common template to
support improved subject planning was included in the TY plan. It is recommended that this template be used, where appropriate, to guide improvements in subject planning for TY.

- In general, the quality of school-initiated programme evaluation is satisfactory. Since its introduction, different stakeholders have evaluated the TY programme at the end of different years. Students have engaged in annual review; their evaluation has been of a good quality leading to commendable improvements to the programme. In line with best practice, a full review that involves parents, teachers, students and senior management should be conducted on an annual basis. The outcomes of this process should inform an annual action plan for the programme.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Tiernan’s College Crossmolina welcomes and celebrates the Programme Evaluation Transition Year Report and is delighted that the talent, dedication and hard work of Senior Management, TY Co-ordinator, Core team, TY teachers and students has been recognised and affirmed. We are delighted that the following was recognised:

- Strengths of the TY programme include purposeful learners, consultation with students on each year’s TY theme and areas of study, and strong support for personal and academic development and preparation for the world of work.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- Students were respectful and positive in lessons and a good learning atmosphere prevailed throughout. Student participation in tasks and activities was very good overall and the learning activities, both individual and group tasks, were highly productive. In these lessons, students were engaged by the tasks and were motivated to progress and achieve as learners.
- In line with programme guidelines, the curriculum comprises four programme layers delivered in a balanced manner throughout the year. It is praiseworthy that students are asked to choose a theme for their TY year and are consulted on areas of study to be included in their TY programme.
- The community, social and volunteering dimension of the programme is well provided for as part of the TY core layer and includes two excellent year-long timetabled programmes; a programme facilitating the mentoring of first-year student by TY students and a personal development programme. Students are also provided with opportunities to obtain certification in some externally provided short courses.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

- A common template to support improved subject planning was included in the TY plan. It is recommended that this template be used, where appropriate, to guide improvements in subject planning.
  - Response: The school will use this common template for all TY subject department planning and assessment from September 2019.
- In line with best practice, a full review that involves parents, teachers, students and senior management should be conducted on an annual basis.
  - Response: While evaluation of the programme currently occurs the school will investigate a more cohesive approach to gathering this information from all sectors so that it may inform future planning.
- It is advised that the calendar of planned activities be made available to parents and that an annual parent-teacher meeting for TY be introduced.
  - Response: A TY parent-teacher meeting is held annually. A calendar of planned activities will be sent to parents in the first term.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<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 <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>
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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 <em>very good</em> 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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