

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in Transition Year (TY)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Tullow Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	The Mullawn Tullow Co. Carlow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91356F

Date of Evaluation: 22-03-2017



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; a response was not received from the board.

TY

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	21/ 22-03-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Examination of students' work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 class periods• Interaction with students• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Tullow Community School is under the joint trusteeship of the Brigidine Order, the Patrician Brothers and the Kilkenny Carlow Education and Training Board, and has an enrolment of 620 students. It offers the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Transition year (TY) is optional in the school. Currently one class group is engaged in the programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with some excellent practice observed and some minor areas for improvement in a small number of lessons.
- The co-ordination and planning of the programme is good and a TY booklet is available for students and parents.
- The quality of the TY programme is good and it is well supported by senior management.
- There is a good balance in the programme between core subjects, taster subjects, modules and once-off trips and speakers.
- There is no provision for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) currently during TY.
- Students interviewed during the evaluation were very affirming of the programme and the TY students have had some notable successes in national competitions and shows, leading to increased interest and take-up of the programme for the next school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be given the opportunity to actively participate in all lessons and be responsible for their own learning.
- RSE should be delivered during the TY year.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with some excellent practice observed and some minor areas for improvement in a small number of lessons.
- Learning intentions were given at the beginning of the lesson and in some cases revisited at the end. In a few lessons, students were given success criteria which enhanced their understanding of the task in hand and what they needed to do. This is good practice and should be extended.
- In most lessons students were given the opportunity to actively participate and were challenged appropriately to make observations and to draw conclusions. However a few lessons tended to be overly teacher-led resulting in students being too passive. This could be easily addressed by some teacher reflection on good practice.
- In some cases students worked in groups and gave feedback to the class in plenary sessions. This strategy worked well and students answered enthusiastically.
- Students engaged very well when given the opportunity and were interested and animated learners. In some lessons, students were actively encouraged to establish links between lesson content and their own lives, leading to significant learning. In a few cases, lesson content was linked to current events and popular culture which enriched the learning process. These practices should be uniformly implemented to extend the relevance of student learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used sometimes to contextualise lesson content. Overall, the use of ICT could be expanded and teachers should plan for this in individual and overall subject planning.
- In a few lessons, there was explicit reference to literacy and numeracy. In one lesson for example, students' attention was drawn to keywords and the intention to create a word bank was announced. Teachers should plan for the inclusion of literacy and numeracy in their lessons in line with the school's literacy and numeracy strategies.
- It is notable that TY students have achieved significant success in various competitions and both staff and students were seen to be highly enthusiastic and driven in relation to this work.
- Curriculum planning was varied. Some subject plans were clear with areas of study and exploration effectively outlined. Other plans would benefit from additional detail in relation to the use of resources including ICT, teaching methodologies and assessment.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- TY is well co-ordinated. Uptake of the programme has been growing and next year there will be two class groups in TY. The programme is highly valued and supported by the senior management team.
- There is a good balance between core subjects, taster subjects, modules and calendar events and guest speakers. Some of the highlights of the programme include involvement in Junk Couture, mini company, craft skills, Gaisce and robot design. The timetabling of modern languages could be improved next year. There are opportunities for accreditation arising from modules and this should be kept under review.

- Students are encouraged to develop a social conscience and there is an emphasis on fundraising and charity work in TY. Consideration should be given to the possibility of charity work placements in addition to the two week work experience placements.
- RSE is not currently provided in TY and this should be addressed in the context of the senior cycle RSE programme.
- While there is a TY booklet, the provision of a shorter TY brochure would be useful to outline the four key strands of the programme and the highlights of the year, and to support the increased uptake of the programme. The co-ordinator, core team and senior management should discuss ways of improving communication with parents.
- The provision of a TY budget should be prioritised as well as a general breakdown of costs for students and parents.
- A wide range of sporting activities is available, some of which students would not get an opportunity to experience ordinarily.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Programme planning is good overall. Recommendations around subject planning, a TY brochure and a budget will all help to support overall planning.
- Students were very affirming of TY. They spoke about additional skills development and improved self-confidence. They were appreciative of the wide range of trips and events but expressed a wish that these would be evenly distributed throughout the year, including an overnight trip. The possibility of organising an overnight trip at the beginning of the year should be considered.
- The programme is evaluated by students and teachers currently and their views are taken into account when planning for the subsequent year. There will be a parental questionnaire next year which will enhance provision and planning.
- Students' work is evaluated through tests and projects. The compiling of individual portfolios and a student interview at the end of the year would enhance overall assessment. This should be considered for next year.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and relevant key staff at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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	Good 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	Satisfactory 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	Fair 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	Weak 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;