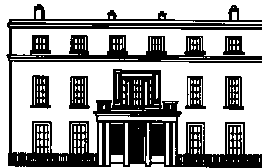


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Transition Year Programme Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Clongowes Wood College S.J.**  
**Clane, County Kildare**  
**Roll number: 61720F**

**Date of inspection: 1 April 2014**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

## **REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TRANSITION YEAR**

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### **INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> March and 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was excellent in all lessons observed.
- The methodologies used allowed students to be independent learners.
- Students demonstrated a very strong interest in learning and participated fully in all lessons.
- The school's Transition Year (TY) programme is excellent.
- TY students are supported very well in making choices about their futures.
- The co-ordination of the TY programme is excellent.

### **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Students should be surveyed about the different teaching and learning strategies that are used in TY and about how they have affected their learning.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Clongowes Wood College S.J. is a voluntary Catholic secondary boarding school for boys with a current enrolment of 444 students. TY is compulsory.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning was excellent in all lessons observed. There were no recommendations made for improvement. All lessons were very well planned with students' interests in mind. For example, the students were surveyed at the start of the music module on the aspect of music they were interested in studying and the programme of study for the subject on musical composition was designed around the results of the survey.
- Teacher explanations and instructions were clear. Very good use was made of higher-order questions to encourage students to explore the lessons' ideas. All lessons had clear learning objectives which were assessed and achieved by the end of the lessons.
- Teachers mainly acted as facilitators of learning. Students collaborated and took responsibility for their own learning. The methodologies used were student-centred and allowed students to be independent learners. Very good use was made of the school setting to enhance students' learning experience. For example, a visit to the school's farm was organised as part of the photography lesson observed.
- The students' skills were used as a valuable resource in some lessons. During the physical education lesson, for example, they were organised into groups and one student was assigned the role of teacher. In a language lesson a number of native speakers were strategically placed in groups to facilitate conversation. This resulted in almost complete use of the target language by students and teacher during the lesson.
- Students demonstrated their strong interest in learning in the contributions they made during their lessons. They participated very well and engaged competently and confidently with the planned activities. It was evident that the teachers are passionate about their subjects. They chose topics that would inspire students and develop their interest.
- The atmosphere in each of the classrooms visited was relaxed and secure with students participating in activities freely and un-selfconsciously. They were very respectful of each other and showed confidence and maturity in class and group discussions. Teachers praised and affirmed students for their efforts. In addition, the students themselves showed great support and encouragement to their classmates at various times during the evaluation.
- The school's assessment practices are in keeping with the aims of TY. Teachers provided students with encouragement and advice on how to improve. Student self-assessment and peer-assessment are strong and valuable features. In the subjects observed evaluation criteria was provided for students to engage in peer and self-assessment. Students are also assessed by personal interview and on their portfolio work. The quality of the portfolios reviewed was very good. Opportunities are provided for the celebration of student achievement.

## **PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The school's TY programme is excellent. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is appropriately structured around an academic core, optional subjects and subject specialisms. Work experience is integrated well into the programme. Some students choose to take on

additional work experience. This is facilitated and encouraged. The TY programme is designed with student interests in mind and includes course work that is not on the Leaving Certificate programmes.

- Students have access to a very wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities to enhance learning and to facilitate personal development. One particularly valuable feature of the TY is the social outreach programme, which takes place one day per week in the school. This involves TY students teaching English as an additional language to asylum seekers and organising activities for members of the local community, who have special needs. In addition, students complete a week's social awareness placement and organise fundraising events for charity. These are very good examples of the school's overall aim for TY, which is to provide students with a deeper learning experience and opportunities for self-development. This is evidence of the TY focus of being 'Men for Others' that is lived out in the school.
- Whole-school support for TY is excellent. The school culture facilitates creativity in TY. This has contributed to the use of student-centred methodologies and the very high level of students' enthusiasm for learning that was evident during the evaluation. The resources for co-ordinating the programme, and for teaching and learning, which include information and communications technology (ICT) are very good.
- There is very good communication with parents of TY students throughout the year. Information evenings are arranged, parent-teacher meetings are held and regular reports are sent home. The members of the TY core planning team are available to provide advice to parents on an individual basis also.
- Students complete interest inventories and career investigations as part of the guidance provision for TY. They can access one-to-one appointments and they receive a number of inputs from the guidance counsellor before making their Leaving Certificate subject choices. Many students are interested in applying for universities abroad and they are provided with all of the necessary information and advice in TY to ensure that they are well prepared in good time. They described to the inspector the benefits of this support when choosing subjects for the Leaving Certificate and making decisions about their future as a particular advantage of participating in the programme.

#### **PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION**

- The TY programme of work for each subject includes a wide range of topics and material that are not on the certificate examination syllabuses. The coursework plans outline clear learning intentions that centre on the development of the necessary skills for the different subjects. They include, for example, the development of reading, writing, oral and presentation skills in the languages and problem solving, investigation and discovery in the sciences. In keeping with very good practice the programmes of work are designed to provide real-life, cultural, moral and practical contexts for learning. Students have the opportunity to experience a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular learning experiences in their subjects that will benefit them greatly in completing their Leaving Certificate programme.
- The co-ordination of the TY programme is excellent. Regular meetings of the core team are held. The work of the co-ordinator is very well supported by the TY work experience co-ordinator, the TY house master, the TY year head, the senior management team (comprising the headmaster and deputy headmaster) and the TY subject teachers. Work experience is

monitored through the completion of student portfolios and through teachers contacting employers while the students are on work placement.

- The success of the TY programme is evaluated through student surveys. It is evident that the programme is informed from year-to-year by these surveys. Different methodologies are used in teaching and learning in TY. It is recommended that students be surveyed about these methodologies and about how they affected their learning.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the head master, deputy head master and the TY co-ordinator 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.