

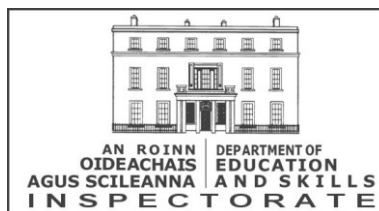
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Programme Evaluation
Transition Year Programme
REPORT**

**Coláiste Cholmcille
Indreabhán, Contae na Gaillimhe
Roll number: 71250A**

Date of Inspection: 28 April 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of Inspection:	27 and 28 April 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Review of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teaching and learning methodologies employed were of a good or very good quality in all lessons observed.
- In the lessons observed there was little evidence of the literacy and numeracy strategies agreed at whole school level as part of the school self evaluation process (SSE).
- The Transition Year (TY) programme has a high profile in the school and a varied programme is provided in which students develop a wide range of skills.
- The co-ordination and planning of the programme was of a very high quality.
- The quality of the plans that had been developed for the various areas of study on the programme ranged from good to very good in half of the plans and there was scope for development in the remaining plans.
- The various programme curricula are evaluated in a systematic manner in consultation with all parties and are renewed accordingly.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on an assessment experience that gives more prominence to the learning process and affords a more central role to students when evaluating their own progress.
 - It is recommended that all plans for the various areas of study in the TY programme be developed to the same quality.
 - It is recommended that an action plan for the development of the programme be agreed and implemented.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Cholmcille is co-educational Gaeltacht post primary school, operating under the auspices of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board. 223 students are enrolled. TY is an optional programme in the school and 40 students are participating the programme this year. They are organised in mixed ability classes for most subjects.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in all lessons observed. The distinctive aspects of this good practice was the commendable effort that had been made to create a learning experience that was different from the students' usual experience as well as a wide range of methodologies that were used to promote student participation.
- The desired learning objectives were shared with students at the beginning of lessons as part of the teachers' normal practice.
- Examples of best practice included lessons where the students were given opportunities to demonstrate prior learning and opportunities were created at the end of lessons to revise what the students had learned. It is recommended that such techniques be extended to all other lessons.
- Lesson material was clearly communicated and good questioning techniques were used in all lessons however in a small number of classes, there was an over reliance on didactic teaching methods. An aspect for development would be to have a better balance between teacher-centred approaches and student-centred approaches in all lessons.
- Additional resources, that greatly supported learning and teaching, were prepared in over half the classes.
- Student management was very good and the good behaviour and good manners of the students were very much in evidence.
- Irish was the language of management, teaching and communication in all lessons and activities observed.
- There was little evidence in any classes observed of literacy and numeracy strategies agreed at whole school level as part of SSE. The use of these strategies in the classroom should be monitored more effectively.
- It is commendable that a new TY diary has been designed this year. It was evident from a sample of diaries that number of subjects in which a homework task is assigned on a regular basis is an area for development. Students did not always have the section relating to work experience entered in their diaries. It is strongly recommended that systems be developed to achieve the learning and teaching potential of the diaries.
- TY students are given examinations in the core subjects twice a year. The amount of work evident in the students' copy books and folders, which were randomly collected, varied greatly. Best practice was observed in subjects in which the students had completed regular tasks, which included projects and work folders and where teachers had given written feedback. The feedback gave an insight into the quality of the work and the students' attention was drawn to areas for development. More widespread use should be made of similar practices. It is also recommended that more use be made of portfolio assessment.

- At the end of the year, students carry out a self-assessment of their own progress across a wide range of skills that they have developed during the programme. The link between this and the learning contract signed after an induction process at the beginning of the year is evident. It is recommended that the personal objectives aspect of the learning contract be developed and that the achievement of objectives set out be monitored at more regular intervals throughout the year.
- It is recommended that a programme wide accreditation system be developed and that the distribution of the credits for the various subjects be specified under assessment methods in each of the subject plans.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The TY programme has a good profile in the school; for the past three years two thirds of third year students have opted to undertake TY. It is recommended that selection criteria for the programme be specified in the school admissions policy.
- A core team is responsible for leading the programme and this group meets formally each month.
- The co-ordinator has regular contact with the principal in relation to the programme and all staff are informed of TY activities on a regular basis.
- Notwithstanding student attendance being closely monitored and parents are kept informed of the number of absences, a significant minority had lost more than twenty days by Christmas. It is strongly recommended that more strategies be employed to deal with this challenge.
- A diverse programme is provided which emphasises extending teaching and learning beyond the classroom door. Students are afforded many opportunities to gain a richer understanding of the heritage and culture of their own native place.
- Although the various strands of the programme are well balanced, it is recommended that the possibility of providing some of the core subjects as modules be examined.
- It is recommended that students be organised in mixed ability classes for all areas of study, including Mathematics.
- Students undertake a week of work experience three times a year. It was evident from student responses that they were very satisfied with the work placements they had obtained as well as insights into those particular careers.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Good work has been carried out in relation to planning for the TY programme, the principles underpinning the programme in the school are set out at the beginning of the plan and comprehensive specific learning objectives were attached to each guiding principle .
- The programme co-ordination and organisation details in the written plan were of a high quality

- There was great variation in the quality of the plans that had been developed for the various areas of study on the programme. In the case of half the planning documents practice ranged from good to very good and there was much scope for development in the other half observed. It is recommended that these plans be developed and provide more comprehensive details relating to learning objectives, methodologies, use of resources and assessment methods.
- In line with best practice, the programme is evaluated on an ongoing basis in a systematic manner by the core team, and periodic evaluation is also carried out in consultation with students, teaching staff and parents.
- The information from the analysis of the evaluation of the TY programme is available in the plan as well as strengths, weaknesses, current opportunities and threats (SWOT). It is recommended that a plan of action be designed to address the areas for development that have been identified and that the main recommendations of this report be included also.

The draft findings and recommendations of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and teachers 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.