

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Programme Evaluation
Junior Certificate School Programme
REPORT**

**Bunclody Vocational College
Bunclody, County Wexford
Roll number: 71620H**

Date of inspection: 10 October 2014



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

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE SCHOOL PROGRAMME (JCSP)

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of inspection	9 and 10 October 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching ranged from good to very good with a good standard of learning observed in the majority of lessons and very good learning noted in a few lessons.
- Active methodologies featured in the majority of lessons with less effective methods observed in a few lessons.
- There is a strong commitment from senior management and the programme co-ordinator to the JCSP in the school.
- A wide range of resources is available to teachers to support teaching and learning in the JCSP.
- Links with parents and the wider community are very good.
- Opportunities for students to engage in a wide range of cross curricular initiatives are excellent.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- School management should increase tuition time to fully comply with the Time in School Circular letters M29/95.
 - The plan for JCSP should be further developed and the feedback from views gathered from a formal review of the programme should contribute to the development of the plan.
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INTRODUCTION

Bunclody Vocational College is a co-educational school with an enrolment of 168 students and 59 Post-Leaving Certificate students. The school is under the patronage of the Waterford and Wexford Educational Training Board and participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. The school offers the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The JCSP has been offered in the school since 2001.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching ranged from good to very good with a good standard of learning observed in the majority of lessons and very good learning noted in a few lessons.
- Teacher preparation and planning for all lessons was very good.
- Learning intentions were explicitly stated at the beginning of lessons. A review of the learning intentions at the end of class is recommended to allow for reflection on what has been achieved in the lesson and for further planning.
- Student behaviour in all lessons was very good. Contributions by students were affirmed and encouraged. Student attendance was monitored in all lessons and seating plans were used by teachers, adding to overall effective classroom management.
- A range of mostly effective methodologies was observed in lessons. In line with best practice students were given opportunities to be active in their learning. The use for example, of a game to consolidate learning in a language lesson was very effective and it was evident that students derived a sense of enjoyment from their learning. It is recommended that there is continued review of the range of methodologies to ensure that a balance between teacher-led instruction and student activities is maintained.
- Procedural questions that required the recall of facts or to provide the next step in the question were observed in a few lessons. More challenging style of questions were also observed but to a lesser extent. In lessons where effective questioning strategies were used very good learning opportunities were afforded to students and this raised expectations of students. Ongoing development of questioning strategies that challenge students is recommended.
- Resources were used effectively in all lessons. These included subject specific equipment, and teacher prepared hand-outs. Of particular note was the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the majority of lessons as an aid to support learning.
- Many teachers are classroom based and displays of student work and subject specific material were observed, all of which added to the learning environment and were used to support learning. For example, a map of the world was used as a visual aid to illustrate various landmarks encountered in the subject and this was very effective.
- JCSP subject statements were displayed in most classrooms and teachers referenced specific targets during the lesson. Students use hardback copybooks to retain samples of their work. However it is recommended that each student has an individualised record of all of their achievements and progression in each subject area.

- There is scope to rearrange the classrooms to support collaborative learning as most of the classrooms visited were arranged in a traditional way. The use of alternative configurations such as those already in use in some situations in the school should be used.
- In-class questioning, school based examinations and some peer assessment are used to assess students' progress. Written formative feedback in students' copybooks provided affirmation and guidance for improvement. This is very good practice.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is a strong commitment from senior management and the programme co-ordinator to actively support the JCSP in the school. To further develop the planning of the programme it is recommended that a core team be established.
- Management encourages and facilitates attendance at continuing professional development (CPD) courses. A detailed register of CPD events attended by teachers is recorded in the programme plan. The co-ordinator of the programme has presented to colleagues during staff development days and provides mentoring to newly appointed teachers to the school. This is very good practice.
- Participation in the JCSP for all junior cycle students was introduced in 2004 for a range of valid and appropriate reasons. The inclusion of all students in the programme has proved very beneficial and there have been improvements noted for many students in their overall attainment in some subject areas in state examinations.
- Links with parents and the wider school community are very good. Events to celebrate students' achievement and attainment are organised. First-year parents are invited to a coffee morning and links with parents are maintained through the school website, texting, letters, school newsletters and community based initiatives. Additional contact between the school and the home is supported through the services of the home school community liaison teacher and the school completion programme.
- Effective practices are in place to allow students to make informed decisions about subject choices including the provision of taster programmes in first year. The current school timetable falls short of the minimum instruction time. This should be addressed in line with Circular Letter M29/95. A--
- Timetabling arrangements are very good for most subjects. However, to support the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, time allocated to English and Mathematics should be reviewed to allow for daily contact with these subjects, in line with Circular Letter 0025/2012.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- A JCSP plan is in place and provides a good overview of the organisation of the programme, with some scope for its development noted. Areas for inclusion as discussed during the evaluation could usefully allow for the development of a comprehensive plan for the programme.
- The coordination of the JCSP is very good. Commendably, a school developed profiling template has been developed and teachers use this as a record of student statements. Co-ordination duties are wide ranging and include duties associated with the LCVP.

Communication with staff is maintained through a JCSP noticeboard in the staffroom and JCSP is included on the agenda of staff meetings. Profiling meetings are arranged regularly throughout the school year.

- There is much evidence that the school reflects on its practices and implements necessary developments for school improvement. However, it is recommended that a formal evaluation of the programme be undertaken so that it reflects the views of parents, staff and students. Findings from this evaluation should then be used to support ongoing planning and development of the JCSP.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and relevant key staff 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management and staff of Bunclody Vocational College welcome this external evaluation of the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) in our school. We also welcome this report which recognises the many strengths and examples of good practice in our school. These include:

- The strong commitment from senior management and the programme co-ordinator to the JCSP programme in our school.
- The quality of teacher planning and preparation for all lessons.
- The quality of the teaching and learning experienced by the Department Inspector during this evaluation.
- The effective classroom management.
- The positive affirmation and encouragement which promoted the very good standard of behaviour of students in all lessons.
- The use of written formative feedback to provide affirmation and guidance for further improvement.
- The active teaching methodologies employed by teachers and the appropriate and effective use of resources including the use of ICT to support students learning.
- The positive links with parents and the wider community.
- The excellent opportunities for students to engage in a wide range of cross curricular initiatives.

The Board is satisfied that the inspection recognised the reflective nature, the characteristic spirit, and the quality of teaching and learning in our school. We are very pleased with the various evaluations that took place at subject level during this inspection and we wish to congratulate the English, Irish, Technical Graphics, Business Studies and Careers Departments for their ongoing dedication and commitment to the development of our school and students.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

As referenced in this report “there is much evidence that the school reflects on its practices and implements necessary developments for school improvement”. The Board of Management will consider the recommendations of this report accordingly. It is our intention to take whatever steps are deemed necessary, within the schools resources, to further promote the development of this valuable programme and the quality of teaching and learning in our school.

Since this evaluation contact has been made with the JCSP Support Service to seek guidance on the issue of maintaining student folders given that this is an issue in many schools. The report has also been made available to all staff members for feedback. We continue to support the positive aspects of the programme identified by this inspection.