

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Programme Evaluation
TRANSITION YEAR
REPORT**

**Cross and Passion College
Kilcullen, Co. Kildare**

Roll number: 61690W

Date of inspection: 19 November 2014



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

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TRANSITION YEAR

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of inspection	18 th and 19 th November 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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to excellent in the lessons observed.
- A range of valuable modes of assessment are used for monitoring and evaluating student achievement in transition year (TY).
- The TY guidance provision is very good.
- The programme provided for TY students in the school is excellent and is very well supported by school management.
- The co-ordination of the TY programme in the school is excellent.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A core team of TY teachers should be appointed and the role of the fourth-year year head should be reviewed.
- The programme of peer observation that has been recently introduced should be extended to promote wider use of the active methodologies.

INTRODUCTION

Cross and Passion College, Kilcullen is a Voluntary Secondary School with a current enrolment of 355 boys and 354 girls. TY is a compulsory programme in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to excellent in the lessons observed. All lessons were well planned. In most lessons a wide range of interesting resources and active methodologies were used to engage learners. These included; group and pair work, computer work, musical performance, meditation, and interactive games. Teachers shared the learning objectives with students at the start of lessons. The objectives were assessed and achieved by the end of each lesson.
- There was a strong emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning. They participated fully and the level of student collaboration was very high in most of the lessons.

In their meeting with the inspector, students highlighted the value of active methodologies, such as group work, pair work and class discussion, as having a positive effect on the quality of their learning. There was scope in one lesson for students to be engaged in a wider range of activities. It is therefore recommended that the good practices described above be extended to all TY lessons.

- The key words were highlighted in the lessons observed. In addition, TY students bring a novel to school each day and complete a book review per term as a further way of developing their literacy and their interest in reading for pleasure. This is very good practice.
- The relationships between students and their teachers were warm and encouraging. Teachers have created secure learning environments where students demonstrated confidence in expressing themselves and respect in listening to the contributions of others.
- A range of valuable modes of assessment are used for monitoring and evaluating student achievement in TY. These include, project work, oral and aural assessment, and formal examinations. Furthermore, extensive use of Assessment for Learning strategies, when providing feedback to students, was noted in the evaluation. These are very valuable in encouraging students to be self-directed learners. However, there is significant pressure on students to complete projects where a large number are due at the same time. Therefore, it is recommended that the timing of the completion of projects be co-ordinated amongst the subject teachers.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- TY is very well supported by school management. Teachers' interests and expertise are well utilised in the design and delivery of the programme. The resources for co-ordinating the programme and for teaching and learning, including information and communications technology (ICT) are very good.
- An information evening is held for the parents of third-year students outlining the options available when they progress into senior cycle in the school. Throughout the year, parents of TY students are kept informed about the activities and events taking place through the school's website, text messages, newsletters and student journals. Formal reports are also issued to parents and parent teacher meetings take place.
- Students complete interest inventories and career investigations and receive a module of career guidance during TY. In addition, advice and support with making Leaving Certificate subject choices are provided. Students sample a wide range of subjects and described the benefits of this when choosing subjects for the Leaving Certificate as a particular advantage of participating in the programme.
- The TY curriculum is very broad and balanced and focuses on the holistic development of the student. It is appropriately structured around an academic core, optional subjects and subject specialisms. Work experience is integrated well into the programme. The TY programme is designed with student interests in mind and comprises many subjects not on the Leaving Certificate programmes.
- In addition to participation in trips out of school, students engage in valuable co-curricular and extracurricular learning experiences. These include, Build-a-Bank, poetry workshops, swimming, the Driver Education programme, and astronomy workshop. A musical is staged in TY and this is a particularly successful and valuable aspect of the programme.
- Attendance and punctuality are well monitored and absence from school is followed up with class teachers checking notes and text messages being sent home. However, there is scope for

a strengthening of the TY year head's role in following up more serious cases of non-attendance and in supporting student participation in TY. This should be addressed.

- Programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation of the TY programme are excellent. The full teaching team meets at the beginning and the end of the year to review and plan the programme. The co-ordinator meets with all team members at least once per term on an individual or subject group basis.
- The work of the co-ordinator is very well supported by members of the TY team and the school secretary who assists with administration. For example, teachers make arrangements for outside speakers' visits and for trips out of school, they check student journals and they contact student work-experience placements. Teachers also interview students to evaluate their portfolios.
- A TY core team has not been established. Therefore, it is recommended that a core team of TY teachers be appointed and the role of the fourth-year year head should be reviewed. These measures are recommended with the aim of providing for the delegation of a wider range of organisational duties in order to build capacity within an already talented and capable team.
- Almost all TY subject plans comprise content not on the Leaving Certificate syllabuses and include a variety of valuable experiences for students. They have a cross-curricular emphasis, and outline a diverse range of methodologies to engage learners, all of which is very good planning. Some subject plans should be further developed to include material that will allow students to develop essential skills for the subject, but that is not on the certificate examination syllabuses.
- Two members of the TY teaching team have been trained in Instructional Leadership. This and other good practices have been shared through the programme of peer observation that has been recently introduced. This has contributed to an enrichment of the school's provision for TY and should be extended to promote wider use of the active methodologies.
- The quality of the programme's provision is evaluated through student surveys at the end of the year. This evaluation should be extended to a discussion with students about how the use of different methodologies has impacted on their learning. This is recommended with a view to encouraging the extension of student-centred methodologies in teaching and learning across all year groups. It is evident that recommendations for improvement made by students are taken on board in the design of the TY programme. This is very good practice.

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 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.

Published February 2015

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 wishes to acknowledge this report, its recommendations and its findings.

The Board welcomes the report's finding that the programme provided is excellent.

The Board welcomes the report's findings that

- The Transition Year Programme is very broad and balanced and focuses on the holistic development of the student, including appropriate structure around academic core subjects, optional subjects, subject specialisms and well integrated work experience.
- The Transition Year guidance provision is very good.
- Students participate in valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences, especially the staging of the musical which is a particularly successful and valuable aspect of the programme.
- Recommendations for improvements made by students are taken on board in the design of the TY programme and this is considered very good practice.
- Relationships between students and teachers are warm and encouraging. Teachers have created secure learning environments where students demonstrated confidence in expressing themselves and respect in listening to the contribution of others.
- The Transition Year Literacy Policy which supports and encourages students' literacy and interest in reading for pleasure is considered very good practice.

Our students' appreciation of the range of active methodologies used and the positive effect of these for their learning outcomes is also very affirming.

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

The school is addressing the recommendations of the report with a particular commitment to and focus on:

- Members of a core team of TY Teachers have been identified and have begun planning this term. Ways in which we can further enhance the role of the Year Head within that team are also being considered.
- Our initiative in 'peer observation' has also been further developed with structured weekly review meetings of a steering group in situ and an extended team of teachers engaged.
- A greater range of methodologies, including a very successful peer teaching approach has been implemented, in the one lesson identified as needing a wider range of activities for students.
- The small number of plans identified as needing further development to include material that will allow students to develop essential skills for the subject, but not on certificate examination syllabuses, have been adjusted and implemented.
- Co-ordinating due dates for completion of projects, has been discussed and planned for each term to relieve pressure on students to complete a number of projects at the same time.
- Student mid and end of year evaluation forms have been adjusted to include a specific question on how the use of different methodologies has impacted upon their learning.