

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Programme Evaluation  
Transition Year**

**REPORT**

**Ramsgrange Community School  
Ramsgrange, New Ross, County Wexford  
Roll number: 91431Q**

**Date of inspection: 13 May 2015**



**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>	11 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2015
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### MAIN FINDINGS

- All lessons were characterised by positive and inclusive classroom interactions which were supported by teacher encouragement and affirmation of student effort.
- Lessons were very well planned, topics chosen were appropriate to Transition Year (TY) and good cross-curricular links were established in many lessons.
- The TY curriculum is broad and generally balanced though more diversity will be necessary.
- The TY programme has a high profile and visibility in the school supported by an effective core team, the involvement of parents and the celebration of student achievements, successes and awards.
- Modes of assessment are good overall, however, some aspects of assessment are overly informal.
- An appropriate current TY plan is in place though TY subject planning will require substantial development.

### MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The teaching and learning recommendations made in the body of the report should be implemented.
  - Greater curriculum diversity and choice to suit the needs and interests of students is recommended.
  - It is recommended that the organisation and planning of work experience be evaluated and reviewed.
  - TY subject planning requires substantial development with a focus on the development of key skills and the use of a common template such as the Transition Unit template.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Ramsgrange Community School serves a rural catchment area and has a current enrolment of 361 mainstream students and 24 Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) students. The school is part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. In addition to TY the school offers a range of programmes including the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Lessons were very well planned and there was effective planning for the use of resources. Topics chosen were appropriate to TY and were in line with the stated programme objectives as outlined in the school's written programme.
- Lessons were well structured overall. The majority of lessons were guided by intended learning objectives which were written on the board and verbally shared with students. Best practice was observed when these objectives were revisited at the conclusion of lessons. This practice should be extended.
- Good cross-curricular links were established in many lessons. Inquiry-based learning formed a key feature of the Mathematics lesson whereby students, working in small groups were set open-ended numerical tasks and were guided in drawing definitive conclusions. Key words and numerical concepts were highlighted on the board. This practice reinforced learning and should be extended to all lessons.
- Students learned practical skills in some lessons and engaged enthusiastically with the tasks set out. For example, in the Art and Woodwork lessons, a good level of differentiation was in evidence to cater for the range of students' abilities. The time available for students to complete meaningful tasks was very short in some cases. The timetabling of double lessons for practical subjects should be considered. In some cases, students of all abilities should be placed in the same working group to better support learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) appropriately supported learning in many cases through the use of video, animation, photographs and short presentations. This good practice should be extended.
- In some lessons, students would have benefitted from guided discussion and collective reflection on their work. Lessons should be planned so that students are provided with the opportunity to demonstrate and present their completed work to the class group. This would support confidence-building and collaboration which are key aims of TY. In some classrooms the seating arrangements did not support this approach and did not facilitate the self and group-reflection tasks undertaken. Classroom layouts and student seating arrangements that better support the aims of TY should be considered.
- All lessons were characterised by positive and inclusive classroom interactions which were supported by teacher encouragement and affirmation of student effort.
- Teachers used a wide range of assessment approaches to evaluate students' level of understanding, progress and achievement. Focused oral feedback on students' work for individuals and groups would have further enhanced student learning in some cases. There was little evidence of formative written feedback on students' completed work in their folders.

- The whole school and many individual classroom environments support, encourage and celebrate student learning and student achievements in the TY programme. Many activities support student literacy and numeracy development and this is very good practice.
- There was a high level of student engagement in learning. Students exhibited a high level of knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, during the Young Social Innovators (YSI) lesson, students were facilitated to reflect on their work and how they could improve.
- Student literacy development was particularly well supported in the English and French lessons. Student involvement in TL21 project and success in 'MATHletes' strongly support literacy and numeracy within TY.

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

- The TY programme has a high profile and visibility and there is a whole school approach to programme development. The programme is inclusive and made relevant to the needs of students partaking in the programme. For example, following feedback from the current group, the theme for the current year is 'self-esteem and confidence building'. A key feature of TY is the celebration of student achievements, successes and awards.
- There is appropriate assignment, training and induction of staff to teach the programme. Good resources are available to support the implementation of the extensive programme offered.
- Systematic procedures are in place for the selection and induction of students. A good draft policy is available, this policy should be finalised and enacted by the board of management.
- Third-year students and their parents are strongly supported and guided regarding access to TY and the specific needs of individual students are identified. Students in receipt of additional support are very well integrated into all aspects of TY.
- There are good structures in place to facilitate the engagement and participation of parents and the wider community in the programme. Parents' views are sought during evaluation of TY. This is very good practice. Reporting to parents on participation, progress and attendance is well established.
- The TY curriculum is broad and generally balanced. A very wide range of subjects and modules are offered. Work experience is very well planned and provided as an integral part of the programme and takes place on one day of each week though the current time provision requires review. It is praiseworthy that community care forms part of the programme. Greater curriculum diversity, enhanced timetabling and built-in choices to suit the needs and interests of students is recommended.
- Modes of assessment are good overall. Ongoing project-based assessment should be extended across all subjects and modules and end-of-year portfolio assessment should be formalised. Certification and awards celebrate student achievement and strongly support students' personal and social development together with academic achievement.

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

- An appropriate current TY plan is in place. TY subject planning requires substantial development. There should be a focus on the development of key skills and the use of a common template such as the Transition Unit template should be considered. These plans

should be available to all staff involved in the implementation and delivery of TY. It is suggested that they be shared electronically.

- The TY programme is strongly supported by a dynamic core team and by senior management. The core team plan, monitor and organise for the evaluation of the programme. TY coordination is very effective. Communication mechanisms regarding TY are very good and there is effective liaison between teachers in planning for the needs of students. TY students are well supported by the school care team. The TY noticeboards and the e-portal system are well utilised to keep all relevant staff informed regarding TY
- The budget for TY is well planned and documented.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the TY programme coordinator 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 of Ramsgrange Community School welcomes the Programme Evaluation Transition Year Report and is delighted that the dedication and hard work of the Senior Management, TY core team and TY teachers has been recognised and affirmed.

We are particularly pleased with the acknowledgement by the Inspectorate of:-

- the overall positive and inclusive nature of the classroom interactions observed
- the high level of student engagement in learning and the high level of student knowledge, understanding and skills exhibited
- the well-planned nature of lessons (and resources to be used in those lessons) with suitable topics and good cross curricular links
- the extensive, broad and well balanced nature of the curriculum provided but the school would like some clarification on the diversity required
- the recognition of the programme's high profile in the school and the manner in which student successes are affirmed, celebrated and awarded
- the good structures in place to facilitate the engagement and participation of parents and the wider community in the programme
- the very well planned and integral role played by work experience and other opportunities such as TL21, MATHletes, and YSI in the programme

### **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 management and staff of Ramsgrange Community School are fully committed to the continuing development of the school. Following a review of the recommendations given in the Programme Evaluation Transition Year report which are considered by management as a means of building on our strengths outlined, we have planned the following:-

- the TY Draft policy will be finalised and enacted by the Board of Management before the end of the academic year 2015/2016
- the time provision for work experience is adjusted for 2015/2016 as had been already planned for before the inspection and advised to the inspector
- The school is in a process of consultation with the PDST in relation to the integration of e-portfolios as one possible means of formalising end of year portfolio assessment and further promoting ICT skills development in our students
- In relation to TY subject planning – a common template, with a focus on the development of key skills, has been devised and adopted in accordance with the Transition Unit template. Planning time to review and complete same will be given to staff in line with Whole School & Department Planning throughout this and every academic year

