

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation
Junior Certificate Schools Programme
REPORT

Ardee Community School
Ardee, County Louth
Roll number: 91441T

Date of inspection: 7 October 2015



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of inspection	6 th and 7 th October 2015
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 and learning observed ranged from good to very good with instances of excellent practice.
- There was very good attention to the care of students in the way lesson activities were well organised and well managed.
- A good range of strategies is employed to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Teachers gave clear direction and regularly praised and affirmed students.
- The programme is well supported by management and very effectively co-ordinated by two dedicated teachers.
- The programme benefits from the services of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) and School Completion Programme (SCP) co-ordinators.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Differentiated methodologies should be more widely used in lessons.
 - A review of the post of responsibility structure in the school is currently under way and the co-ordination of special educational needs (SEN) should be a priority in this review.
 - Student profiles are maintained for second and third-year Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) students currently. This practice should be started as soon as first-year students have been inducted to the programme.
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INTRODUCTION

Ardee Community School caters for 717 students in a co-educational setting. The school is involved with the Department of Education and Skills' Developing Educational Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme. All programmes are available in the school including an optional Transition Year (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed ranged from good to very good with instances of excellent practice.
- Lessons were well planned. It was good practice that lessons were structured to include a number of short achievable tasks. In one lesson, best practice was observed where the teacher had listed on the board at the start of the lesson all the materials students should take out in preparation for the lesson.
- There was very good attention to the care of students in the way lesson activities were well organised and well managed. In some instances, classrooms were organised in a manner which promoted group work and collaborative learning.
- The school and classroom environments support and celebrate students' learning and achievements. Classrooms showed good displays of key words and student-generated work. The JCSP students work is displayed on the corridors; in particular, in the large mural covering one wall in a general purpose area.
- A good range of strategies is employed to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills and these included the key-word initiative, the maths booklets and Maths for Fun. In some lessons, students were facilitated to reflect on and comment on their own work and each others' work. This good practice should be more widespread.
- In most lessons, there was a good balance between teacher input and student activity. Teachers should be mindful of this balance and take care not to over-rely on any one activity, for example, the use of *PowerPoint* presentations.
- Teachers gave clear direction and praised and affirmed regularly students for their inputs. Some very good differentiated methodologies were observed where the chosen lesson content and the design of activities and tasks facilitated the learning for students within a wide range of abilities. These very good practices should be discussed and shared among the team of JCSP teachers.
- In one lesson, where an activity log was maintained by students, it was good practice that students were encouraged to reflect on and rate their own level of engagement with the task.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The programme is well supported by management in the school. Programme provision has been modified from stand-alone designated JCSP classes to the integration of JCSP students in mainstream classes with four or five JCSP tutorials in the week. This change is in keeping with the spirit of a good JCSP programme.
- The programme is very effectively co-ordinated by two teachers who show great dedication and commitment to the JCSP students.

- Material resources appropriate to the organisation and implementation of the programme are available. The school has refurbished one of its three computer suites recently and all classrooms contain information and communication technology (ICT) equipment.
- It is good to note that seven teachers of JCSP hold a qualification in SEN. The school does not currently have a SEN co-ordinator and the duties are being carried out informally. A review of the post of responsibility structure in the school is currently under way and the co-ordination of SEN should be a priority in this review.
- There are clear and systematic procedures in place for the selection of students for the programme, including liaison with the SCP co-ordinator. There is an induction programme for students in place which is led by the co-ordinators and includes a trip to Belfast.
- The HSCL co-ordinator facilitates very good links between the school and the home as well as the wider community. Clear guidance is provided to students and their parents regarding their choice of programme. Very good procedures are in place to monitor and record students' punctuality and attendance.
- The programme is timetabled appropriately and the needs, interests and abilities of students are prioritised. There are some well-established JCSP initiatives underway such as the One book-One Class, the digital Library project, as well as the recently introduced 'Run for Life' initiative which was taking place in the school at the time of the evaluation.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- The programme co-ordinators meet formally on a weekly basis with the HSCL and SCP teachers to discuss students in their care. Valuable informal communication is ongoing.
- There is a core team of nine teachers who deliver the programme. There is a high level of liaison between these teachers and the JCSP co-ordinators in planning for the programme. Much of the communication regarding student statements is on a one-to-one basis and this could be streamlined by the inclusion of a slot for JCSP co-ordination on the agenda of staff meetings at key times during the school year.
- Student profiles are maintained for second and third-year JCSP students currently. This practice should be started as soon as first-year students have been inducted to the programme.
- Evaluative reflection on the operation of the programme takes place at the end of every school year and is led by the co-ordinators. A formal evaluation which includes the views of parents and students should be undertaken every three years.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and programme co-ordinators 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.

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