

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Programme Evaluation**  
**TRANSITION YEAR**  
**REPORT**

**Cnoc Mhuire Secondary School,**  
**Granard, County Longford**  
**Roll number: 63730S**

**Date of inspection: 12 November 2014**



**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 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to excellent in the lessons observed.
- Teachers used many very high quality assessment strategies to monitor and promote learning.
- Whole school support for transition year (TY) is very good.
- The life skills programme for TY effectively provides timely advice and support for students in making choices about their future.
- The arrangements for work experience are very good.
- The school's TY programme is very well organised and co-ordinated.

### **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The good practices identified in this report should be shared among teachers through peer collaborative review.
  - At the end of TY, a meeting should be held with the students to discuss the range of methodologies used in TY and how it has impacted on their learning.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Cnoc Mhuire Secondary is a voluntary Catholic secondary school with a current enrolment of 229 boys and 223 girls. TY is optional and there are currently two TY class groups in the school.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to excellent in the lessons observed. All lessons were very well planned with a wide range of interesting and relevant resources used to engage learners.
- Students were encouraged to be independent learners in most of the lessons. Teachers mainly acted as facilitators of learning in the classroom and students collaborated and took responsibility for their own learning. In one lesson, relevant and interesting material was very well delivered with an emphasis on real life applications, and while this practice is very good there was a need for more student activity. This should be addressed.
- The students in their meeting with the inspector described the extent and quality of the group work, research work and project work that they experienced in TY as being very beneficial to their learning. They also considered engaging in classroom discussions as being of particular importance not only in terms of their learning but also for the development of their self-confidence.
- The quality of learning observed was very high. Throughout the evaluation students were confident in making presentations, asking questions and contributing to their lessons. They were very respectful and listened carefully to each other and to their teachers. This is evidence of the secure learning environments that have been created by teachers and the mutual respectful relationships that exist.
- Teachers used many very high quality assessment strategies to monitor and promote learning. For example, peer and self-assessment through reviewing and critiquing written articles, through filling out an evaluation sheet for student presentations and through listening carefully in Music and identifying areas and strategies for improvement. By evaluating each other's work, students were facilitated in gaining a deeper understanding of success criteria and in developing a different perspective on the quality of their own work. In addition, there was very good use of higher-order questioning strategies to encourage students to engage with the material taught in a more meaningful way.
- Students are assessed by class test and formal examinations and on their portfolio work. Parent-teacher meetings are held and opportunities are provided for the celebration of student achievement.

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

- Whole school support for TY is very good. The TY programme was recently reviewed and the school decided to further promote it and to encourage as many students as possible to participate. The measures taken have resulted in the provision of an additional TY class group and have been very successful.
- The resources for co-ordinating the programme, and for teaching and learning, which include information and communications technology (ICT), are very good.

- Admission to the programme is inclusive. All third-year students are invited to apply for TY and almost all students, who are interested in enrolling in the programme, are offered places.
- The procedures for monitoring student attendance in TY are effective and attendance is very good.
- An information evening is held for parents of third-year students to outline the options available to students when they progress into senior cycle. There is good communication with parents throughout the year.
- One life skills lesson is provided, for each TY class group, per week. This is delivered by the guidance counsellor. Students complete interest inventories and career investigations and in keeping with very good practice these are linked to subject choice for Leaving Certificate. The life skills programme in the school also provides opportunities for students to develop their interpersonal, presentation, interview, study and time management skills. This support will be of particular benefit to students when they are choosing subjects for the Leaving Certificate and making decisions about their future.
- The TY curriculum is broad and balanced. It is appropriately structured around an academic core, optional subjects and subject specialisms. The TY programme is designed with student interests in mind and comprises many subjects that are not part of the Leaving Certificate programmes.
- Work experience is integrated well into the programme and takes place over two blocks; one comprising eight Fridays and the other comprising seven. On the remaining Fridays a variety of trips and valuable workshops are organised. These workshops include themes such as: health and safety, dance, car safety, Junk Kouture. This arrangement effectively evens the distribution of the demand for work placements on local businesses and also minimises the disruption to learning caused by attendance at workshops and events.
- Students have access to a very wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities to enhance learning.

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

- The TY subject plans outline topics that are not on the Leaving Certificate syllabuses and include a variety of valuable experiences for students. The subject plans have a cross-curricular emphasis and outline a diverse range of methodologies to engage learners. This is very good planning practice. There are some aspects to the programme for the Mathematics, such as the inclusion of chess and other board games that are in keeping with the spirit of TY. However, the plan should be reviewed to include topics that are not part of the Leaving Certificate syllabuses but that will develop essential critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- The members of the TY teaching team collaborate regularly and work very well together. The school has very successfully introduced peer observation as part of their school self-evaluation process. To build on this, the good practices identified in this report should be shared through peer observation.
- The school is currently in the process of appointing a programme co-ordinator and the principal is acting TY co-ordinator in the interim. The school's TY programme is very well organised and co-ordinated. Regular meetings of the core team are held. The work of the co-ordinator is very well supported by the TY year head, tutors and the subject teachers.

- The success of the TY programme is evaluated through student surveys. It is evident that the programme is informed from year-to-year by these surveys.
- The school has highlighted the promotion of active methodologies as part of their school self-evaluation process. There is a stronger emphasis on the use of student-centred methodologies in teaching and learning in TY, therefore, a meeting, with the students, to discuss this and how it has impacted their learning should be conducted. This is recommended with a view to encouraging the extension of student-centred methodologies in teaching and learning across all year groups.

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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; a response was not received from the board.