

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation
Transition Year (TY)

REPORT

Coláiste Ghobnatan
Baile Bhúirne, County Cork
Roll number: 709200

Date of inspection: 17 April 2015



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

**REPORT ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE TRANSITION YEAR (TY)**

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of inspection: 16 & 17 April 2015	
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and core team• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and transition year co-ordinator

MAIN FINDINGS

- While the quality of teaching and learning varied across the lessons observed, classwork had effective outcomes in all cases.
- Comprehensive preparation was made for all lessons.
- There was a good variation in learning activities during all lessons.
- The alternative learning experiences provided for in the Transition Year (TY) were noteworthy.
- The TY programme enjoys a high profile in school life and students develop a wide-ranging set of skills.
- The programme is well co-ordinated and of particular note were the structures that enabled effective communication between different participants.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Utilisation of learning methodologies and activities that would strengthen the student voice during the learning process is recommended.
 - It is recommended that students be enabled to engage in self-assessment and reflective learning.
 - A greater emphasis on self-evaluation at team level is recommended.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Ghobnatan is a co-educational Gaeltacht school operating under the auspices of Cork Education and Training Board. 209 students are enrolled in this school year. As well as TY, which is an optional programme in the school curriculum, the Junior Certificate, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme are also provided. TY enjoys a high profile in school life and the overall proportion of students opting for the programme each year is high.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Lessons were observed in French, Geography and Agricultural Science, as well as modules in Personal Development and Chinese. There was variation in the quality of teaching and learning across these classes. The practice was highly commended in one case and very successful practice was observed in another. In the other lessons, the valuable work that took place would be further enhanced if areas for development identified in this section of the report were attended to.
- Comprehensive preparation was made for all lessons. Having considered the desired learning outcomes, methodologies and learning activities that would enable learning were planned. Additional resources such as slides, diagrams, video extracts and worksheets had often been prepared.
- In many classes, appropriate use was made of whole-class teaching to present lesson content. There was merit in this approach, especially when teachers went to considerable lengths to provide clear explanation and to ensure ample opportunity to practice the skills being developed. References to diagrams and other visual resources also supported learning. It is recommended that this highly commendable practice be extended to all classes.
- In all cases, a commendable effort was made to create learning experiences that differed to students' usual experience. Another strategy that encouraged student participation was the the creation of links with students' own lives and experiences.
- In all cases, variety in lesson tasks ensured continuing participation by all students. It was good that activities in all lessons were scaffolded. Practice was more effective in cases in which activities were undertaken at an appropriate pace. In these cases, student input, be it responding to questions, completing tasks or providing opinions, indicated that levels of understanding were good.
- Opportunities were often created, through pair work or group work, for students to collaborate with each other . This practice is commended as it strengthens the student voice in the learning process. Other ways in which students could occupy a more central role in lesson activities were identified and, in view of this, it is recommended that opportunities for students to provide explanations to their peers, to ask each other questions and to converse with each other be maximised.
- The quality of assessment of student progress during lessons varied. Practice was more effective where effective questioning strategies that require all students to provide an answer were used. Practice was more successful in instances where attention was drawn to the gaps in students' knowledge that became apparent during questioning. There was effective monitoring of class tasks in cases where the teacher circulated among the students, reviewing the standard of the work and focussing their attention on areas for development.

- The work of certain students' was in very good order. In these cases, their files and copybooks gave a good insight into the learning that they had achieved as part of the TY programme. High expectations should be set for all students with regard to accurate notekeeping and written work. The maintenance of a separate diary in which students keep a continuous log of their progress during the TY would be worthwhile and marks should be awarded for the quality of their own self-evaluation.
- A comprehensive system of assessment is in place, including house exams for core subjects. It is good that recognition is given to attendance and the year's work in all learning areas. The merits of portfolio assessment as a means of giving a more central place to self-assessment should be considered.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The TY programme enjoys a high profile in the school and different approaches are taken to developing a selection of skills in students in different learning settings. Many opportunities are created for students to travel, participate in competitions, support community projects and gain a better understanding of the heritage of their native area. In addition, considerable emphasis is placed on personal development and well-being.
- It is good that students get a taste of the subjects that are available at Leaving Certificate level and the innovative way in which many of the topics are covered was noted. It is recommended that the timetable be amended to reflect this good practice.
- All third-year students are welcome to participate in the TY programme. Information about the programme is shared with them and, as part of the application process, they have to set out personal aims for themselves. Regular reference should be made to these aims at certain intervals during TY as part of the self-assessment process. While no student has been refused a place on the programme to date, it is recommended that selection criteria be laid down and that they be specified in the school's admissions policy.
- Students show a very positive attitude towards the provision made for them. They believe that they are developing many skills that will support them when undertaking the Leaving Certificate programme. In addition, they feel that they have had a genuine experience of professional life and that they have had worthwhile experience of working in partnership with staff members, with community groups and with each other.

PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

- The TY co-ordinator operates in a voluntary capacity. The effective administration of documentation and the open communication processes that ensure that information is transferred to the appropriate participants is commended. Notwithstanding the contribution made by the vast majority of staff members to different aspects of the programme, it would be good if a core team was established to take responsibility for leading the programme.
- The TY plan provides insight into students' learning experiences and there is a good balance between the different strands of the programme. The plan itself and the value of planning and evaluation activities would be greatly enhanced if the basic principles underpinning this programme were specified in the introduction.
- Feedback from students and their parents as well as discussion at staff meetings is used to review the programme. It is recommended that analysis of this feedback be recorded in the

plan. An action plan that focuses on areas for development that arise from these self-evaluation activities should then be developed.

- Teachers are commended for their creativity and entrepreneurship in respect to providing a learning experience that is different from the students' previous experience.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the TY co-ordinator 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.