

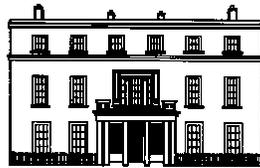
The Department of Education and Skills

**Programme Evaluation
For Transition Year**

REPORT

**Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach
Carlow
Roll Number: 70440A**

Date of the Inspection: 26 April 2016



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

REPORT ON THE STANDARD OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE TRANSITION YEAR

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of the inspections:	25 & 26 April 2016
Inspection activities undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of subject documents• Discussion with the principal and key personnel• Relationship with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 class periods• Revision of student work• Feedback to principal and to appropriate staff

MAIN FINDINGS

- A wide diverse programme is provided for Transition Year (TY) under the direction of an effective co-ordinator who is committed to providing the best learning and development experiences for students.
- The correct elements of an effective TY programme are provided, but it is advisable, if and when the school has the capacity, to add to the range of subjects which students can attempt.
- The students were complimentary about the programme and about their personal development during the year.
- School management is very supportive of the programme and of the work of the coordinator and the teachers; an approach which significantly adds to the scope and effectiveness of the work.
- The standard of teaching was good on the whole, especially when connected to active learning, but there was scope for improvement in the range of learning challenges for students in certain lessons.
- There was little attention paid to the development of student literacy and numeracy skills during lessons.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that appropriate differentiation be provided for so that all students experience suitable learning challenges.
 - It is recommended that more attention be paid to the development of literacy and numeracy skills among students in the context of a school improvement plan and as part of the self-evaluation process.
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INTRODUCTION

This is an Irish-medium school founded 25 years ago under the patronage of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board. There are 368 students currently enrolled and the following programmes are provided: The Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching and learning was good on the whole. However, there was some scope for improvement, relating to the quality of learning challenges which the students experienced, in some of the lessons. Although the subject content of these lessons was interesting, the tasks which the students were asked to complete were too easy. It is necessary to ensure that appropriate planning is done for lessons to provide content that is attractive and challenging.
- Learning intentions were given at the start of lessons and this is good practice. It would be advisable to present these intentions to students in terms of what they will be able to do as a result of their learning and revise the outcomes at the end to evaluate progress.
- Students were given too much time to complete certain tasks in a couple of lessons and some students were idle as a result of this approach. It is necessary to plan carefully for lessons in order to ensure that the right encouragement is provided and that continual learning occurs.
- Group work, paired work and project work were a feature of all lessons observed. This approach is highly commended as it ensured that the student voice was central to learning and could be clearly heard.
- It was noted that there was a good learning atmosphere in the lessons observed and that there was a friendly, respectful rapport between students and teachers.
- The opportunities which students were given to talk and to debate among themselves are to be commended. It was noted that these conversations were in Irish as you would expect in an Irish-medium setting and this is commended as good practice.
- Observation of the use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) as a resource to support the learning of students in some lessons is to be commended. The use of this resource could be extended to put lesson subject into context, to develop cross-curricular links and to encourage the students' interest in the subject of the lesson.
- The homework given to students had a commendable relevance and there was good continuity between work done in class and the tasks laid out for homework.
- It was observed that little reference was made to the development of literacy or numeracy skills during lessons. It is recommended that all teachers focus on using whichever literacy or numeracy strategies are laid out in the school improvement plan in the context of self-evaluation.
- A lot of terminology and proper nouns were used in English only, in one case observed. Although there may be a place for limited use of translation from time to time, it is necessary

in the case of Irish-medium settings that terminology and the nouns are primarily presented to the students in Irish, with suitable English translation only if necessary. Certain members of staff need to develop their personal competence in Irish. A wide range of Irish courses are available for teachers, and it is recommended that these should be explored.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school management and the teachers are very supportive of the Transition Year programme and it is evident that this programme has an important place in school life.
- Every effort is made to include variation and creativity, as much as possible, in the design of the programme every year. This variation and the range of experience and events, debates, competitions, guest speakers, school tours and in-school modules that are provided was noted.
- A definite budget is set out for the programme and every effort is made to keep costs as low as possible, without affecting the range of student opportunities and experiences. The students are given an opportunity to pay, tour costs included, in various ways, an approach which is commended.
- The students were complimentary of the programme and their personal development throughout the year. Students stated that they would like to be given the opportunity to try a wider range of subjects during the year. It is recommended that management and the coordinator explore the possibilities in relation to this, within the limited resources of the school.
- The students' work is assessed through one in-school examination, continuous assessment, assessment of the work portfolio and an interview. This is a commendable approach.
- The students are brought on a school tour abroad and the extra challenges and work involved in this trip, which is in high demand and very respected, is recognised. The students participate in Gaisce, which is commendable. It was not entirely clear however, if they are fulfilling the qualification requirements of Gaisce, Bronze Medal, as related to the adventure trip. This requirement should be examined.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- The coordinator, who has held the post for some years, carries out effective planning and coordination on the programme with the support of staff and management. The coordinator is completely committed to providing the best learning experience and developmental opportunities for the students and the open positive attitude shown towards administration of the programme is commended.
- There is a core group of teachers that support the work of the coordinator and that meet regularly to discuss and plan aspects of the programme and to assess progress and aspects needed to be changed.
- Work experience and charity work are laid out properly. Links are fostered between the school community and parents to help organise a mock interview for students and this is good practice.
- It was reported that there was a lot of interest during the Transition Year in the mini-company project with some significant successes, although this aspect of the work was finished at the time of evaluation.

- An opportunity is given to students and teachers at the end of year to give their opinions and recommendations and every effort is made to include these opinions for the following year.

At the end of the evaluation, the draft decisions and draft recommendations of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the appropriate key personnel.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.