

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation
TRANSITION YEAR
REPORT

Manor House School
Raheny, Dublin 5
Roll number: 60300B

Date of inspection: 8 March 2016



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

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TRANSITION YEAR

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of inspection	4 and 8 March 2016
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall with some excellent practice observed.
- High levels of student co-operation and engagement were a feature of all of the lessons and students demonstrated very good confidence in speaking in public.
- The excellent work of the Transition Year (TY) co-ordinator, with the full co-operation of the TY year head, teachers and whole-school support, has contributed greatly to the success of programme in the school.
- Communication between the TY team and the wider school community is very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The TY teachers' role in monitoring work experience should be strengthened.
 - The TY mathematics programme should be further developed to ensure that students are developing *Project Maths* skills through the study of non-syllabus content more suitable for TY.
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INTRODUCTION

Manor House School is a voluntary Catholic secondary school with an enrolment of 792 girls. TY is compulsory and there are six TY class groups.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall with some excellent practice observed. All lessons were well planned with a wide range of interesting and stimulating resources prepared to support learning. Lessons were well structured and purposeful.
- There was evidence during the evaluation of excellent cross-curricular planning amongst TY teachers. In preparation for the upcoming commemoration, for example, the 1916 Easter Rising featured successfully in a number of the lessons. A Spanish lesson included a study of Eamon Bulfin, the 1916 Proclamation was studied in the history lesson, and some prominent poets of 1916 were studied in English.
- High levels of student co-operation and engagement were a feature of all of the lessons. Students' engagement was highest when lessons included project work, well-organised pair and group work, and student presentations. It is recommended that such active learning strategies be further used in TY lessons.
- Students are provided with plentiful opportunities to develop independent learning skills in most subjects. Students complete a range of projects in TY and engage in research in some subjects. The use of research approaches should be extended and the development of independent learning emphasised in all subjects.
- Promoting oral literacy is the focus of this year's school improvement plan. Many opportunities were provided for TY students to develop their oral literacy skills. During the evaluation, students demonstrated very good confidence in speaking in public at assembly and in their classes.
- A range of valuable modes of assessment is used for monitoring and evaluating students' achievement. These include project assessment, end-of-year formal examinations and evaluation of the students' portfolios.
- The relationships between students and their teachers were warm and encouraging. Teachers had created secure learning environments where students demonstrated confidence in expressing themselves and respect in listening to the contributions of others.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for TY is excellent. The senior management team is open to ideas from the TY team and supports innovation and creativity. The resources for coordinating the programme and for teaching and learning, which include information and communication technology, are very good.
- The TY curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriately structured. Work experience and community-action placements occur one day per week from January onwards and are well integrated into the programme. Work experience, for the large TY cohort, is monitored by the TY coordinator and school management. To share this work, it is recommended that the TY teachers' role in monitoring work experience be strengthened.

- In keeping with good practice, the TY programme comprises many subjects not on the Leaving Certificate programmes and is adapted from year to year to ensure that it reflects students' interests.
- Valuable opportunities are provided for students to plan for their future careers and make subject choices for the Leaving Certificate. Students are timetabled for one class period of career guidance per week. They also complete interest inventories, aptitude tests and career investigations, and can avail of individual appointments with the guidance counsellor.
- The students were appreciative of the many benefits of participating in TY. The development of the relationships, through engaging in TY activities, with their teachers and with the students of their year group was highlighted as being of particular value to them.
- In discussion, the students described how the variety of experiences in TY benefited their enjoyment of learning. However, some students expressed concern at the reduction in formal certificate examination type work which occurs during TY. It is recommended, therefore, that the value of TY in terms of providing opportunities to develop essential skills should be explicitly outlined to students as a rationale for using alternative learning strategies and studying a wider range of material.
- In addition to participation in trips out of school, students engage in valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences. These include the development of handcrafts, acquisition of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and participation in *Gaisce* and the Driver Education programme. Additionally, a musical is staged; this is reported by students and teachers to be a particularly successful aspect of the programme.
- The TY year head makes a significant contribution to managing the programme and plays an important role in motivating students, and promoting strategies for managing stress and for good mental health. There are very good processes in place for monitoring attendance and punctuality of TY students.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- TY has a long and successful history in the school. Programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation are very good. Adequate time, on a weekly basis, is allocated to the TY co-ordinator for planning.
- The co-ordinator is very committed to the programme, brings considerable energy and enthusiasm to her work and is supported by the full co-operation of the TY year head and TY teachers. Her excellent work has contributed greatly to the success of programme in the school.
- Almost all of the subject plans are in keeping with the principles of TY. For example, the programme of work for English has been designed to develop skills using a diverse range of content and subject material. However, there is a need to further develop the mathematics programme to ensure that students are developing *Project Maths* skills through studying non-syllabus content more suitable for TY.
- Communication between the TY team and the wider school community is very good; in addition to sharing information at TY team meetings, the co-ordinator reports to staff and

to the board. The TY student journal is used very effectively to communicate with parents and with employers in work and community-action placements. Appropriate opportunities for communication with parents and the celebration of students' achievements, including information evenings and the TY graduation, are provided.

- The various school-based evaluations focus mainly on the TY in terms of the activities undertaken. To date, the quality of provision is evaluated through student reflections, and student and parent surveys at various stages during the year. The members of the TY core team discuss students' experiences with them as a further way to evaluate the programme.
- Commendably, this year's evaluation will include opportunities for students to provide feedback on the quality of their learning in TY, how the methodologies used differ from the junior-cycle years and what aspects of TY learning should be extended to other year groups.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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, 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

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes this report and its very positive findings on the quality of the Transition Year Programme offered in our school. The Board is pleased that the report affirms the excellent work of the TY Co-ordinator, TY team and year head and that it recognises the whole-school support for the programme and the strong student engagement with it.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

As mentioned in the report, the school plans to involve more teachers in monitoring work experience during the next academic year. The TY mathematics programme will be reviewed in May and September 2016 and the revised programme will be monitored during the 2016-17 school year.