Programme Evaluation
Transition Year

REPORT

Meánscoil San Nioclás
Rinn Ó gCuanach, County Waterford
Roll number: 76066J

Date of Inspection: 14 April 2016
REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TRANSITION YEAR

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Inspection:</th>
<th>13 and 14 April 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during 5 class periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with principal and key staff</td>
<td>Review of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with students</td>
<td>Feedback to principal and relevant staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good organisation and comprehensive planning applied to every aspect of the Transition Year programme observed, under the direction of the school’s senior management, the programme coordinator and the school’s teaching staff.
- Creativity and significant diversity applied to the Transition Year programme, an approach which ensures that the students’ experience is beneficial and enjoyable during the year.
- The focus on the culture and heritage of the local area is to be recommended, as it ensures that information regarding the rich heritage of that Gaeltacht area stays alive among the next generation.
- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good during the lessons observed with aspects of excellent practice in certain cases.
- The students were full of praise in relation to their experience of the programme and they spoke very positively of their personal development during the year.
- The collaboration between Meánscoil San Nioclás and Coláiste na Rinne is recognised and highly commended regarding the additional students being attracted to the school to participate in the Transition Year programme.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is acknowledged that the school is located in a rural area but it would be worthwhile to review regularly the possibility of creating additional contact with charity work.
- It is recommended that learning intentions are shared with the students at the beginning of every lesson with regard to what they will be able to do as a result of their learning.
INTRODUCTION

Meánscoil San Nioclás is a Gaeltacht co-educational school under the patronage of the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Bord. There were 124 students attending the school at the time of the inspection and the school has been growing for the last few years. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools initiative, the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion. Transition Year is a compulsory programme in the school and there is considerable development planned for the Programme as a result of the cooperation between the school and the boarding school beside it, Coláiste na Rinne.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good during the lessons observed with aspects of excellent practice in certain cases. Comprehensive planning was undertaken for all of the lessons observed, based on the subject plans that were prepared for the Transition Year in the different subjects. The standard of planning in the school is commended.

- Students were made aware of what would occur during lessons. It is recommended that the students are presented with learning intentions in terms of the skills they would acquire in order to encourage them to accept extra responsibility for their own learning. It is recommended progress is reviewed at the end of the lesson.

- Irish was dominant during all of the lessons and the students’ attention was drawn to grammatical accuracy now and then, a best practice which should be implemented across all of the subjects. The students’ attention was focussed on keywords in certain cases as set out in the school plan for literacy development.

- Effective use was made of pairwork and groupwork during the lessons observed so that the students could work together and in order to encourage debate and discussion amongst themselves. It is highly beneficial that the students were talking during the lessons, in order to enhance their self-confidence and their oral accuracy, a strategy that is set out in the school plan for literacy development.

- It was noted that the students worked diligently during the lessons and when making conversation with them, it was evident that they were interested in the work and understood what was to be achieved.

- Effective use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) during many of the lessons observed and the use of those resource is commended. Good use was made of visualiser in one lesson, an approach that greatly enhanced the students’ understanding of the lesson material and of the work in progress.

- The prevailing good atmosphere in the classrooms was noted as well as the positive relationship between the students and the teachers.

- All of the students are engaged with the development of a mini-company during Transition Year. Examples of the students’ work which was of a high standard were observed.
PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school’s provision and support for the programme is of the highest standard. The school’s management, staff and community recognise the importance of Transition Year in general, especially in relation to Meánscoil San Nioclás. The collaboration between the school and Coláiste na Rinne is highly commended to increase the number of students who will come to the school in order to benefit from the programme.

- The students’ achievements in the school, especially the students in Transition Year, are publicised in Irish only in the local newspaper, a practice which greatly enhances the programme’s profile in the school and in the surrounding area. Paragraphs and photographs of a high standard are made available and the work in this regard is highly commended.

- A considerable list was made available during the inspection, of the events, modules, competitions, guest speakers and occasions which the students have the opportunity to attend during the year. The diversity and creativity of the programme, which ensures that the students enjoy and benefit from their wide range of experiences, is commended. The students were given the opportunity to have an input into selecting extra events and occasions.

- A big awards’ night is organised at the end of the year following a continuous process of intensive assessment, where records are kept of the students’ progress in all aspects of the year’s work. The students’ achievements and personal development are celebrated at this occasion, and this is commended as good practice.

- It was reported that a wide range of supports are provided to students who need them, and close attention is paid to every aspect of their progress during the year. A year head is responsible for the students during the year who works hand in hand with the coordinator.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Good organisation and comprehensive planning applied to every aspect of the programme, under the direction of the school’s senior management, the programme’s coordinator and the teaching staff of the school. There is a core group of teachers working together under the effective direction of the coordinator.

- Good planning documents were provided for every aspect of the year, including subject plans, a TY year plan, a list of occasions and other relevant plans relating to literacy and numeracy development.

- The particular attention paid to the culture and heritage of the area, which ensures that information regarding the rich heritage of that Gaeltacht area stays alive among both the youth of the area and visitors is commendable.

- The students spoke very positively about their experience on the programme and about their self-development during the year. The management and staff’s commitment to the continuous improvement of the programme was noted.

- Regular meetings are organised between the core group and the management of Coláiste na Rinne to discuss and agree the details of the programme’s development. This is a valuable alliance which is of benefit to the area and to the two institutes of education.
The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and with the relevant key staff at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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 Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board and the board of management of Meánscoil San Nioclás accept the report on the Transition Year programme carried out at the end of the academic year 2016.

It is agreed that the report is positive and that it gives a comprehensive overview of the positive co-operation between the two educational institutes namely: Meánscoil San Nioclás and Coláiste na Rinne. These two institutes understand the central role that they have in the Gaeltacht area of Na Déise. They are committed to the good of the local community, to the Gaeltacht and the Irish language. The programme emphasises the importance and the recognised advantages of immersion education to the Irish language learner and how the student is supported and enabled through this experience, an experience that improves his/her personal, social and academic development. We believe that an exceptional creative Transition Year is offered by Meánscoil San Nioclás in conjunction with Coláiste na Rinne. The diverse attractions of the Déise Ghaeltacht area seen in this project which will strengthen and underpin this pioneering Transition Year.

The Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board are fully supportive of the school’s efforts to develop and improve the Transition Year plan, a plan which is new, vibrant, innovative, cultural, modern and far-sighted which is steeped in the culture of Na Déise.

(This is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management.)