

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in TY

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Mary's Knockbeg College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Knockbeg Co. Carlow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61130H

Date of Evaluation: 11-10-2019



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

PROGRAMME EVALUATION

The programme evaluation model of inspection is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the following programmes and to provide advice and support to teachers, principals and school management in post-primary schools and centres for education:

- Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)
- Transition Year (TY) programme
- Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in TY under the following headings:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Programme provision and whole-school support
3. Programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Programme evaluation in TY

Dates of inspection	10 - 11 October 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal, programme co-ordinator and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning in seven lessons• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team and programme co-ordinator

School context

St.Mary's Knockbeg College is a post-primary school for boys, with a current enrolment of 439 students. The school offers the junior cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) to its students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with scope to develop the use of learning intentions and active learning methodologies.
- Teacher use of information and communications technology (ICT) was noted to be particularly effective.
- Teacher-student rapport was noted to be positive in all lessons.
- An appropriate variety of assessment approaches are in place to support learning within the TY programme.
- The overall standard of programme provision and whole-school support is good; the balance in time allocated to work experience and individual subjects requires review.
- The quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review is good; some evidence in the TY documentation review indicated a focus on preparation for the Leaving Certificate.

Recommendations

- Teachers should work towards developing, and presenting, specific learning intentions and allotting time to a revision and assessment of the learning towards the end of lessons.
- The use of active learning methodologies should be extended, to include more pair and group work.
- The senior management team (SMT) should review, in future timetabling, the time allocated within the TY programme both to work experience and to subjects on the curriculum.
- Overall planning for TY should remove references that focus on preparation for the Leaving Certificate examination within the TY programme, in line with the requirements of circular letter M1/00.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- Teacher-student rapport was noted to be positive and a supportive atmosphere prevailed in all lessons.
- In every lesson, teachers outlined the proposed lesson content at the outset and, in some instances, specific learning intentions were presented to students. In those lessons, the students had a clear sense of the lesson direction. To build on this good practice, all teachers should work towards developing, and presenting, specific learning intentions and allotting time to a revision and assessment of the learning towards the end of lessons.
- ICT usage was particularly effective in the lessons observed; examples observed included the use of images and video clips to stimulate whole-class discussion around relevant topics.
- In a lesson, a topical 'walking debate' that focussed on environmental issues was clearly devised by the teacher with student interest in mind. This task served to effectively engage and motivate the learners.
- Overall, however, teacher presentation was a more central methodology within the lesson structures observed. It is recommended that active learning methodologies be extended, to include more pair and group work, in order to rebalance the input between teacher and students. When devising the learning intentions, planning for active learning opportunities should feature as part of the typical TY learning experience within each lesson.
- Individual support was a recurring feature of the lessons observed, with teachers' regularly circulating and supporting students as necessary. In many lessons, teachers employed good questioning practices as a further means to support strategies that promote differentiation and extend the learning for the students.
- A review of a sample of student work indicated some very good examples of written formative feedback. It was evident that a considerable amount of work had been inputted by both teachers and students in the preparation and assessment of the work observed. The detailed comments prepared by teachers should serve to further encourage students to reflect on their learning.
- An appropriate variety of assessment approaches are in place to support learning within the TY programme; these include in-class oral formative feedback, in-house examinations, project and portfolio work. Overall, a good balance in assessment modes was noted.
- Teachers effectively developed students' literacy and numeracy skills in many lessons, particularly through the referencing of subject-specific keywords on the whiteboard. In a Geography lesson, for example, students were facilitated to engage with a clinometer in order to measure angles of elevation, thus positively building on their numeracy skills.
- Lessons observed took place within a variety of settings, including computer rooms and classrooms. In some classrooms, seating arrangements favourable to the creation of optimal conditions for active learning were identified. These arrangements should be extended where possible.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall standard of programme provision and whole-school support is good, with a broad curriculum in place providing students with a variety of valuable learning experiences.
- TY is well supported by the SMT and the TY coordinator; teachers and students interviewed in the course of the evaluation expressed satisfaction with the implementation of the programme. While TY is optional in the school, most students opt to enter the programme.
- Effective communication structures are in place within the programme. The provision of a TY notice board in the staff room and the use of an electronic mail system support the exchange of regular information between all staff members. Information is provided to students and parents in advance of application for TY, and an annual parent-teacher meeting also provides a channel of communication to inform of student progress.
- A variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities support and enhance student learning in TY; for example, students have engaged in Science competitions, social awareness and active citizenship programmes, and fashion events.
- The overall TY curriculum is planned around core subjects, subject sampling, TY specific subjects and additional once-off activities. Students identified the extensive range of subjects on offer within TY as a positive opportunity to make more informed subject choices for senior cycle and SMT report that parents are supportive of the wide range of subject options in TY.
- A review of the timetable for TY indicated an imbalance in the timetabling arrangements, with certain subjects receiving significantly more, or less, time allocation than what is generally observed within TY programmes. In order to further develop student confidence in their core subject areas and to fully support their transition from junior to senior cycle. Senior management should address the balance of the TY curriculum in future timetabling so as to ensure that adequate time is allocated to all subject areas.
- Gaeilge and all of the modern foreign language subject options in TY are currently timetabled on two concurrent days only. A better spread of the lessons across the week to ensure more regular contact time would support student's ongoing development in those subject areas.
- A work experience programme forms a significant aspect of the school's TY programme. Students engage in work experience every Monday during the school year and for one week in both November and in February. By rebalancing the time allocated to work experience, more time would be available on the timetable to support the wide variety of other learning experiences available for students.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review is good.
- The overall TY programme is comprehensive, of good quality, and is subject to an annual review. The quality of teachers' individual curriculum planning for subjects and modules was also good. At present a variety of templates exist for subject planning within TY and, to ensure a more unified approach to planning, it is suggested that a common template be introduced.
- It was noted within the overall planning documentation, including student surveys and presentation materials for parents that, there was an emphasis at times on preparation for the Leaving Certificate examination; this should be reviewed in line with the requirements of circular letter M1/00.
- All stakeholders, including teachers, parents and students, have been surveyed as to their experience of the current TY programme. This good practice has allowed for ongoing review of the programme provided.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal, and co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation.

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <i>outstanding</i> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	<i>Good</i> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	<i>Fair</i> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	<i>Weak</i> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Knockbeg College welcomes the findings of this report. In particular, the Board acknowledges the very positive comments made in relation to the use of information and communications Technology, the level of respect between teachers and students, the overall quality of the transition year programme planning and co-ordination by all involved and reflective practice of the team.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board of Management will ensure that the following actions will take place based upon the recommendations provided within the report:

- A common template to support improved subject planning will be included in the TY plan.
- Teachers will continue to develop the use of written development feedback on student work.
- The Senior Management team will continue the practice of reviewing the programme provision on an annual basis to ensure the needs of all the students are adequately catered for.