

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in Transition Year

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Stratford College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	1 Zion Road Rathgar Dublin 6
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61020A

Date of Evaluation: 25-11-2016



WHAT IS A 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.

Transition Year

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	24-11-2016 and 25-11-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal, TY coordinator and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Examination of students' work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 one hour class periods• Interaction with students• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and TY coordinator

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Stratford College is a fee-charging co-educational secondary school originally founded by the Jewish community in 1954. The school has a current enrolment of 123 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

- Positive relationships and interactions in classrooms supported a co-operative and productive learning environment.
- Students engaged purposefully in learning activities that developed knowledge, understanding and skills, though some students were distracted in a few lessons.
- The teaching, learning and assessment strategies utilised were appropriate to the TY programme.
- The principal and other school leaders ensure the provision of a very broad TY curriculum and a wide variety of learning opportunities.
- A whole school approach to TY is in place and there is very good communication and liaison between teachers of the programme and relevant staff in planning for the needs of students.
- Very good structures are in place to monitor and report on students' progress and attendance.
- The TY written plan is comprehensive though there is scope for enhanced cross-subject collaborative planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Classroom group activities should be planned so that all students are working actively to achieve the stated lesson intentions.
- A common agreed template should be considered for all TY subjects and modules so that strategies relating to common themes such as key skills, assessment, literacy and numeracy and school self-evaluation (SSE) are discussed and recorded.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching, assessment and learning ranged from good to very good.
- There was a high level of individual teacher planning and teachers prepared suitable resources in advance.
- The majority of lessons were guided by learning intentions that were shared with students and revisited. This practice should be extended.
- Team teaching, where teachers worked together to devise learning opportunities, was in evidence in one lesson in which teachers enabled students to make meaningful links between lesson themes and real life applications of the subject.
- Teachers purposefully developed literacy and numeracy skills in some lessons, though some opportunities to develop students' graphing skills were not availed of in one lesson.
- Positive relationships and interactions in classrooms supported a co-operative and productive learning environment.
- There was differentiation to cater for the range of abilities though this could be improved in some group settings.
- Student confidence-building played a key role in many lessons, especially where students developed their interview skills and presented on their work.
- Students engaged purposefully in learning activities and were enabled to develop knowledge, understanding and skills, though some students were distracted in a few lessons. Some lessons necessarily took place in the computer room. Computer screens should be switched off during some elements of these lessons so that all students can focus on the task in hand. Classroom group activities should be planned so that all students are working actively to achieve the stated lesson intentions.
- The teaching, learning and assessment strategies utilised were appropriate to the TY programme. Classroom assessment strategies, including questioning and oral feedback, worked well overall.
- Students are facilitated to reflect on their work. The school is considering the introduction of a customised student journal for this purpose.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The principal and other school leaders ensure the provision of a very broad TY curriculum and a wide variety of learning opportunities for TY students which support the guiding vision of the school.
- The principal and other school leaders build positive relationships with parents and the wider community. Students reported meaningful work and community placement experiences and there are links with the feeder primary school for some activities. The school should consider having the student attend the TY parent-teacher meeting to further support self-assessment and personal reflection.
- The programme curriculum, which includes externally certified courses, is broad and balanced and appropriately timetabled. A very good guidance programme is timetabled for one hour per week. Assessment and evaluation procedures are in line with programme objectives. All students take all subjects and also experience a wide range of activities that support student leadership, wellbeing, confidence and maturity. The recently introduced one-hour lessons are reported to be working well overall.
- Good timetabling practices, including tutor time each day and frequent meetings of key personnel, support a vibrant and active TY programme.

- A whole school approach to TY is in place and there is very good communication and liaison between teachers of the programme and relevant staff in planning for the needs of students.
- The compulsory nature of TY should be stated in the school's admissions policy.
- Clear and systematic procedures are in place for induction of students into TY. Students set goals and expectations for TY and are well supported by teachers in achieving their ambitions. Lifelong learning is supported by events such as the end-of-year interview and portfolio presentation and by students nominating the overall student of the year.
- The specific support needs of individual students are systematically identified.
- Very good structures are in place to monitor and report on students' progress and attendance. TY attendance gets special mention in the school's attendance policy whereby credit is given, both in subject exams and in the TY certificate award, for a good student attendance record.
- The whole-school and classroom environments encourage, support and celebrate students' learning and achievements in the programme. School infrastructural developments, including the provision of the new art room, provide enhanced facilities for learning. School noticeboards celebrate significant TY events including Friendship Week and the trip to Delphi adventure centre.
- Teachers are facilitated to engage in appropriate continuing professional development which contributes to very positive learning outcomes for students. The school promotes a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in teaching, learning and assessment.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- The TY programme is very well planned to support active, co-operative, independent learning. The content of TY plans appropriately supports innovative modes of assessment and learning in TY. TY portfolio assessment is well established and developed in the school.
- The TY written plan is comprehensive, though there is scope for enhanced cross-subject collaborative planning. A common agreed template should be considered for all TY subjects and modules so that strategies relating to common themes such as key skills, assessment, literacy and numeracy, and SSE are discussed and recorded.
- The TY programme is very effectively co-ordinated. There is ongoing liaison with school management, the guidance department, other programmes and all relevant staff. The school has established a very effective communications network and TY is discussed at staff meetings.
- Teachers, students and their parents are consulted in the evaluation of the programme and the outcomes of the evaluations have impacted positively on students' learning experiences. Recent changes include the reorganisation of work experience and enhanced student attendance strategies in TY. The further integration of whole school SSE strategies into TY, in accordance with the SSE guidelines, will strengthen the programme into the future. The current school improvement plan appropriately focuses on assessment for learning, key skills and wellbeing, all of which support TY.
- Teacher collaborative practices are supported by the electronic sharing of TY resources.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and TY coordinator 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 Board welcomes such a positive report on its TY Programme and wishes to highlight the conclusions below.

*The principal and other school leaders ensure the provision of a very broad TY curriculum and a wide variety of learning opportunities for TY students **which support the guiding vision of the school.***

The school promotes a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in teaching, learning and assessment.

A whole school approach to TY is in place and there is very good communication and liaison between teachers of the programme and relevant staff in planning for the needs of students. The whole-school and classroom environments encourage, support and celebrate students' learning and achievements in the programme.

The TY programme is very effectively co-ordinated.

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

Recommendations will be considered as part of Stratford College's School Self Evaluation (SSE) process.

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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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	Good 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	Satisfactory 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	Fair 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	Weak 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;