

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

**Programme Evaluation in Transition Year (TY)**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Nenagh College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Dromin Road Nenagh County Tipperary
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	72440K

**Date of Evaluation: 12-02-2020**



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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## **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 Transition Year (TY)

<b>Date of inspection</b>	12-02-2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</li><li>• Meetings with key staff</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Student focus-group interview</li><li>• Meeting with parents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Feedback to the principal and the co-ordinator of the programme</li></ul>

### School context

Nenagh College is one of three providers of second-level education in the town of Nenagh. It is the only co-educational school and operates under the auspices of Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB). There were 464 students enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching was good overall; aspects of practice which were satisfactory were observed as well as aspects of an excellent quality.
- The overall quality of learning was good in the lessons observed; learning experiences ranged from satisfactory to very good.
- An effective range of assessment modes is used during the TY programme; there is scope to develop further the use of assessment-for-learning strategies.
- The overall standard of programme provision and whole-school support for TY is very good.
- In general, significant strengths characterise the quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review; programme review should include all stakeholders and guide the development of the programme in a more formalised manner.

#### Recommendations

- An assessment policy for TY should be developed, to further embed formative assessment approaches into learning experiences and to foster consistency in relation to TY assessment generally.
- The outcomes of a more inclusive review of the programme should be used to devise an action plan for the programme over agreed timeframes.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching was good with some very good practices noted; there was scope for improvement in a significant minority of other lessons.
- Planning and preparation for lessons were generally good; materials, worksheets and other resources were organised in advance. The best lessons were well paced, high expectations for learning were set and independent learning was promoted.
- Clear learning intentions were outlined at the beginning of most lessons. In one very effective lesson, the learning intentions were co-created with the students, success criteria were agreed and a recapitulation session was facilitated with the students at the end of the lesson.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers utilised good scaffolding strategies to support students in completing tasks and in experiencing success as learners. In one lesson, very good use was made of upward differentiated strategies to extend the learning for the more able learners. This very good practice should be a feature of all lessons.
- The overall quality of learning was good in the lessons observed, and the learning experiences ranged from satisfactory to very good.
- An atmosphere of positive regard and mutual respect was evident in all classes. Students' efforts and contributions were affirmed and encouraged.
- In the most successful lessons, there was an appropriate balance between a student-centred approach in which interactive functional tasks were performed and whole-class teaching where the teacher focussed the attention of the entire class on points to note.
- A variety of good questioning strategies was employed in a significant minority of lessons. In less than half of the lessons observed, there was an over-reliance on global and lower-order questions and the opportunities which existed to develop self-assessment and peer-assessment techniques were not exploited. The use of Bloom's taxonomy to develop questioning strategies is recommended.
- Among the significant strengths that characterised the learning experience of students were the creation of very good links between new concepts or skills and students' prior knowledge, everyday life experience, or learning from other aspects of the TY programme. The use of such approaches should be extended further.
- In the classrooms visited, the learning environment ranged from exemplary to that where there was scope for development.
- Homework was assigned in the majority of lessons during the evaluation. A review of a random sample of students' homework journals indicated that homework is not always set in the majority of subjects. The development of an agreed approach to the assigning homework is recommended.
- A good programme-wide accreditation system is in place. The criteria for projects and presentations should be agreed across all areas of study and be explicitly taught to encourage students to further engage in self and peer-evaluation.
- There is a comprehensive assessment system in place which utilises a selection of summative and formative assessment methods to identify the achievement of students across a very wide range of abilities and skills. There is a need to develop further the use of assessment-for-learning strategies to achieve a better balance between such strategies and summative modes of assessment. In this regard, agreed approaches in the use of learning

intentions linked to success criteria are recommended as well as a general review of questioning strategies used during TY.

- A programme-specific assessment policy should be developed to further embed formative assessment approaches into learning experiences during TY and to foster consistency in relation to TY assessment. Guidelines for the assignment of homework during TY should be agreed should also be included in this policy work.

## **2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Whole-school support for the programme is highly commendable. Very good mechanisms have been developed to facilitate regular two-way communication about the programme among the core team and senior management, staff, parents and students.
- The timetable has been designed to provide a very well-structured, four-layer programme: core, sampling, TY specific and calendar events.
- Calendar events are very well planned and evenly distributed throughout the year. This high standard of planning achieves flexibility to facilitate out-of-school activities and special activities while minimising the impact on the delivery of the planned programme across the different areas of study.
- The periods for work experience are managed in a very effective manner and students were strongly of the opinion that the experience received of the working world was very worthwhile.
- The students themselves reported that their self-confidence and well-being had developed as a result of their participation in the programme. It was evident that their research, teamwork, management, creative and leadership skills had been developed during the TY programme.

## **3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW**

- Dynamic leadership is provided by a co-ordinator who carries out this role enthusiastically and diligently on a voluntary basis. An active core team supports the work of the co-ordinator and timetabled weekly meetings are convened.
- The priority given by school management to the TY programme is also evidenced by the composition of the core team. The inclusion of the guidance counsellor and special education needs co-ordinator on the team helps to ensure that cohesive supports are provided to students during the programme; this is highly commendable.
- The quality of programme planning is very good and the ongoing development of TY is well managed. In line with best practice, the programme is reviewed annually so as to respond to the changing needs and interests of the student cohort. An example of this responsiveness is the recent introduction of a social media module as part of the programme of study.
- Overall, good-quality individual plans have been developed for the various areas of TY study, ranging from satisfactory documents to exemplary subject plans. It would be worthwhile to agree a common template at a whole-staff meeting. Such a template should include examples of the very good practice that was observed in a small number of plans, planning for cross-curricular learning, planning to develop learner autonomy in the learning process and clearly stated credit weightings for the different modes of assessment.

- The annual review of the programme involves garnering the views of students, year heads and teachers teaching on the TY programme. It is recommended that this review be extended to include senior management, all teaching staff, parents and employers who support the work-experience placements. The outcomes from this expanded review should be used to devise an action plan for the programme over agreed timeframes.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<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
<b>Good</b>	<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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<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
<b>Fair</b>	<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
<b>Weak</b>	<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;