

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

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

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Sutton Park School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Saint Fintan's Road Sutton Dublin 13
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60381E

**Date of Evaluation: 18-10-2016**



## **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.

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.

## INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	18-10-2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with head of school and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Feedback to head of school and deputy head.</li></ul>

## SCHOOL CONTEXT

Sutton Park School is a co-educational fee-charging school under the trusteeship of a board of governors. There are 318 students enrolled in the school with fifty-eight students currently in the compulsory Transition Year (TY).

## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good overall.
- Whole-school support for TY is excellent.
- The programme is co-ordinated very effectively.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should collaborate on ways to maintain students' interests in TY lessons and to encourage students to think for themselves.
- A focus group of students should be interviewed at the end of the school year to discuss the aspects of TY provision that they found enhanced the quality of their learning.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good overall. Many examples of excellent practice were noted. There was scope for improvement in some lessons.
- In most lessons, the students demonstrated very high levels of engagement with the key learning intentions. They participated actively in thinking, discussing, presenting, researching and completing individual tasks. They were enthusiastic, enjoying their lessons and their contributions indicated very good learning. In some lessons, students were facilitated in identifying with the key concepts on a personal level and this promoted deeper engagement.
- In a small number of lessons, there was scope for improvement in the quality of student participation and engagement. It is recommended that teachers collaborate on ways to maintain students' interests and to encourage students to think for themselves. It is good practice that there is a peer observation programme in place. It is suggested that teachers plan lessons collaboratively, take opportunities to observe each other teach, and then refine the lesson plan with a focus on students' active participation.

- The highest-quality learning occurred where teacher instruction was clear and concise, and where students worked individually or collaboratively. In their focus group interview, the students said that group work was most effective when all students were involved, roles were assigned and the task was well designed; excellent practice in relation to group work was observed in some lessons.
- In most lessons, the learning was well differentiated with teachers providing additional challenge for more able students, providing assistance where necessary and including activities that allowed students to work at their own pace.
- The English and debating lessons observed were overly similar in terms of content and approach. It is recommended that collaboration around subject planning be used to mitigate such overlap where it might be likely to occur.
- The quality of assessment was very good overall. Teachers assessed progress through observation and questioning. Effective student peer-assessment was used in some lessons. In one lesson, students created their own questions.
- Many of the subjects and modules include project work and student portfolios form a significant part of the overall TY assessment. TY students sit in-house examinations and their progress is very well monitored through the ongoing student target setting and achievement monitoring system in place throughout the school.

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

- Whole-school support for TY is excellent. TY is given high priority in planning the timetable with teachers assigned to modules and subjects on the basis of their interests and expertise. The resources for co-ordinating the programme and for teaching and learning are very good.
- The TY curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced; it is structured around an academic core, optional subjects and subject specialisms. The programme beneficially comprises many subjects not on the Leaving Certificate programmes and is adapted from year-to-year on the basis of feedback from teachers, students and parents.
- Work experience is well integrated into the programme. The community action project gives students the opportunity for personal development through working with children with special educational needs and also with the residents of a local nursing home.
- An eight-week 'futures' module is provided to prepare students for work experience and to get them thinking about the third-level courses they wish to pursue. Students are strongly encouraged to find high-quality work-experience placements in line with their interests. In discussion, the students were appreciative of this support.
- Students are supported very effectively in making good subject choices for senior cycle. All TY classes receive one timetabled guidance lesson per week. They complete aptitude and interests assessments and use online career research software. They can also avail of individual appointments with the guidance counsellor.
- A number of trips out of school and valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences are provided. A musical is staged; this is reported to be a particularly successful aspect of the TY programme.

- The school is an International School and TY is a point of entry for some students. There are very good systems in place to support the needs of students starting in TY.
- The school encourages students to develop good relationships with each other and with their teachers. While students are assigned to a particular class group for the year they are mixed for almost all subjects. This arrangement, as well as the team-building trip to an adventure center that takes place at the beginning of the year, helps to ensure that students get to know as many of their year group as possible.

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

- Overall, the quality of programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation is very good. The TY year head makes a significant contribution to managing the programme and plays an important role in promoting the students' high level of motivation.
- Attendance and punctuality of TY students are good. However, there needs to be a clearer differentiation between students who are absent and students who are out on school business to ensure the accuracy of attendance records for TY.
- The programme is very effectively co-ordinated. The TY core team comprises the co-ordinator, year head, TY teachers, the head of school and deputy head. The participation of the senior management team has contributed to ensuring that TY has high priority in school planning. The co-ordinator's excellent work has contributed greatly to the success of programme in the school.
- Communication between the TY team and the wider school community is very good; in addition to regular team meetings, TY is a standard agenda item for meetings of the board and staff. Appropriate opportunities are provided for communication with parents and celebration of students' achievements.
- The quality of subject planning for TY is very good. Many of the core subjects follow the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) curriculum and this adds variety of material and skill development. The modules and optional subjects are designed to foster student interest and to facilitate the transition to senior cycle and beyond.
- Students complete a reflection form at the end of each module and an evaluation at the end of the year. Parents are also surveyed. The teachers and the core team engage in a thorough review of the programme. There is very good evidence that these evaluations inform TY planning.
- The students highlighted the benefits of the teaching and learning approaches that are prevalent in TY. For example, the use of real-life contexts such as magazines and newspapers when learning Irish. To further inform provision, a focus group of students should be interviewed at the end of the year to discuss the aspects of TY that they found best enhanced the quality of their learning.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the head of school and deputy head at the conclusion of the evaluation.

## **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 is delighted with this report and feels that it is an accurate reflection of our excellent Transition Year Programme. The Board is delighted that the evaluation compliments the coordination and whole school support for Transition Year and feels that the positive response to teaching and learning reflects excellently on the school as a whole.

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

The Board will be happy to facilitate time for teachers to collaborate and discuss the content of lessons and agree that Transition Year is a time when all students learn to think for themselves and feel this is a worthwhile recommendation.

The Board as a whole is focusing on the area of student voice and feel that a focus group in Transition Year would be an integral part of this. This should be done in early 2017.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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>	<b>Good</b> 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 <b>very good</b> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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>	<b>Fair</b> 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>	<b>Weak</b> 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;