



M1/00

To: Management Authorities of Second Level Schools

THE TRANSITION YEAR PROGRAMME

The Transition Year Programme is now offered in 502 schools. This represents considerable expansion since 1994 when the Programme was offered in 451 schools. The evaluation of the programme carried out by the Department's inspectorate, published in 1996, showed that schools demonstrated high levels of creativity while adhering to departmental guidelines in the implementation of the Transition Year. **A list of the recommendations contained in the report on that evaluation is appended to this circular.** Monitoring of individual programmes recently carried out by inspectors corroborates these findings. This expansion and the healthy state of Transition Year programmes are attributable to the readiness of principals, co-ordinators, teachers, pupils and parents to engage in innovative ways of learning and teaching, as well as to the excellent work of the TYST (Transition Year Support Team) from 1995-1998, and its successor, the TYCSS (Transition Year Curriculum Support Service) which started work in September, 1998, under the guidance of a National Co-ordinator.

The Department acknowledges the impressive work that has been done in schools to date in Transition Year programmes. It is timely to issue a reminder to schools regarding certain basic requirements of all Transition Year programmes.

- **The need for each school to produce an annual, written Transition Year programme.**

Successful Transition Year programmes have well-developed written programmes, in which the overall aims and objectives of the programme, as well as the specific aims and objectives of each curricular area, module or subject are clearly stated. The elaboration of such a plan requires team-work between the principal, the Transition Year co-ordinator and the teachers concerned. This team-work, manifested in the writing of the programme and in its implementation, is one of the distinguishing features of a good Transition Year programme.

The following quotation from the Department's guidelines (1994) underlines the need for a written programme:

"A clearly documented programme is essential for ongoing review and for effective internal evaluation of the programme in the school. The programme should be reviewed annually and revised appropriately following each review. A copy of the programme, approved by the Board of Management, should be retained in the school for inspection by the Department's inspectors".

Further guidance on the writing of the programme will issue to schools from the TYCSS early in 2000.

- **The length of the school year for Transition Year students.**

It is essential that all Transition Year students complete a full school year. Periods of residence in other countries, work experience, visits to outdoor activities centres, are all perfectly valid components of a Transition Year programme, provided that they are included in the school's overall plan. It is not acceptable that any Transition Year student should end his/her first term of study in mid-December or his/her year of study in mid-May.

- **The relationship of the Transition Year Programme to the Leaving Certificate Programmes.**

The guidelines issued to schools in 1994 state clearly:

"A Transition Year Programme is NOT part of the Leaving Certificate Programme and should NOT be seen as an opportunity for spending three years rather than two studying Leaving Certificate material".

In this context, the terms of circulars M31/93 and M47/93 should be re-read and applied.

In fact, the teaching and learning that make up a Transition Year Programme will greatly enhance students' study skills and their prospects of success in whatever Leaving Certificate Programme they choose to follow.

- **Use of the TYCSS (Transition Year Curriculum Support Service)**

Considerable innovative energy is demanded of a school if the Transition Year programme is to retain its freshness and vitality. The National Co-ordinator, who is based in Dublin, and his five team-members who work in the regions support the Programme in a variety of ways:

- In-school consultations with Principals, Co-ordinators, core teams and other staff members on aspects of the Programme
 - In-service workshops with full staffs on aspects of programme design, delivery, assessment and evaluation
 - In-service workshops for groups of teachers within a school
 - Consultation with individual subject teachers
 - Telephone support
 - Assistance to schools in presenting the Transition Year Programme to prospective students and their parents
 - Workshops on co-ordination for clusters of schools
 - Workshops on particular subjects/modules for clusters of schools
 - Development, sometimes in association with other agencies, of learning and teaching resources, e.g., the videos on Experiential Learning in the Classroom and on Making Experience Work, "Project Forest", "Ros na Rún".
- The full list can be obtained from the TYCSS headquarters at Blackrock Education Centre (tel. 01 2301671) or from your regional co-ordinator.

The need for support of Transition Year programmes varies from one school to another. What is important is that all Transition Year schools should make appropriate use of the service.

- **All those who are involved in Transition Year in a school should read each issue of the TYCSS newsletter.**

This newsletter contains useful information as well as providing teachers with a number of valuable ideas on classroom methodologies. Some examples of newsletter topics that are of particular importance are:

- programme structure
- staff involvement
- assessment
- student induction

A number of inspectors evaluate the Transition Year on an ongoing basis. They affirm the excellent practice found in some aspects of all Transition Year programmes and suggest ways in which the school can build on the current strengths of its programme. If an inspector plans to visit your school, you will receive a courtesy call from him/her a day or two before the visit takes place.

The Department greatly appreciates the dedication of whole school communities which continue to make Transition Year a richly formative learning experience for a large number of our young people. It is aware that, in schools where the Programme is being successfully implemented, it has also proved to be a most effective agent of staff development.

- **Copies of Circular**

Please provide a copy of this circular to the appropriate representatives of parents and teachers for transmission to individual parents and teachers.

John Dennehy,
Secretary General.
January, 2000.

View Appendix:

[Transition Year Programme, 1994–1995 – An Evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education](#)