

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Centres for Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Youthreach Ballinrobe
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Neale Road Ballinrobe County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	YR0066

Date of Evaluation: 21-09-2018



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agus Scileanna
Department of
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EVALUATION OF CENTRES FOR EDUCATION

Evaluations of centres for education address the quality and effectiveness of aspects of the centre's work in relation to attendance, retention, progression, attainment, literacy, numeracy, and life skills. They provide advice and support to teaching staffs, resource persons, centre coordinators and centre management.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated learning and teaching under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. The learners' experience
2. Centre organisation and management

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 centre's provision in each area.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The centre did not meet the requirements in relation to 5 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken at the time of the evaluation. However, the centre has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with this requirement.

EVALUATION OF CENTRES FOR EDUCATION

Dates of inspection	17 - 21 September 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with centre personnel• Review of centre documents• Learner focus-group interview• Meeting with parents• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of learners' work• Interaction with learners• Feedback to centre co-ordinator, ETB management, advisory board chairperson and teaching staff

Centre context

Youthreach Ballinrobe opened in 1990 and operates under the auspices of Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (ETB). It is a forty-place centre and caters for learners from a wide catchment area. The centre offers the Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and a number of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) awards.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of the learners' experience is very good overall, supported by very good leadership from an experienced and committed centre co-ordinator and by good teamwork among staff.
- This is an effective and caring centre that caters very well for the needs of learners; there is a need to ensure all learners have an individual learning plan.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with some very good practices observed in some lessons and areas for improvement noted in other lessons.
- Very good daily lessons specifically focussed on improving students' literacy and numeracy skills are provided; the focus on developing these skills across all other lessons was fair and requires further attention.
- The MSLETB Youthreach advisory board is working well, with appropriate policies in place and centre facilities well maintained.
- Youthreach Ballinrobe has very good capacity for improvement and development.

Recommendations

- Comprehensive individual learning plans (ILPs) for learners should be fully developed.
- A strategic focus on sharing and further developing the pedagogical practice of staff within the centre in the areas of active and co-operative learning, differentiation, questioning and the use of learning intentions is recommended, supplemented by a whole-centre CPD programme focused on those areas.
- Agreed strategies should be implemented in all lessons to advance literacy and numeracy development.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNERS' EXPERIENCE

The quality of the learners' experience is very good overall. Learners and their parents were very positive about their experiences of the centre and learning in a more supportive and less pressured environment.

1.1 Attendance/Retention

- Learner attendance is generally good.
- There is a safe, caring and supportive environment in the centre which facilitates and encourages attendance and retention. There are many positive strategies in place to promote good attendance such as end-of-year awards, the breakfast club and the provision of a varied and learner-centred curriculum. The centre has also purchased their own bus to collect learners and drop them home; this has impacted positively on attendance.
- The centre has a sign-in and sign-out system to record attendance which is working well and staff also maintain their own records. A text-system is in place to notify parents of absences.
- The retention rate of students in the centre varies from year to year. The reasons why some learners choose not to continue with their participation should be fully explored by centre management and strategies to effect improvement should be put in place.

1.2 Educational Progression

- Educational progression from the centre is good for some learners in terms of going onto further education. Very strong links were forged between the centre and businesses in the locality.
- While some systems are in place to support and track learner progress, a more formalised and strategic tracking system should be established to record and support learner attainment and progress. For example, the introduction of a learner handbook would give purpose to learners recording their goals, progress and achievements.
- A balanced curriculum is in place which is kept under review and which allows for educational progression and certification.
- Contact with parents is ongoing with parent-teacher meetings and parent information evenings, when necessary. Parents may meet centre management or any teacher by appointment throughout the year.
- Due to staff turnover, ILPs were not developed last year. This is something which the centre has identified in their Centre Evaluation and Improvement Plan (CEIP) and this work has been prioritised. Each learner's plan should contain all relevant social, educational, career and personal information. In addition, an action plan that charts the learner's educational aspirations and progress should be maintained.

1.3 Teaching, Learning and Attainment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good. Instances of very good practice were observed in some lessons, and elements of teaching observed in other lessons required improvement.
- Teachers had high expectations of students in all lessons and learners engaged very well and worked purposefully.

- Teachers were well prepared for lessons, and a range of quality resources was sourced or often created. Learning intentions and success criteria were shared orally at the beginning of most lessons. Learners would benefit from consolidation of learning and from clear direction about what they will have learnt by the end of the lesson.
- In a small number of lessons, very good use was made of active and co-operative learning strategies. This practice should be extended to all lessons.
- There was a good level of one-to-one instruction, with teachers providing direction and explanations in a differentiated manner. Incorrect responses were clarified and dealt with sensitively. In those instances, teacher differentiation was good. Team teaching, another support to differentiation introduced in some lessons, is reported to be working well.
- Teacher-led questioning was a commonly used methodology. Such questioning was very effective in promoting learning when questions were directed to named individuals, when sufficient time was allowed for answering, and when supplementary questions probed understanding.
- Best health and safety practices were modelled during teacher demonstrations in practical lessons. While safety signage and personal protective equipment were present in the Materials Technology (Wood) room and Engineering room, the demarcation of safe operating areas around machines should be carried out immediately. Risk assessments should also be carried out and reviewed annually.
- Given that different teachers have specific strengths in their approaches to teaching, a strategic, whole-centre focus should be placed on creating regular opportunities for sharing and further developing pedagogical practices in relation to active, co-operative learning, differentiation, the use of learning intentions and questioning. A whole-centre continuing professional development (CPD) programme to support this upskilling is also recommended.
- It is suggested that a teacher handbook be developed to support new teachers, providing concise information regarding pedagogical approaches and in particular about centre-agreed numeracy and literacy strategies for use across all subjects.
- There is very good provision of information and communications technology (ICT) facilities in the centre. Some lessons would have benefited from the use of ICT as a tool to support teaching and learning.
- It is suggested that the centre's trolley of tablets and visualiser be used more extensively to record demonstrations of particular subject skills for learners, for example in hairdressing and engineering, to support learners catching up after days missed.
- Classroom climate in the lessons observed was consistently positive, borne out by questionnaire finding that learners were comfortable to ask questions, willing to offer an opinion or comment, and happy to risk incorrect responses. Teachers were generous in their encouragement, acknowledgement and affirmation of learners during lessons

1.4 Literacy and Numeracy

- Timetabling of literacy and numeracy is organised very well, enabling learners to access literacy and numeracy lessons daily. Within these specific daily lessons there was very effective focus on improving students' literacy and numeracy skills; the focus on developing these skills across all other lessons was fair and requires further attention. Programmes such as the SNIP Literacy programme, are utilised to promote and support literacy.
- Learners' personal literacy and numeracy levels are identified during induction, with repetition of testing at a later point to monitor progress. One-to-one literacy and numeracy

tuition is provided where necessary. Providing a numeracy and literacy programme at the beginning of each year to provide intensive support in those areas is also advised.

- The whole-centre focus on literacy and numeracy skill development is fair overall and requires further attention. The centre's literacy and numeracy plan should be further developed, outlining the specific measures that centre staff will undertake to further develop learners' skills in these areas, along with annual review.
- There was a focus on oral and written literacy in some of the lessons observed, including good deciphering of terminology and identification of key words. To further the effectiveness of these strategies and reinforce learning, it is suggested that students be encouraged to record those words and to use them.
- Library books are provided in the recreational area. The practice of providing newspapers/magazines for learners should be investigated.
- Very good systems are in place for supporting students for whom English is an additional language (EAL).

1.5 Life skills

- A strong focus on the development of learners' personal and social skills was apparent in the centre.
- The management of learners was observed to be sensitive, effective and fair, and a respectful relationship was evident between staff and learners. The code of conduct sets out clear expectations for the roles and responsibilities of students and of parents in promoting a positive learning environment.
- Learners are given the opportunity to be members of the learners' council. Democratic principles inform its formation, and good systems support its organisation and operation.
- Learners' participation in additional activities such as Gaisce and Junk Kouture is commended. As an additional guidance support, students participate and receive certification in the *Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT)* programme.
- Parents and learners interviewed and surveyed during the evaluation were very positive about the work of the centre and the impact it was having on their lives.
- Centre staff work very hard to promote learners' mental and physical well-being and to increase levels of self-esteem and confidence. Guidance and counselling are available to learners on a group and one-to-one basis but the centre management has identified that counselling provision needs to increase to meet the diverse needs of the learners. Centre management and MSLETB need to continue to work together to address this issue.
- Most learners participate in work experience during the summer. However, a formal summer programme should be developed to ensure full engagement of all learners and provide additional opportunities for certification.
- The corridors of the centre are used very well to display photographs of school-related activities, to publicise upcoming events, to promote numeracy and literacy, and to celebrate success. It was evident from observing these displays that the learners and staff take enormous pride in their time at the centre.

2. CENTRE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 General operation of the centre

- Youthreach Ballinrobe is staffed by team of teachers, resource persons and ancillary staff who work in a dedicated and highly committed manner, of whom many have worked in Youthreach provision for several years. The team is highly motivated and staff morale is very good.
- MSLETB takes a proactive approach to supporting and managing the centre and visits regularly. A committed Youthreach advisory board oversees the five Youthreach centres in the ETB. This arrangement is working well.
- The experienced co-ordinator provides very good leadership to learners and staff. He empowers staff to take on new challenges, is deeply committed to the welfare of the learners, and displays highly developed organisational and management skills.
- The co-ordinator, with the support of all staff, manages the day-to-day running of the centre very effectively and teamwork is encouraged in all aspects of centre life.
- A wide range of centre policies has been devised in consultation with the ETB and staff. Those policies contribute successfully to the smooth operation of the centre. There is a need to review the enrolment policy to ensure it sets out clear procedures in cases where demand exceeds available places. Further opportunities to involve parents in policy development and review should be sought.
- Centre facilities are of very good quality and are well maintained. The ICT infrastructure has been upgraded throughout and centre management, in conjunction with the ETB, is continuously developing and improving facilities.
- It was reported that the centre has a website but due to technical issues during the evaluation it was not available to view. Further utilisation of the website to promote the centre and to celebrate the success of learners should be considered.

2.2 The centre's capacity for improvement and development

- Youthreach Ballinrobe has engaged effectively with centre development planning through the CEIP process; staff, learners and parents have contributed to this process in a commendable manner. This operates as an effective centre, and there is a willingness and openness to work towards improvement.
- Overall the centre has very good capacity for improvement and development.

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;