EVALUATION of CENTRES FOR EDUCATION
2015

REPORT

Killarney Youthreach
Kerry Diocesan Youth Services
Killarney
County Kerry

Date of evaluation: 18 May 2015
Evaluation of Centres of Education

Introduction
A focussed evaluation of Killarney Youthreach was undertaken by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills in May 2015. During that evaluation, aspects of the centre’s work in relation to attendance, retention, progression, attainment, literacy, numeracy, and life skills were reviewed. The evaluation involved interviews with centre personnel, review of centre documents and records, observation of teaching and learning and other activities, questionnaires for learners and parents, and focus group meetings with learners and parents. Following the evaluation, a meeting to discuss the findings was held with: the centre co-ordinator, the centre staff, the CEO, a senior staff member of Kerry Diocesan Youth Services (KDYS), and the Adult Education Officer of Kerry Education and Training Board (KETB). 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.

Killarney Youthreach was established in 2001 and is managed by KDYS under a partnership agreement with KETB. The centre is located within the high quality KDYS premises. Learners are offered Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) courses in general learning at levels three and four, along with learner support, an extensive life skills and summer programme.

1. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

1.1 Key Findings

- Killarney Youthreach provides a very high quality inclusive service to learners.

- Patterns of attendance, retention and progression are strong given the individual needs of learners and the personal, social and cultural context involved.

- The centre curriculum represents a very positive balance between the provision required to achieve the QQI levels offered, and the personal, social and emotional supports targeted at learners.

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good overall.

- The co-ordinator provides very high quality leadership and management of the centre.

- The staff forms a cohesive team and demonstrates a professional and committed approach to its work

1.2 Recommendations for Further Development

- A strategic focus on developing and sharing pedagogical practice is recommended to develop and advance the learners’ classroom experience.

- The KDYS board of directors is required to confirm that the KDYS Child Protection and Welfare Policy (2015) is in full compliance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools in relation to the operation of Killarney Youthreach.
• A curriculum and timetable review should be undertaken in the context of changing progression routes for learners.

2. THE LEARNERS’ EXPERIENCE

2.1 Attendance/Retention

• Patterns of attendance, retention and progression are strong given the individual needs of learners and the personal, social and cultural context involved. Access and induction procedures are open, clear, supportive and inclusive. The effectiveness of centre staff in identifying and addressing the range of individual needs of learners is a key strength.

2.2 Educational Progression

• There are well-established progression pathways for learners. Strong and supportive progression planning is in place in the context of the curriculum, work experience, and the individual supports provided to learners. When planning curriculum provision, the centre should consider the changing demands and requirements being made of students wishing to enter the Further Education and Training (FET) sector.

2.3 Teaching, Learning and Attainment

• The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall. There were a number of examples of very good practice: the learners’ ownership and empowerment relating to their engagement and their learning in lessons; the variety of active and engaging teaching and learning experiences provided; tutors’ awareness of learners’ individual needs, and their strategies to address these.

• Lessons were very well structured and sequenced, and they reflected very high quality planning and resource development by tutors. Visual stimuli of very high quality helped to support understanding and learning. Very effective questioning and differentiation strategies enhanced learners’ engagement and learning.

• Where recommendations were made to tutors, they focused on the potential of sharing planned learning intentions and the need to review and consolidate the learning achieved in lessons. Recommendations also focused on the need to further develop co-operative learning strategies. To build on, and to sustain, current very good practice, a strategic focus on developing and sharing pedagogical practice is recommended.

• The quality of learners’ work in their folders was very high and reflected the range of abilities within the classrooms. These folders contained structured module tasks and projects, and evidence of ongoing review and reflection by the learners themselves. There was clear evidence of ongoing monitoring and formative feedback from tutors as the learners progressed and attained the appropriate levels.

• Very positive and mutually respectful relationships underpinned all lessons. Clear and well-established boundaries facilitated learners to actively participate in their own learning in a positive environment of inclusion, respect and trust.

2.4 Literacy and Numeracy

• The centre has a strong literacy development focus, both within classroom practice, and in the additional supports provided to learners. Engagement with strategies to develop numeracy, however, should become a priority for classroom practice.
2.5 Life skills

- Developing the person is a clear and equal pillar that underpins the work of the centre. The high-quality, multi-faceted life-skills programme is fundamental to, and inseparable from, the academic programme. Life-skills development occurs as part of daily interactions with tutors, within ‘contact time one-to-one’ interactions, during ‘social and personal’ time, and during the summer programme.

2.6 Child protection

- Confirmation was provided that the board of directors has not formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools without modification.

- The centre currently operates under the KDYS Child Protection and Welfare Policy (2015). However, as a Centre for Education, as referenced in the Education Act (1998) and within the definition of ‘School’ in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as referenced in Circular 0065/2011, the board is now required to confirm that the aforementioned KDYS Child Protection and Welfare Policy is in full compliance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools in relation to the operation of Killarney Youthreach.

3. CENTRE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 General operation of the centre

- Management of the centre is very effective. The co-ordinator provides very high quality leadership and management, and demonstrates a deep and sustained commitment to the academic, social and personal wellbeing of the learners. The staff demonstrates a professional and committed approach to its work. Parents and learners provided a very positive endorsement of the work of the centre though their responses to questionnaires completed as part of the evaluation.

- The centre provides a very positive and visually enriching learning environment. Learners can also avail of the wider range of facilities, offices and room spaces provided in the KDYS Killarney premises.

- The centre curriculum currently represents a very positive balance between the provision required to achieve the QQI levels offered, and the personal, social and emotional supports required by learners. However, in recognition of the changing demands of the workplace and of the FET context to which learners will progress, it is recommended that a curriculum and timetable review be undertaken to focus on the overall rationale for the timetable structure, and in particular, to focus on class contact time, on the time weightings for subjects, and on aspects of learner support.
3.2 The centre’s capacity for improvement and development

- A sustained culture of self-evaluation and review is embedded in the operation of the centre. The operation and outcomes of Internal Centre Evaluation (ICE) processes represent very good practice. The staff and centre management demonstrate a clear capacity for ongoing learner-focused improvement.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Kerry Diocesan Youth Service and Kerry Education and Training Board acknowledge that the Inspection Report highlights many strengths that exist within the Killarney Youthreach Programme. Both organisations have strong confidence in the programme being delivered to participants and in the staff team. Positive outcomes for young people in the areas of young person centred approach, attendance, progression, educational attainment, development of life skills, literacy and numeracy are identified within the report.

The affirming of the general operation of the centre, the positive and enriching physical environment due to the programme being part of an integrated Youth Centre and the holistic approach to learners is very gratifying.

The Partnership wishes to express a strong sense of appreciation to the co-ordinator, staff members, and other KDYS services who input into the positive, safe and professional delivery of the Killarney Youthreach Programme on foot of receiving this final report.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The report has made some recommendations for further development that are being considered. Both KDYS & KETB are committed to working with the Killarney Youthreach staff team to progress these areas. To date the following has happened in relation to Recommendations for Further Development:

1:2: Strategic Focus on developing and sharing pedagogical practice:

- Killarney Youthreach staff team have held two and scheduled three cross-curricular meetings for the academic year (2015/2016) to develop pedagogical best practices across our curriculum.

- They have also added “sharing pedagogical practices” to the weekly staff meeting agenda in order to advance their learners’ classroom experience.

- In September, the co-ordinator attended Instructional Leadership Conference which focussed on building a school-wide approach to best pedagogical teaching methods. On foot of this, there has been a meeting with KDYS co-ordinators from three other Youthreach centres to share teaching and learning strategies, ideas and resources.

1.2 Curriculum and Timetable review:

- A curriculum and timetable review was held on 18th June 2015, 2nd September 2015, and 14th October 2015 with a view toward matching the centre’s timetable to the changing needs of the learners while keeping in line with QQI requirements. Four more meetings are scheduled for 2015/2016.

1.2 Child Protection:

- The KDYS Board of Directors wishes to confirm that the KDYS Child Protection & Welfare Policy 2015 is in full compliance with the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools. The KDYS Policy is guided by Children’s First:
National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 and incorporates all the requirements of the DES Procedures.

2.3: Teaching, Learning and attainment:

- The practice of consolidating and reviewing classroom learning is now employed by all tutors and weekly staff meetings allow for sharing of pedagogical practices.

- New strategies to engage in numeracy have been developed e.g. highlighting numeracy moments in the classroom across the curriculum.

- Recommendations have been taken on board and changes made re: timetable, subject weighing, and in regards to all aspects of supports offered to learners.

- Members of the staff team will be invited to attend the Kerry ETB, Cohort 8, Barry Bennet in-service scheduled to take place March 2016.

2.4: Literacy and Numeracy

- Teaching staff will be invited to participate in the Kerry ETB Maths Community of Practice, and will be invited to attend any other in-service applicable to the centre as part of the Kerry ETB DIESEL calendar.

- The centre will be advised of any in-service on Numeracy being delivered by the Kerry ETB ABE Programme and teachers delivering in this area will be invited to attend.

3.1: General Operation of the Centre

- The programme co-ordinator is a member of the Kerry ETB FET Forum, the purpose of which is the sharing of information and the opportunity to network with other programme co-ordinators across the scheme who are involved in the delivery of Further Education & Training. This forum receives regular up-dates from the CEO on FET issues, the QQI Support Officer and the Employer Engagement Officer.