EVALUATION of CENTRES FOR EDUCATION
2014

REPORT

Leixlip Youthreach
Mill Lane, Leixlip, Co Kildare

Date of evaluation: 14 November 2014
EVALUATION OF CENTRES OF EDUCATION

Introduction
A focussed evaluation of Leixlip Youthreach Centre was undertaken by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills in November 2014. 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, staff 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, staff and Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) management

Leixlip Youthreach is a long established centre and has been located in the current premises since 1990. It is one of three Youthreach centres in County Kildare. It serves a wide catchment area including Leixlip, Maynooth, Celbridge and Kilcock. It is designated as a thirty-place centre and there are currently twenty-six learners enrolled.

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Key Findings
• This is an effective and caring centre that caters very well for the needs of learners.
• KWETB provides very good management and support for the centre.
• Learners are treated respectfully and there is good rapport between staff and learners.
• High quality teaching and learning was evident.
• The experienced co-ordinator manages the centre very well and provides very effective leadership to staff and learners.
• The staff works very well as a team in the best interests of learners.

1.2 Recommendations for Further Development
• The building needs to be substantially developed to ensure that it is fully fit for purpose.
• A board of management needs to be put in place.
• A programme for professional development needs to be implemented for staff to address areas within teaching and learning.
• Learner and parent representatives need to be nominated to help co-ordinate parent and learner voice.

2. THE LEARNERS’ EXPERIENCE

2.1 Attendance/Retention
• Attendance and punctuality for the vast majority of learners are good. Despite a range of strategies, including regular telephone contact and careful tracking, regular attendance remains a challenge for a small number of learners.

2.2 Educational Progression
• For some learners educational progression from the centre is good in terms of going onto further education or employment. Learner progression is facilitated by strong
links with the local community. Local contacts provide opportunities for both work experience and employment. However, a number of learners that recently left the centre are still unemployed.

2.3 Teaching, Learning and Attainment

- High quality teaching and learning was evident. Teachers are experienced, are good communicators and explain key concepts and ideas clearly.
- Learners complete appropriate assignments and participate successfully in learning tasks.
- There were very good examples of individual lesson planning and schemes of work but there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach to short-term planning for teaching, learning and assessment.
- There was insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons observed. ICT should be used more to enhance teaching and learning.
- Learners are treated respectfully and there is good rapport between staff and learners.
- The centre offers Quality and Qualifications Awards, formerly known as Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) Awards at levels three and four across a range of areas and students are achieving well. Assignment folders are well monitored but more correction of written work towards improvement is recommended.
- Differentiation is well catered for especially in terms of the individual attention given to learners. Different learners are successfully doing different levels of certification in the same class.
- Teaching methodologies need to be further developed in some lessons in order to incorporate whole class instruction, group and pair work. A programme for professional development needs to be implemented for staff to address areas within teaching and learning.
- Individual learner profiles are compiled which include initial assessments for learners in literacy and numeracy upon entry to the centre and other relevant learner data. It is recommended that greater use is made of diagnostic assessments in order to guide individual or group education plans.

2.4 Literacy and Numeracy

- Literacy and numeracy levels are identified during induction when learners complete a WRAT 4 literacy and numeracy assessment. One-to-one literacy and numeracy tuition is provided where necessary. Mathematics and computer literacy are well taught.
- The display and exploration of key vocabulary associated with subject areas is implemented by teachers. This practice is praiseworthy. Reading aloud and writing is encouraged. Some good writing was observed in learners’ folders. There is scope for development for the greater integration of literacy and numeracy in teaching and learning.

2.5 Life skills

- This is an effective and caring centre that caters very well for learners. The focus on life skills and personal and social development is commendable. Responses to learner and parent questionnaires and interviews strongly suggest that students are well minded, cared for and respected.
- High quality counselling is available, in order to develop coping skills and to enhance the wellbeing of more vulnerable learners.
• There are no sports facilities in the centre but learners avail of the local Amenities Centre and the local public park.
• Work experience is well planned and gives learners the opportunity to sample work environments.
• Catering is impressive and the preparation of food provides valuable nutrition and life skills.

2.6 Child protection
• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

3. CENTRE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 General operation of the centre
• The KWETB provides very good management for the centre. A board of management needs to be put in place as a previous board was discontinued. The new adult education officer (AEO) and previous AEOs have given valuable line management support.
• The centre has fully engaged in development planning. A key part of this annual report is individual teacher review and reflection. It is affirmed that parents and learners are surveyed as part of this review process.
• The experienced co-ordinator manages the centre very well and provides very effective leadership to staff and learners.
• The staff works very well as a team in the best interests of learners. The key worker system is working effectively and provides mentoring to learners.
• Key policies are in place and reviewed regularly. There is an open admissions policy as well as a good induction programme.
• The building needs to be substantially developed to ensure that it is fully fit for purpose as a modern learning centre. The heating system was not working during the evaluation and the centre was unacceptably cold.
• Learner and parent representatives need to be nominated to help co-ordinate the parent and learner voice.

3.2 The centre’s capacity for improvement and development
The centre co-ordinator and staff are reflective and open to new ideas. In-centre review processes are well developed but need to focus more on teaching and learning. Development of the building would provide opportunities for the introduction of courses such as childcare and allow for more certification in catering. Overall, the centre is effective and caring and there is a willingness to work towards improvement.

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.

Published March 2015