EVALUATION of CENTRES FOR EDUCATION
2014

REPORT

Youthreach New Ross,
Butlersland Industrial Estate,
New Ross, Co. Wexford.

Date of evaluation: 22 January 2014
EVALUATION OF CENTRES OF EDUCATION

Introduction
A focussed evaluation of Youthreach New Ross was undertaken by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills in January 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, board of management and management of Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB), 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, the resource persons, staff, and WWETB management. 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.

Youthreach New Ross is a 37 place centre established in 1994, providing second chance education for early school leavers. It moved to new premises in 2007. It benefits from the pilot Special Education Needs (SEN) initiative which provides enhanced provision.

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Key Findings
- This centre is very well run by a very effective and experienced co-ordinator together a committed cohesive management team.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good however, there was scope for development in all the lessons observed.
- The SEN mentoring system is well established in the centre however, learners need to be engaged more effectively in achieving their short and long term learning goals.
- The centre provides a welcoming caring atmosphere and a safe environment which is very supportive of the learners’ personal, social and educational development.
- The centre is engaged in effective ongoing self-evaluation and improvement through internal centre evaluation.
- Very good progress has been achieved in implementing the recommendations of the previous whole centre evaluation including the provision of excellent facilities equipped to a professional standard.

1.2 Recommendations for Further Development
- The range of teaching methodologies used should be extended to include greater opportunities for active learning including learner-centred and learner-led activities.
- More extensive and creative use of information and communication technology (ICT) and appropriate websites and resources should be incorporated into teaching and learning.
- Literacy and numeracy strategies need to be agreed and implemented on a whole centre basis.
- A plan for the delivery of Social Personal and Health Education (including Relationship and Sexuality Education) should be developed and implemented for all year groups as a priority.
- To provide a structured forum for the learner voice in the centre, a learner council should be established.
- A systematic review of the centre timetable and curriculum should be planned and progressed.
2. THE LEARNERS’ EXPERIENCE

2.1 Attendance/Retention

- Learners’ attendance and retention is very good. Systematic monitoring and recording of punctuality and attendance is undertaken on a daily basis. The tracking of individual learner attendance and punctuality should be further developed and included in their files.
- The centre has a system for recognising good attendance which is not being implemented and this needs to be addressed.

2.2 Educational Progression

- An effective induction programme is in place for new learners.
- Given the educational needs of the present cohort of learners, the curriculum provides appropriate challenges, educational progression and certification for the learners.
- Overall, the current mentoring system is working well however, the learners need to be engaged more effectively in achieving their short and long-term learning goals, through SMART planning. Attention needs to be given to the further development of individual learner plans and monitoring and tracking of progress together with the ongoing timely maintenance of learners’ profiles.
- The learners’ handbook should be further developed as a diary to record the learners’ learning goals, progress and achievements.
- Learners are effectively supported and guided in progressing to further education, to linked work experience and to employment. Very good practice is implemented to track learners’ progression when they leave the centre and the centre staff are available to support them.

2.3 Teaching, Learning and Attainment

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good, however it was fair in a significant minority of lessons. There was scope for development in all the lessons observed.
- Methodologies observed included teacher-led instruction, global questioning and worksheets. The range of methodologies used needs to be extended to include greater opportunities for active learning including learner-centred and learner-led activities.
- Pair work was seen in some lessons and this good practice in collaborative learning should be extended to all lessons, where appropriate. The formal layout of classrooms should be varied to facilitate pair and group work and the use of active learning methodologies, for example, learning centres.
- ICT was used effectively in a minority of lessons. More extensive and creative use of ICT and appropriate websites and resources would be very beneficial to learners.
- Learners worked purposefully in lessons and good rapport, affirmation and atmosphere was in evidence. Greater attention needs to be given to differentiation and providing appropriate challenge for individual learners as ‘one size does not fit all’.

2.4 Literacy and Numeracy

- Literacy and numeracy has been prioritised as a key element in the progression phase of the centre’s programme.
- There was some attention given to literacy and numeracy in a minority of lessons. Literacy and numeracy strategies need to be agreed and implemented on a whole centre basis by management and staff.
- Teachers should plan for the integration of literacy and numeracy into all elements of teaching and learning.
2.5 Life skills

- The co-ordinator and centre staff team are very committed to the holistic development of the individual learners and the centre programme provides good opportunities for the development of learners’ life skills.
- Most staff have received basic training in the teaching of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and mental health. A plan for the teaching of the SPHE (including Relationship and Health Education (RSE)) programme to all year groups should be developed and implemented as a priority. Teachers new to teaching RSE should be facilitated to attend RSE training in the delivery of the ‘TRUST’ Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching Resource.
- Many aspects of the centre’s activities are health promoting and it could commence work towards recognition as a health promoting centre. The provision of a smoking cessation programme for learners should be progressed as planned.
- Learners have taken the initiative to organise fundraising for charity and social events. To provide a structured forum for the learner voice in the centre and to facilitate whole centre learner-led projects, for example, the attainment of the Green Flag, a learner council should be established.

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 centre 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 centre is very well run by an experienced very effective co-ordinator with the current resource persons, who work together as a committed cohesive management team. The staff team are enthusiastic, dedicated and very caring of the learners and work well together with management as a whole centre team.
- WWETB are very supportive of the centre through, inter alia, the provision of resources, policy development and staff training.
- The work of the centre is overseen and supported by a diligent board of management whose work includes the ratification of key centre policies.
- The centre is not operating in line with Circular FE12/2003 regarding length of centre week and centre year. The timetable and curriculum would benefit from a systematic review to include consideration of the duration of lessons and the provision of greater subject choice.

3.2 The centre’s capacity for improvement and development

- The centre has engaged effectively with centre development planning, through the internal centre evaluation (ICE) process. Another round of ICE is currently being progressed. Good action planning is used to implement key priorities identified for centre development.
- While learners and staff are consulted as part of ICE, it is important that parents are also included in this consultation and generally communication with parents should be further developed.
- Overall, the centre has very good capacity for improvement and development.

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