

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in LCA

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	O'Connell School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	North Richmond Street Dublin 1
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60440R

Date of Evaluation: 22-02-2018



WHAT IS A PROGRAMME EVALUATION?

The programme evaluation model of inspection is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the following programmes and to provide advice and support to teachers, principals and school management in post-primary schools and centres for education:

- Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)
- Transition Year (TY) programme
- Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in LCA under the following headings:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Programme provision and whole-school support
3. Programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation

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 school's provision in each area.

The board of management 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.

Programme Evaluation in LCA

Dates of inspection	22-02-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meeting(s) with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, and coordinator

School context

O'Connell Secondary School is under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The school has a current enrolment of 275 students. The school participates in the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). A broad range of curricular programmes is on offer.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good; practice in relation to written formative feedback and differentiation needs development.
- In-class assessment is appropriate overall; there is scope for further use of higher-order questioning.
- The overall quality of whole-school support and provision for LCA is good.
- The school demonstrates a strong commitment to providing the LCA programme; fifth and sixth-year LCA classes are amalgamated for many subjects.
- The teachers of LCA demonstrate a good level of engagement with relevant continuing professional development (CPD).
- Overall, programme planning, coordination and review are appropriate; action is required to improve aspects of collaborative planning practices and to support teaching and learning for the amalgamated class of fifth and sixth-year students.

Recommendations

- The teachers of LCA should establish strategies that provide constructive written feedback on key pieces of students' work.
- The use of higher-order questions and planning for differentiated learning should be extended to facilitate students' deeper understanding of lesson content.
- The core team should meet more regularly to lead collaborative planning for and evaluation of teaching and learning in LCA.
- To facilitate high-quality learner experiences and outcomes for the combined class of fifth and sixth-year LCA students, a planning template that supports differentiated learning should be used by all subject teams to further develop module programme plans.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good, with very good practice noted in a few lessons observed. In half of the lessons, however, there was scope to deepen students' learning and to challenge all learners appropriately. It is recommended, therefore, that practice in relation to aspects of assessment and differentiation should be developed.
- Students demonstrated high levels of interest in learning when the purpose of the lesson or task was explained clearly. This was most effective in lessons where learning intentions were expressed in terms of what students should know or be able to do, and were revisited to assess progress. Such an approach should be adopted more widely.
- Some very good advance preparation for lessons was observed. In a few instances, very effective additional resources, such as teacher-designed worksheets and writing frames, were used to scaffold learning activities and to facilitate differentiation. Use of such resources should be extended and, where appropriate, be differentiated.
- In the main, teacher-student rapport was mutually respectful and teachers were affirming of students' contributions and efforts.
- Highly stimulating and purposeful learning environments were created in a few classrooms through very good displays of student work. The exhibition of the LCA work in these instances set high expectations for students. It would be worthwhile for the school to consider extending this very good practice to other areas of the school.
- Good efforts were made in all of the lessons observed to engage students actively through setting individual or group tasks. Highly effective learning was noted when these activities were well paced and structured.
- All teachers pay good attention to monitoring and recording the completion of key assignments. There is scope, however, to improve the learning potential of key assignments in some subject areas by raising expectations for the standard of completed work. Learning experiences from key assignments should be differentiated to challenge the complete range of student abilities.
- Some very good student routines around using folders and filing work were noted in a few subject areas. In these instances, students' attitude to their work was positive. It is advisable that LCA teachers review and agree standards and routines around folders and classwork.
- While the quality of in-class assessment in the lessons observed was appropriate overall, the range and effectiveness of formative assessment strategies used varied significantly. Oral or teacher-led questioning was the dominant assessment strategy used in most lessons. Questions tended to be lower-order and requiring very brief answers. Further use of higher-order questions, with increased wait time, is recommended to foster deeper understanding of lesson content.
- In the lessons observed, designated classwork copybooks were used in only a small number of instances. In the other instances, students completed workbooks or exam papers. There is significant scope for development in the use of written formative feedback, as few examples of very good written constructive feedback were noted in the sample of student work reviewed during the evaluation. It is recommended that the coordinator and team of teachers review formative assessment practice in LCA, with particular consideration given to supporting effective methods for correcting students' written work.

- Some appropriate differentiated teaching was facilitated through one-to one support and hint sheets; there is scope for improvement in this area. Differentiated teaching approaches are particularly important in instances where students from fifth and sixth year are amalgamated into one class group.
- In the lessons observed, homework was assigned on a few occasions; however, it was not recorded by students in their journals. The school has a homework policy, but it may be timely to review the homework policy for LCA. Homework provides students with opportunities for independent learning and the review should discuss and standardise expectations around homework for students in LCA.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of whole-school support and provision is good.
- Senior management reported that it was experiencing difficulties recruiting qualified guidance personnel. The absence of a qualified guidance counsellor results in a specialist gap in the core team for LCA. It is acknowledged that senior management is proactively addressing this issue. Once the position has been filled, plans should be put in place to ensure that a guidance counsellor becomes an integral part of the core team.
- School management demonstrates a strong commitment to the LCA programme and supports teachers' CPD; staff have availed of CPD to support the LCA programme.
- Work experience is well integrated into the programme and students partake in three two-week blocks of work experience in retail, trade and voluntary work. Good procedures and linkages with employers are in place to monitor work experience.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- Overall, programme planning, coordination and review is appropriate. Some aspects of good practice was noted but action is required to improve collaborative planning practices.
- The core LCA team meets at the end of each session currently. The absence of more regular core team meetings is limiting the potential to monitor and manage action planning for the on-going improvement of the LCA programme. It is recommended that the core team establish a regular meeting schedule to lead planning for and evaluation of teaching and learning in LCA.
- The full team of LCA teachers meets at the start of each year. It was reported that additional planning meetings with LCA teachers are not scheduled. This should be addressed as soon as is feasible in order for the team of teachers, in collaboration with the coordinator, to ensure high-quality planning to support teaching and learning and review of the programme.
- Good tracking and analysis of student attainment are undertaken by the coordinator. The core team in collaboration with the coordinator should use the outcomes of this analysis to agree and implement a set of targeted strategies that will further support student learning across the programme.
- Subjects planning for LCA is established and, of the plans reviewed, the overall quality was good; planning templates vary in style however. To facilitate high-quality learner experiences and outcomes for the combined class of fifth and sixth-year LCA students, a planning template that supports differentiated learning should be used by all subject teams to further develop module programme plans.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

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Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The board of management welcomes the recommendations following the Programme Evaluation of LCA in our school. Since the inspection an initial two-hour review of the programme was conducted with the principal, the co-ordinator and all relevant teachers in April 2018. Regular homework will now form part of the programme as will the development of subject planning templates that support differentiated learning styles. The core team has been formally established to meet twice per term and in order to further collaborative practice among the teaching staff, scheduled meetings will be established for all LCA teachers once per term. Formative assessment strategies have been discussed at the initial review meeting and will be adopted by all teachers in the 2018-19 school year. The co-ordinator has developed an overall LCA Plan for the two-year programme and a notice-board has been reserved in the staff room for LCA activities and plans. A dedicated space for the LCA samples of work has also been reserved in the school's redesigned entrance foyer.

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;