An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in LCA

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>St Dominic’s College</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Cabra Dublin 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>60731F</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 10-10-2019
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.

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.

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

School context
Saint Dominic’s College is a voluntary secondary school for girls under the patronage of Le Chéile Schools Trust. The current enrolment is 805 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, Transition Year (TY) as an optional programme, the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; aspects of practice in relation to differentiated teaching need development.
- The classrooms in which LCA lessons took place had very good quality LCA-specific material on display.
- Teacher-student rapport was affirming and supportive in all of the lessons observed.
- The overall quality of assessment practices was satisfactory; the range and standard of questioning strategies used varied significantly.
- The quality of whole-school support and programme provision is good; the time allocation provided to a few subject areas is not in line with the recommended guidelines.
- The quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review procedures for LCA is good.

Recommendations
- Teachers of LCA should plan for the further use of differentiated teaching methodologies to appropriately challenge and extend students’ capabilities.
- The use of higher-order questions should be extended to facilitate students’ deeper understanding of lesson content.
- Senior management should review the time allocation for subjects provided in LCA to ensure that it is in line with recommended guidelines.

Programme evaluation in LCA

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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>07-10-2019 &amp; 10-10-2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>• Meetings with key staff</td>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to senior management team and teachers</td>
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<td>• Student focus-group interview</td>
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DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good. There is scope to further challenge all learners through appropriately differentiated teaching and learning strategies.

- Student behaviour in the lessons observed was good. Teacher-student rapport was affirming and supportive in all of the lessons observed. Many of the classrooms in which LCA lessons took place had very good quality LCA-specific material on display.

- In all lessons observed learning intentions were shared with students. Highly effective learner experiences were noted in a small number of lessons where teachers referred to the learning intentions during lessons and sufficient time was taken to re-visit the intentions and consolidate learning.

- In a small number of lessons observed there was a very good balance between the time spent on student activity and teacher input. In the majority of lessons however, there was a need to reduce periods of teacher-led activity. In these instances, teachers should ensure learners have more opportunities to be active in their learning.

- A few instances of good differentiated teaching were observed. For instance, in some lessons when learners were working independently, teachers provided one-to-one support where needed. However, learning in the majority of the lessons was not differentiated; all students were provided with the same material and tasks regardless of ability. In these lessons there was a need to ensure that the learning tasks and material were differentiated to more accurately meet students’ individual needs. It is recommended that the teachers of LCA plan for the further use of differentiated teaching methodologies to appropriately challenge and extend students’ capabilities.

- The overall quality of assessment practices observed was satisfactory. The standard and range of questioning used by teachers varied significantly in lessons. In the main, questions tended to be lower-order, requiring very brief answers, with teachers then expanding on the answers themselves. Further use of higher-order questions, with increased wait time, is recommended to foster a deeper understanding of lesson content.

- A sample of student work was reviewed during the evaluation. In a small number of samples, teachers provided constructive feedback on student work which was both affirmative and provided direction to learners on how to improve their work. This very good practice should be extended, where appropriate.

- A review of student journals during the evaluation indicated that the assignment of homework is not consistent. The school is currently reviewing its homework policy. The core team should discuss and standardise expectations around homework for LCA students to inform the homework policy review.

- Overall, student attendance and punctuality in LCA is good. An attendance team effectively monitors and follows up on absenteeism. The team’s analysis of attendance data has noted that a few students will not get credits in some subjects due to absenteeism. Notwithstanding the good work completed by the attendance team, further work is required to ensure that students and parents recognise the impact of low attendance of students’ progression in LCA.
2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support and provision for LCA is good.
- The senior management team and LCA teachers are very committed to developing the programme. Opportunities for teachers to access continuing professional development are facilitated. Very good support is provided by the co-ordinator to teachers new to the programme.
- Very effective student-selection processes are established. The special educational needs co-ordinator, guidance department, senior management, year heads and the LCA programme co-ordinator all have key roles in providing students and parents with information on the programme. In reviewing the enrolment policy, it was noted that information about admission into LCA was not included; this should be addressed.
- Commendably, the co-ordinator surveys teachers and students about learners’ experiences of the programme. Findings from these surveys have been used in the past to make decisions about the LCA curriculum. This is good practice. Currently, students complete four elective modules in the same subject during the two years of the programme. The possibility of extending the range of electives and vocational specialisms offered should be kept under review.
- The timetabling of the various modules need review. A significant amount of time is allocated to one vocational specialism, and as a result the time allocated for some other modules is below the recommended guidelines. It is recommended that senior management reviews the time allocation for subjects provided in LCA to ensure that that time allocation for all subject modules is in line with recommended guidelines.
- Very good links have been established between the school and local businesses. In fifth and sixth year, LCA students complete work placements one-day per week for each of the two years. Very good procedures are in place to monitor and track student work placements.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The quality of LCA programme planning, co-ordination and review is good.
- The quality of planning for individual LCA modules is good. In the best examples reviewed, teachers linked appropriate assessment strategies to the desired learning to be achieved. This good practice should be extended to all module plans.
- The co-ordinator has established very good systems to track students’ attainment. Currently students do not formally track their own progress. During the evaluation students indicated that being involved in setting their own targets for improvement would be worthwhile. This should be considered.
- The school has a core LCA team. Currently a guidance counsellor or a SEN co-ordinator are not members of this team. It is suggested that, where feasible, a member from both the guidance and SEN departments attend core team meetings.
- The core LCA team meets formally twice a year and informally throughout the year to plan and monitor the implementation of LCA. The core team has identified areas for improvement. The development of an action plan to address the priorities identified, is advised.
The co-ordinator meets the LCA teaching team formally twice a year and informally throughout the year. Effective systems have been developed to facilitate the sharing of information among team members. However, a more regular meeting schedule between the full team of teachers and co-ordinator should be established, where feasible.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals and programme co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

- The Board congratulates the LCA Coordinator and teaching team with regard to its good quality of programme planning, coordination and review procedures.
- The Board acknowledges the report of good practices of whole school support and programme provision.
- The Board acknowledges and congratulates the school community on the overall good quality of teaching and learning that was observed.
- The Board congratulates the school community as a whole on the very good teacher-student rapport which is both affirming and supportive.
- The Board affirms the very good practice of nurturing strong links with the local business community in order to support the learning of LCA students through work placements.
- The Board acknowledges the provision of very good quality LCA-specific material on display in many of the classrooms where LCA lessons take place.

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

- A focussed concentration on using higher order questions to deepen the students’ understanding of lesson content and increased use of differentiation for effective questioning has already been addressed and discussed by the whole school teaching team and this will be of great consideration in lessons moving forward.
- The target for SSE for 2019-2020 is feedback and for teachers to provide written and oral formative feedback in order to increase the instances of highly effective learner experiences.
- The SIP plan for 2020-2021 will focus on extending differentiation teaching methodologies and further CPD will be provided in this area in order to increase student active learning and less teacher led activity to increase the instances of good differentiated teaching that was observed.
- The balance of time allocation for LCA modules will be reviewed in line with our school ethos.
- Expectations around homework for LCA students will be incorporated into the Homework Policy currently being reviewed.
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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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 <em>outstanding</em> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Good</em> 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 <em>very good</em> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><em>Fair</em> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td><em>Weak</em> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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