

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

Programme Evaluation in LCVF

REPORT

School name	St Mary's Academy CBS
School address	Station Rd Carlow Co. Carlow
Roll number	61120E

Date of Evaluation: 27-01-2017



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 LCVP 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; a response was not received from the board.

LCVP

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	26 and 27-01-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Examination of students' work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three lesson periods• Interaction with students• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mary's Academy CBS is a boys' voluntary secondary school which operates under the trusteeship of Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 578 students. The LCVP was introduced onto the school's curriculum in 1998.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

- The quality of student learning ranged from satisfactory to good.
- A variety of appropriate teaching methodologies was used to support student learning; the planning for and quality of their delivery varied from fair to good.
- The range of experiential student learning activities was limited.
- The overall quality of assessment practices was adequate with scope for further improvement.
- Overall LCVP is well supported by senior management.
- The planning, organisational and review practices for the LCVP are less than satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- When planning lessons, teachers should ensure that student learning activities have a clear focus, are clearly linked to syllabus specific learning outcomes and that learning is incremental and progressive.
- Teachers should assign more regular homework and provide additional summative assessments and formative feedback for students.
- The timing of work experience should be reviewed by management and the LCVP core team should facilitate additional explicit activities to broaden students' experience of enterprise.
- Time allocated for the co-ordination of the programme should be used more strategically to support and develop the programme's implementation, planning and review processes.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of student learning as observed ranged from satisfactory to good. While a variety of appropriate teaching methodologies was used to support student learning, the quality of their delivery varied from fair to good.
- At the outset of all lessons, an outline of lesson content was shared with students. It is recommended that teachers set learning intentions in the form of what they want students to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson. In addition, the relative specific learning outcomes of the unit being taught should be linked to the lesson intention.
- Planning for student learning and lesson structure in the majority of lessons required development. In some lessons, the content should be reviewed to ensure that it correlates with the intended learning activity of the lesson. In other lessons, student learning activities should be organised in a manner that ensures learning is incremental and progressive.
- Student participation and sharing of knowledge were enhanced in lessons where teachers used a good range of differentiated questions.
- Students worked in pairs in all lessons. In one lesson, the good student dialogue in the group task enhanced learning. In other lessons, a plenary session between tasks could have provided intermediate feedback and guidance to students on the quality of their output.
- The use of information and communication technology as a teaching tool was good in all lessons as students conducted an internet research and used a computer application that enabled them to view each other's input in a co-operative learning task.
- Generally, each year group participates in one out-of-school visit and has inputs from guest speakers. However, the main focus of these visits is career orientated. It is recommended that additional school-based explicit enterprise activities are facilitated as a means of providing more varied opportunities for experiential learning and teamwork activities.
- A range of students' coursework was reviewed during the evaluation. In many instances, text size, layout and content of draft portfolio items were not consistent with what is recommended in 'LCVP Assessment Guidelines'. Teachers should encourage students to use the support material they are provided with, so that they can reflect and self-evaluate their work.
- A review of a sample of students' work and journals revealed that a limited amount of homework is assigned to students. It is advisable that homework is assigned on a regular basis. Relevant examination-style questions could be assigned at the end of activities and units of learning so that students can further improve their competence in answering relevant theory questions.
- The overall quality of assessment practices is adequate with scope for further improvement. Good practice was observed where students' work was returned with some formative comments. To further support student learning, clearer direction and feedback should be given by teachers at an individual and group level.
- The use of electronic mail by students to submit portfolio items to teachers is good practice. Students are continually assessed on their portfolio work. Summative assessment only occurs in sixth year when students complete their pre-examinations. Formal summative assessments should be extended to ensure a balance between portfolio completion and practice for theory elements of the certificate examination.

- Student attainment levels are generally satisfactory. However, the reasons why there are high levels of unsuccessful grades in alternating years in certificate examinations should be investigated by the core team and senior management.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall LCVP is well supported by senior management.
- Access to LCVP is open to all students who fulfil the necessary vocational subject groupings requirements. Uptake of the programme was consistently good, however, in recent years the rate of participation had declined. It is praiseworthy that a successful effort by senior management and link module teachers to increase participation has led to increased numbers in this year's fifth year class groups.
- Teachers assigned to teach link modules have expertise in the areas of business. The programme is well supported by the guidance teacher in terms of student preparation for their career investigation and production of the curriculum vitae.
- Timetable provision of hour long lessons supports the use of active learning methodologies. However, the provision of just one lesson period for each class group is below the recommended timetable provision. It is advisable that overall time provision be increased.
- In line with the requirements of the programme, an ab-initio French module is provided for LCVP students who are not already studying a modern European language. This is good practice.
- Teachers are facilitated by senior management to access continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. Link module teachers have partaken in whole-school CPD for active learning and have in the past availed of some LCVP-specific CPD. In the context of the dynamic nature of the programme, teachers should, where possible, partake in regular LCVP-specific CPD and consider active membership of their professional association of link module teachers.
- Some students partake in work experience at various times in fifth year, while other students, who have previously participated in the Transition Year work experience programme, are not required by the school to attain additional work experience. This arrangement is unsatisfactory as it does not satisfy the implementation guidelines for the LCVP programme.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Subject department planning for LCVP is less than satisfactory and requires further development. The LCVP co-ordinator is afforded one hour each week to carry out their duties; this time should be used more strategically to support and develop the programme's implementation, planning and review processes.
- Although planning documentation contained information pertaining to many aspects of the programme, it should provide more detailed information on the programme's provision and organisation in the school. In addition the LCVP core team should collaboratively plan for the delivery of varied and high-quality experiential student learning opportunities.
- While an analysis of yearly attainment in certificate examinations is conducted by the LCVP core team, it is recommended that the review procedures of the programme be strengthened. The LCVP team and senior management in conducting an annual review, should include the views of LCVP students, their teachers, parents and employers.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and relevant key staff at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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	Good 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	Satisfactory 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	Fair 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	Weak 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;