Programme Evaluation in LCVP

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>Kilkenny College</th>
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<tr>
<td>School address</td>
<td>Castlecomer Road</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
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<td>Roll number</td>
<td>61570M</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 16-02-2017
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.
LCVP

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>16-02-2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during one double class period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>Interaction with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</td>
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<td>Examination of students’ work</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Kilkenny College is a co-educational secondary school that caters for boarders and day students from a wide hinterland. The school has a current school enrolment of 846 students. The LCVP is a component of the school’s curriculum since 1998.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

- A very high quality of teaching was observed in the link module lesson.
- The very good atmosphere, high expectations and affirmation of students’ work created a successful learning environment.
- Senior management’s commitment to the successful implementation of the LCVP is reflected in the good provision of resources; however, uptake of the LCVP is low.
- While students are afforded opportunities to develop key skills through experiential and cooperative learning activities, there is potential to expand the range of programme activities.
- The core team’s planning practices and the co-ordination of LCVP are good, though curriculum planning is not yet fully developed.
- The LCVP team is committed to the successful implementation of the programme, though appropriate evaluation and review procedures are not currently in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Senior management should explore the possibility of open access to LCVP for all students who satisfy the programme requirements.
- The range and variety of team-based activities should be extended to provide additional opportunities for experiential learning and choice in the preparation of portfolio items.
- The content of the curriculum plan for each link module should be further developed.
- The programme should be reviewed and evaluated annually.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The very high quality of teaching in the link module lesson provided students with valuable learning experiences. The very good atmosphere, high expectations and affirmation of students’ efforts created a successful learning environment.
- Students worked very effectively in a well-organised team activity. During the task, there was a high level of dialogue; the concluding plenary session facilitated the development of students’ oral literacy and presentation skills.
- Lesson planning was very good. Learning intentions were shared with students and reviewed as the lesson concluded. Students were engaged throughout the lesson.
- It is praiseworthy that students compile a résumé of their learning and skill development from programme activities which serves as an aide memoire for the completion of portfolio items.
- Highly effective questioning strategies were used to assess student knowledge and prompt relevant student-teacher discussions.
- Students partake in three five-day blocks of work experience during term time. Work experience is well managed with very good preparation and employer follow-up procedures on completion of work placements.
- The students interviewed were very positive about their experiences of LCVP. Students valued the programme in terms of practical learning experiences, opportunities to further enhance research and communication skills, assistance in choosing a career and the possibility of acquiring additional points for college entry.
- A substantial portion of the portfolio is completed under the direct supervision of teachers. Students are responsible for improving the quality of their portfolio items in line with the good guidance and formative feedback received from teachers.
- Students are continually assessed on their portfolio work. Each class group sits formal summative assessments at key points in the academic year. This good practice aids student competency in answering written examination-type questions. There are well established procedures for reporting on students’ progress to parents.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and outcomes are good in certificate examinations. It is advisable that an analysis of yearly attainment in certificate examinations be used as part of the evaluation of the programme.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Senior management’s commitment to the successful implementation of the LCVP is reflected in the good provision of resources. These include appropriate student access to computers, the deployment of teachers with specialisms in business, engineering, language, guidance, information technology and special educational needs. In the context of the dynamic nature of LCVP, teachers should, where possible, partake in continuing professional development in order to remain upskilled.
- In the past, all students had open access to the LCVP programme. Currently, access to the programme is open to students who are exempt from Irish or do not choose a modern European language and fulfil the necessary vocational subject grouping requirements. While
this good practice maximises student learning time and provides additional options for certification, the current uptake of the programme is low. It is advisable to consider opening up access to all students who satisfy the programme requirements.

- The provision of a school bi-annual careers evening with inputs from a very wide range of professions, industry, agriculture and third level colleges is beneficial to LCVP students in terms of careers advice and information.

- There is potential to strengthen whole-staff awareness of LCVP. An opportunity could be provided for the LCVP co-ordinator to brief staff on the aims and objectives of the LCVP and to explore potential cross-curricular links and sharing of activities within senior cycle.

- It is praiseworthy that the career guidance department provides direct support for LCVP students and guidance teachers are timetabled for relevant elements of link modules.

- Students have very good LCVP timetable provision. In line with the requirements of the programme, a weekly ab initio French lesson is provided for LCVP students who do not choose a modern European language. The ab initio language module focuses on French cultural studies and provides opportunities for students to further develop their research, project work and presentation skills. However, the language component of the module needs to be more explicit.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- The LCVP co-ordinator successfully organises administrative aspects of the programme. A small portion of the school’s overall co-ordinator hours should be allocated to LCVP planning activities.

- There is a good level of collaboration within the LCVP teaching team. The team meets formally at the outset of the academic year and informally throughout the year to oversee activities.

- The LCVP plan is good. It is advisable to document how the school’s literacy and numeracy targets are deployed in link module lessons and to include a database of local community, enterprise and employers’ contacts.

- The curriculum plan for each link module should be further developed by linking each activity to its specific learning outcomes, resources, and range of teaching and assessment methodologies.

- All LCVP students participate in an out-of-school visit and arrange one guest speaker for a classroom visit. To add further breadth to the programme, the range and variety of team-based activities such as a school-based enterprise, should be expanded in order to create additional opportunities for experiential learning and choice in the preparation of portfolio items.

- Currently there is no formal review of the programme. The programme should be reviewed and evaluated annually and the views of students, teachers, parents and employers should be part of the process.

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 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.
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.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</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.</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>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.</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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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</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>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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