An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in Leaving Certificate Applied

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Munchin’s College</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Corbally Limerick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>64240G</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 21-01-2020
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 of the school 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

Dates of inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>20 &amp; 21 January 2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meetings with key staff</td>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to deputy principal and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Student focus-group interview</td>
<td>programme coordinator</td>
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School context

Saint Munchin’s College is an all-boys voluntary post-primary school in Limerick City, operating under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick. It offers the Junior Cycle, Transition Year (TY) as an optional programme, the Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the LCA programme. Enrolment stood at 657 at the time of the evaluation. The total number of students participating in the LCA programme was twenty-one: ten in Year One of the programme and eleven in Year Two.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall with very good practices observed in some lessons.
- Teacher-student rapport was affirming and supportive and the behaviour of students was very good throughout the evaluation.
- The quality of assessment was good overall, though there was scope to improve some of the assessment practices observed.
- Whole-school provision for LCA is good and school management supports the development of the programme effectively; greater choice in relation to modules and electives offered to students would be beneficial.
- There is a core team of teachers for LCA and school management regularly facilitates teachers in engaging with appropriate continuing professional development (CPD).
- The quality of planning was good and the LCA programme is well co-ordinated, though schemes of work should provide more detail in relation to teaching methodologies.

Recommendations

- Teachers should use the learning intentions to check on learning during the lesson using distributed questioning and other assessment for learning (AfL) practices and all teachers should provide written formative feedback to students.
- The school should look to provide students of LCA with module and elective choices in areas where teaching resources are available.
- Schemes of work for the subject modules should ensure that specific teaching methodologies are linked to the learning outcomes and sufficient detail should be provided so that the schemes can be used as working documents.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was good overall, ranging from good to very good. Lessons were well planned and resources, including digital technology, were chosen to make very good links to students’ own experiences and interests. Learning intentions were shared and made very clear to students at the start of lessons. The learning intentions should be referred to more frequently during lessons and time should be provided to check the intended learning.

- A good range of effective teaching methodologies was used throughout the lessons observed. These included group work, individual tasks, clear teacher instruction, student presentations, and student use of digital technology. All lessons had a good balance between the time spent on student activity and teacher input. The practice of students being provided with a focus prior to watching video clips is highly commendable. To further enhance outcomes from group tasks or student presentations, teachers should ensure that all students are provided with a structured task during feedback so as to maximise their learning and to ensure that there are not unnecessary moments of student passivity.

- The attention given to improving students’ literacy and numeracy skills was a strong component of the lessons observed, though in some cases literacy strategies could have been more effective. Numeracy in relation to measurement, accuracy and an emphasis on units was a regular occurrence. There are good cross-curricular links and teachers’ understanding of the content of other modules is commendable.

- The quality of learning was good overall. Student-teacher rapport was positive and the behaviour of the students throughout the evaluation was very respectful. Lessons were differentiated suitably and most students were challenged appropriately to progress in their learning. However, a number of practices, especially in terms of student management skills and the need for more challenging tasks in some cases, indicated a need for teachers to be mindful of setting higher expectations for the students at times.

- The quality of assessment was good. Questioning was the main form of assessment and it was generally of a good standard. At times, there was an over-reliance on global questioning with only a small number of students responding. Teachers should distribute questions more widely across the student cohort; this would help to improve students’ confidence and oracy skills. There is scope to use AFL strategies more consistently to assess learning. Oral feedback was a feature of all lessons.

- A sample of student work was reviewed during the evaluation. In a small number of cases, teachers provided very constructive written 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, and used in all lessons where appropriate.

- The attendance of LCA students is monitored. Overall attendance is good, with the majority of the students having very good attendance records. Noticeboards, in prominent areas of the school, highlight the various activities for LCA. Students reported that they really enjoyed the programme and were very satisfied with the work experience aspect of LCA.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of programme provision and whole-school support for the LCA programme is good. The senior management team and LCA teachers are very committed to developing the programme. The programme is well established within the school and LCA students are well catered for and included in the school community.
A core team for LCA has been established and this team meets at least once per term. Many of the teachers have been involved with LCA for a considerable number of years and some have experience of being involved in LCA examinations for the State Examinations Commission. Senior management regularly facilitates teachers in engaging with appropriate CPD on a regular basis.

The selection process for entry into the programme is well structured. The special educational needs co-ordinator, guidance department, chaplain, the LCA programme co-ordinator and senior management all have key roles in providing students and parents with information about the programme. Students of LCA are interviewed in the year prior to starting Year One of the programme and sign a contract of conduct. As a next step, students’ opinions in relation to choice of specialisms should be explored in order to foster a greater sense of ownership of the programme for the students. The enrolment criteria for LCA should be included on the school’s admissions policy and website.

Currently, students study Agriculture/Horticulture and Graphics and Construction Studies, as the two specialisms. It is advised that, where possible, senior management should provide a choice in the specialisms prior to starting the programme. Students should also be provided with options in relation to the electives at the start of Year One and Year Two of the programme.

The students undertake the four modules of work experience on Fridays. The school has good links with the wider community for work placements and the LCA programme co-ordinator monitors student engagement with the employers appropriately. The amount of time given to work experience is more than what is required. In order to minimise erosion of tuition time, the school should ensure that other activities such as induction, educational trips and extra-curricular and co-curricular events take place on some Fridays throughout the year.

The scheduling of the various modules is good. However, Agriculture/Horticulture and Social Education exceed recommended timetabling guidelines and, as a result, Irish, modern language options and some of the science electives fall below recommended guidelines. This should be addressed in future planning for the programme.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

The programme is well co-ordinated. A good plan has been created and administration tasks and filing of credits and assignments are undertaken to a high standard. An action plan of commendable quality was developed recently with areas for improvement indicated therein.

There is a need for greater consistency in the details provided in the schemes of work of the various modules. Where not the case already, the schemes of work should link the learning outcomes of the modules with detailed and specific teaching methodologies and teachers should reflect on these working documents and review areas for improvement year-on-year.

A formal programme evaluation, seeking the views of parents, students and teachers, should take place annually.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

The Board of Management of St. Munchin’s College welcomes the Programme Evaluation Report for our Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. The visit has given us the impetus, support and advice to continue moving forward in all areas of Teaching and Learning and Programme Provision, Planning, Assessment, Co-ordination and Evaluation.

The report notes the many good practices in the school, particularly:

- The good quality of teaching, with a good range of effective teaching methodologies, good focus on Literacy and Numeracy skills and good cross-curricular links.
- The quality of learning was good overall with lessons differentiated suitably, well balanced and students challenged appropriately to progress their learning.
- Teacher-student rapport was positive, supportive and affirming and student behaviour was very good throughout.
- The quality of assessment was good overall, as was sample of students’ work reviewed.
- Student attendance is well monitored and very good for the majority.
- The quality of programme provision and whole-school support for the LCA programme is good, supported by a committed Senior Management Team (SMT) and LCA core team and teachers. CPD for teachers is regularly facilitated.
- Inclusion is a key principle for school management and staff for all LCA students.
- The selection process for entry into the programme is well structured, with a broad and good range of subjects, specialisms and work experience on offer.
- The LCA programme is well co-ordinated and administered and has an Action Plan of commendable quality.

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 acknowledges the recommendations made in the report and is committed to acting on them and to the ongoing development and improvement of the LCA programme in St. Munchin’s College. It intends to use the recommendations to further serve the needs of our students in accordance with our Mission statement.

- Distributed Questioning based on learning intentions and other additional Assessment for Learning (AFL) practices, will further enhance student learning, confidence and oracy skills.
- Teachers will be more mindful of setting higher expectations and more challenging tasks for their students at times and will continue the good practice of giving written formative feedback to their students.
- The school will continue to look to provide students of LCA with varied and increased Module and Elective choices and an opportunity to review this at the start of each year. This will give students a greater sense of ownership of the programme.
- Tuition time will be maximised by placing selected trips, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities on Friday work experience days.
- Management will continue to review timetabling of all modules and electives to meet department guidelines as part of programme planning.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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, with very significant strengths; exemplary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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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<tr>
<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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