Programme Evaluation in LCA

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Mount Seskin Community College</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Jobstown Tallaght Dublin 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>70141N</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 03-10-2019
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 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

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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>01-10-2019 and 03-10-2019</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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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School context

Mount Seskin Community College is a co-educational college operating under the patronage of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 326 students and provides the full range of curricular programmes. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

• The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was satisfactory; differentiated teaching approaches were underdeveloped in most lessons.

• Student behaviour during the evaluation was good; teacher-student rapport was mutually respectful in all lessons.

• The overall quality of in-class assessment was satisfactory; there was opportunity to further embed the use of higher-order questions in all lessons.

• The overall quality of whole-school support and provision for the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is satisfactory; there is a need to review the breadth of the curriculum.

• The school has established effective procedures to track student attendance, punctuality and attainment in the LCA programme.

• Overall, the quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review is satisfactory; programme planning templates do not sufficiently integrate differentiated teaching and learning approaches relevant to LCA.

Recommendations

• Teachers of LCA should plan for the further use of differentiated teaching approaches to meet the varying learning needs of all students.

• The use of higher-order questions should be extended to facilitate students’ deeper understanding of lesson content.

• The range of subjects in LCA should be reviewed to ensure that vocational specialisms and electives are sufficiently aligned to meet students’ interests, needs and progression routes.

• The template that supports planning for teaching and learning of each LCA module should be further developed to include planning for differentiated methodologies, outcomes, and assessment.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was satisfactory, with a few instances of good practice noted.
- Student behaviour during the evaluation was good. Teacher-student rapport was mutually respectful in all of the lessons observed.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. Highly-effective learner experiences were noted in a few lessons where the learning intentions shared were expressed in terms of what a student should be able to do, and when time was taken to revisit the intentions to consolidate learning.
- In the majority of lessons observed, teaching and learning approaches were not sufficiently differentiated; all students were provided with the same material and tasks regardless of ability and some were not sufficiently challenging. There was a need in many instances to ensure that the learning tasks were differentiated to more accurately meet students’ individual needs. It is recommended that teachers develop strategies in the area of differentiation to meet the varying learning needs of students in all lessons.
- In many instances students were given opportunities to work in small groups or in pairs and, in the main, students were able to do so. In some instances students’ learning from group work was less than optimal; students were unclear of their individual and collective roles. Teachers of LCA should look at how students work in groups and develop practices to support highly-effective peer collaboration.
- The overall quality of in-class assessment in the lessons observed was satisfactory; the range and effectiveness of formative assessment strategies used varied significantly.
- In most lessons questioning was the dominant assessment strategy used. In the main, questions tended to be lower-order, requiring brief answers, with teachers then expanding on the answer themselves. Further use of higher-order questions, with increased wait time, is recommended to foster a deeper understanding of lesson content.
- A few very good examples of written constructive feedback were noted in the sample of student work reviewed. There is scope to extend the use of formative feedback on student work, with a focus on showing how and where improvement can take place. The coordinator in collaboration with the team of LCA teachers should discuss and extend assessment strategies for implementation in LCA.
- An emphasis was placed on supporting students’ literacy in a small number of lessons. Practice proved particularly successful when conscious efforts were made to ensure that students used relevant key terminology in classroom discussions. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Good procedures are established to track student attendance and punctuality. It was noted that while all key assignments are completed, a small number of students may not get credits due to their attendance in some subjects. The attendance rates should continue to be reviewed and analysed to inform programme planning and timetabling.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, the quality whole-school support and provision was satisfactory, with some good practice identified. Staff members are appropriately deployed in accordance with their experience and expertise, and opportunities to access LCA specific continuing professional development are facilitated by management.
• Timetabling arrangements for LCA are appropriate. However, there is scope to enhance the breadth of the curriculum provided. While it is good practice that students are afforded an opportunity to choose vocational specialisms, currently only one subject is offered as an elective. Evidence gathered during the evaluation indicated that students would like an extended range of choices, where feasible. The possibility of extending the range of electives and vocational specialisms offered should be reviewed, and students’ interests, needs and progression routes should be used to inform this review.

• Uptake of LCA is good however, student retention in the programme has fluctuated over recent years and is identified as a target in the DEIS plan. The effectiveness of strategies to support full engagement and retention in the LCA programme should be kept under review by the core team. The school is investigating the introduction of an induction programme to support student transitions in senior cycle. This would be a worthwhile support for students.

• The school is committed to introducing co-teaching. Timetables indicated that there are many co-taught lessons in LCA. It is positive that the school has provided CPD for all staff in this area. The embedding of highly effective co-teaching will be a valuable addition in meeting and supporting students learning needs.

• Good links have been established between the school and local businesses. The school provides effective supports to engage students in work experience. Students’ work placements are monitored and tracked effectively.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

• Overall, the quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review are satisfactory.

• A newly appointed co-ordinator has developed the selection and application procedures for LCA and these changes are positive. Effective systems are in place to track students’ attainment. The co-ordinator has oversight in tracking the completion of key assignments and in the allocation of credits.

• Commendably, the teachers of LCA and core team meet regularly. Minutes of meetings reviewed indicate that aspects of the programme such as summative assessment and analysis of results are discussed. This forum should also be used to develop collaborative planning for teaching and learning in LCA.

• The quality of planning for individual LCA modules ranged from fair to good. A course planning template which was designed by the co-ordinator is used by all subjects. This template records the module, topic, the in-and-out- of school activities and resources being used in the various modules. The planning template requires further development. It is recommended that the template includes planning for differentiated outcomes, methodologies and assessment.

• An appropriately school-designed template to support mainstream teachers in the planning for students with special educational needs was included in the majority of subject plans reviewed. The template however, is not used consistently. LCA teachers should make greater use of this template as an additional support in planning for differentiation.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and programme co-ordinator 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 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>Very Good</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 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>
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<td>Good</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 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><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>Fair</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>Weak</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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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Mount Seskin Community College welcomes the affirmation that the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme Evaluation offered and we look forward to engaging with the recommendations therein.

The Board was happy to read that the school was fully compliant at the end of the evaluation regarding the Child Safeguarding checks.

We are delighted that our students were comfortable and confident enough to present themselves well during the inspection, comments like ‘good behaviour’ and ‘mutually respected’ indicate this. This also shows that the work done with parents, the LCA Co-ordinator, the year-heads, tutors, teachers, other support staff and students is evident.

While we were happy with the level of engagement with key staff, we feel that deeper insights would have been gained if class tutors and Year Heads were also consulted.

We are of the view that differentiation can be implemented in many ways, the more discreet and inclusive the methods used the better for students. We felt that the report did not fully acknowledge the level of differentiation currently used in our classes.

A visit to some practical LCA would have been beneficial in showcasing some other active learning models of teaching and learning. These are areas of specialism that our students excel in.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The school is totally committed to school improvement through SSE/DEIS processes and will work towards improving programmes. Presently, we are only offering RE as an elective. The school will explore other elective options keeping within our obligations of having to provide formal RE classes within the timetable.

We also plan to continue to survey the students and parents to look at the specialisms to see how we can more fully meet student needs within the context of our overall allocation and teacher expertise.

Collaboratively, and with the support of CPD, we will continue to explore and develop ways that group work is delivered in the class context so that we can move from effective to highly effective practice.

Currently we are working to ensure that differentiation and learning approaches are implemented into all subject planning templates.

While student retention has fluctuated in the past, effective strategies have been put in place as indicated by our excellent retention figures for 2018 and 2019. We will continue to proactively review these strategies to maintain the current high level of retention going forward.
As we are currently developing an Assessment Policy for our school, it is expected that a consistent and collaborative approach to formative assessment will be developed over time. The Assessment Policy once fully implemented will also ensure the more effective use of lower and higher order questioning. The Policy will also assist staff in extending the use of formative feedback on student work with increased emphasis on where improvement can be made.

We have already implemented actions to ensure that there is a consistent approach from ALL LCA teachers in the implementation of the SEN template.

We are currently drawing up a new 3 Year DEIS Plan with strong emphasis on our LCA students. The LCA co-ordinator, LCA teachers and relevant staff will set literacy and numeracy targets in conjunction with other DEIS target areas to bring about best outcomes for our students.

Measures have recently been made to upskill teachers on differentiation in the classroom. Further CPD will be provided to help teachers meet the varying learning needs of students.

Actions on these recommendations will be immediate and we will formally review the LCA programme at the end of the 2019/20 academic year.