REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Coláiste An Átha</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Kilmuckridge Gorey Co Wexford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>71650Q</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 12-04-2019
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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>11 and 12 April 2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observations of teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal and LCA coordinator</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with LCA core team</td>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to senior management team and LCA co-ordinator</td>
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<td>• Student focus-group interview</td>
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School context

Coláiste an Átha is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board with a current enrolment of 314 students. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for inclusion. It provides Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and a Transition Year programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

• The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good in all of the lessons observed.
• The quality of learner experiences was very high; relationships and interactions in classrooms were very positive and respectful at all times, and conducive to well-being.
• Teachers were very aware of students’ individual learning needs, and, in consultation with the special education teachers, designed and implemented learning activities and personalised interventions to help students experience success as learners.
• Literacy and numeracy skills were integrated very effectively into the fabric of lessons.
• Programme provision and whole school support is highly effective, a high value is placed on the LCA programme, and effective whole school initiatives have been established to raise awareness of the programme.
• Programme planning and co-ordination is highly effective with many commendable elements.

Recommendations

□ Teachers should extend the highly effective attention to literacy observed in lessons, by cocreating individual literacy targets with students, to be used as success criteria in key assignments and key tasks across modules.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

• The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good in all of the lessons observed.
• Students achieved, and at times surpassed, the intended learning of the lessons. Their enjoyment in learning was evident throughout the inspection and arose from having a sense of making progress and of achievement. They were productively engaged throughout and this engagement with learning contributed to their sense of well-being.
• The quality of learner experiences was very high. Teachers knew their students well. Interactions among students and between students and teachers were very positive and respectful at all times, and conducive to well-being. Relationships and interactions in classrooms created and sustained a co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment.
• Students were able to discuss their learning confidently in lessons and with the inspector. They felt comfortable asking questions and were respectful of and interested in the opinions and experiences of their classmates.
• In some lessons, students negotiated their learning and contributed to success criteria for tasks, thereby increasing their autonomy and effectiveness as learners. This good practice should be extended.
• Learners were regularly encouraged to make connections between learning in different modules and areas of the curriculum.
• All teachers observed demonstrated high competence and proficiency in the pedagogical skills required for LCA, and for developing students’ learning across and beyond the curriculum. They selected and used highly effective teaching approaches to match the learning intentions of the lesson and meet the learning needs of students. This included designing and preparing in advance resources for learning activities.
• Teachers’ enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning helped create a learning environment where students were motivated to engage in and enjoy their learning.
• Teachers’ assessment practices included assessment of knowledge and skills. Effective formative assessment strategies were observed in all lessons.
• Teachers used a range of highly effective questioning techniques for a variety of purposes including stimulating student responses, facilitating deeper engagement with lesson content and extending learning beyond the lesson.
• Appropriate key assignments were developed for students in line with module guidelines. Teachers regularly provided students with constructive and developmental feedback. Key tasks incorporated co-curricular and extra-curricular learning. Students were encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, through self and peer assessment, and this contributed to their sense of progress.
• Teachers’ attendance and assessment records were clear and well maintained.
• Literacy and numeracy skills were integrated very effectively into the fabric of lessons. Teachers introduced key words in context and returned to them regularly to reinforce
learning. It is recommended that teachers extend the highly effective attention to literacy observed in lessons, by co-creating individual literacy targets with students, to be used as success criteria in key assignments and key tasks across modules. These targets should be regularly reviewed as they become embedded.

- Teachers were very aware of students’ individual learning needs and, in consultation with the special education teachers, designed and implemented learning activities and personalised interventions to help students experience success as learners.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Programme provision and whole school support is highly effective.

- Curricular provision and timetabling are in line with guidelines. Student access to the LCA programme is under regular review, with initiatives in place to increase uptake among eligible students.

- Whole-school initiatives to raise awareness of the programme are in place, such as introducing a student-designed uniform top with the LCA logo and displaying photographs of students achieving their Credit certificates on school noticeboards and school media. It is suggested that this could be progressed by having an LCA awards ceremony in front of the whole school.

- The LCA student voice is very prominent. Each LCA year group has a representative on the student council. Student feedback is regularly used to implement curricular reform, for example regarding specialism modules. LCA students interviewed were very proud of their course and their achievements and felt highly valued in the school.

- Management of the organisation is highly effective. A secure and orderly learning environment is maintained and great care is taken in deploying teachers to the LCA programme. All teachers interviewed were very committed to the programme.

- A high value is placed on the LCA programme and many co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences are in place to ensure a high-quality learning experience for students.

- The principal empowers teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, through the effective use of distributed leadership models in the LCA programme.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- Programme planning, co-ordination and review procedures for LCA are highly effective.

- Highly effective procedures are in place for identifying potential LCA students at wholeschool level. Teachers co-created a list of identification criteria for potential LCA students. Subject teachers use this list to identify students who might benefit from the LCA programme and refer them to the core LCA team.

- The LCA core team meets regularly to review and evaluate the programme using the six-step process and principles of school self-evaluation. Programme evaluations by parents, students and teachers are used to adapt and improve the programme as necessary. A regular review of specialisms ensures that modules meet the needs and interests of students.
• Teachers use formal meetings and planning time to reflect together on their work. In addition, teachers meet with the LCA co-ordinator at regular intervals to discuss teaching, learning and assessment practices.

• Teachers new to LCA are regularly brought into the programme to ensure continuity of expertise in the school and they are very well supported.

• The co-ordination, filing and storage of key assignments and key tasks is exemplary. Module teachers are accountable for certifying attendance and assignments in their modules and take this role very seriously.

• Collaborative practice is highly effective. Teachers regularly share teaching strategies and effective curricular plans are in place. Some of these plans are exemplary, integrating individual learning outcomes with teaching strategies, learning activities, resources and assessments specific to those outcomes. This good practice should be extended.

• The nature of LCA work experience is currently under review following feedback from students and the local community. Currently, work experience on a Friday is being trialled. It is suggested that if the school continue with a weekly placement, the day be changed to Wednesday so as to provide LCA students with four full school days each week. Coordination and monitoring of work experience placements is highly effective.

• Highly effective links and communication practices are in place with the local community. Communication with parents is highly effective also: parents are regularly informed of their child’s progress and notified promptly if there is a risk of failure due to non-attendance.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the LCA 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><strong>Very Good</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Good</strong></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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<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></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><strong>Fair</strong></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><strong>Weak</strong></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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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 Coláiste an Átha and the Waterford & Wexford Education & Training Board welcomes the very positive affirmation of all aspects of the leaving Certificate Applied Programme offered by the school. The board acknowledges the recognition in the report of the exemplary learning environment and that the quality of learner experience was very high & conducive to wellbeing. The board is delighted that it has been recognised that a high value is placed on the LCA programme in the school.

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 LCA co-ordinator, LCA teachers and SET teacher assigned to the LCA programme will meet in September to discuss & agree literacy targets, as identified, for individual students.

The work experience element of the programme is being amended and LCA2 students will complete their work experience on each Wednesday so as to provide them with four full school days each week from September 2019.

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