Programme Evaluation in Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>St Oliver’s Community College</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Rathmullen Road Drogheda Co. Louth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>71761C</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 06-03-2019
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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>05-03-2019 &amp; 06-03-2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal and deputy principals</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meetings with key staff</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Student focus-group interview</td>
<td>• Feedback to senior management team, and programme co-ordinators</td>
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School context
St Oliver’s Community College is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 1319 students. The school, which operates under the auspices of Louth and Meath Education and Training Board, participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan for educational inclusion. The school provides the full range of curriculum programmes.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings
• The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some exemplary practice noted: formative assessment practice could be further developed.
• The use of student laptops in lessons was not always as effective as it could be in supporting highly-effective learner outcomes and experiences.
• Programme provision and support for LCA is very good, with an exemplary range of learning experiences provided; student engagement with work placement is not optimal.
• A very high level of care and individualised support is provided to students.
• Very good links are established with local businesses and further-education providers to support successful progression routes.
• Programme planning, co-ordination and review is good; evidenced-based action planning requires development.

Recommendations
• The LCA teaching team should review the current use of student laptops in lessons and explore additional ways that digital technology can support highly-effective learning.
• The potential of key assignments in supporting high-quality learner outcomes should be optimised.
• Arrangements for work experience should be reviewed, and additional interventions should be planned for those students who find it difficult to obtain a placement.
• The outcomes of an analysis of trends in attainment data should be used to implement a series of targeted teaching and learning approaches aimed at on-going improvement in learner outcomes in LCA.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good. The quality varied between individual lessons, with some exemplary practice noted.
- There was evidence of advance planning and preparation for all lessons. In some instances teachers had selected or prepared a very good range of additional resources to scaffold meaningful learning. High levels of student engagement were apparent in lessons which supported learning by actively building on students’ prior knowledge and interests.
- All lessons were characterised by a respectful, encouraging and inclusive atmosphere. Students worked well together, individually and in groups, when challenged to do so. In some lessons the potential of collaborative learning was underutilised. In some classrooms teachers had changed the layout of the furniture to make it easier for students to collaborate. This was very successful in supporting co-operative learning.
- Very good learning was noted in lessons when the tasks assigned were appropriately differentiated, with extension activities provided for the better-able students. Highly-effective learning was noted when students discussed and reflected meaningfully on what they learned. In some lessons, there was insufficient consolidation and assessment of key learning. Strategies that facilitate active reflection and consolidation of learning should be incorporated into all lessons. The potential of a revised student journal in supporting self-reflection and assessment could also be considered.
- In some lessons a deliberate emphasis was placed on supporting students’ literacy and numeracy. Practice proved particularly successful when conscious efforts were made to ensure that students understood and used relevant key terminology or numeracy concepts in purposeful ways. There is scope to agree approaches to support targeted literacy and numeracy skills across lessons.
- Some very good use was made of digital technologies to support learning. Well-chosen film clips and visual presentations facilitated high levels of student engagement in learning. LCA students are provided with laptops to support their learning. While some good use is made of this resource, at times its use in lessons was less than optimal in facilitating high-quality engagement and efficacy in learning. The teaching team should review the current use of student laptops and explore additional ways that they can support highly-effective learning.
- A very good range of activities is undertaken by students in completing key assignments and tasks. There is scope to improve the learning potential of key assignments in some subject areas by raising expectations for the standard of the completed work and through the provision of additional constructive feedback.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Programme provision and whole-school support for LCA is very good. School management and the programmes co-ordinators share a clear vision for the role and benefits of LCA in the school.
- Systematic procedures exist for the selection and induction of students to LCA. The level of support provided to LCA students by teachers, year heads and the guidance counsellor was
highly praised by the students during the evaluation. Consideration should be given to including events for parents during the induction programme, to emphasise the key points of information relating to LCA.

- The range of learning experiences provided by the school in their design of LCA is exemplary. A conscious effort is made to ensure that a wide range of subjects is offered to meet students’ needs, interests, abilities, and intended progressions routes.

- Very good links have been made with local businesses and further-education providers to extend the range of learning opportunities offered to students.

- Timetabling is mostly in line with module requirements, but it needs to be closely monitored. The arrangement of class time for some subjects does need adjusting to support quality learning experiences.

- Good staff deployment practice is apparent but some training needs are evident. Senior management should conduct an audit of staff training needs, which can be addressed on a systematic basis.

- Students go on work placement one day per week for the full academic year. A small number of students do not readily find placements. Arrangements for work experience should be reviewed and additional interventions planned for those students who find it difficult to obtain a placement, to optimise engagement and overall attainment.

- A very high level of care and individualised support is provided to LCA students. Core team meetings are effective in planning an integrated approach to addressing students’ needs.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The overall quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review is good. The programme is co-ordinated in a very committed and enthusiastic manner by a core team comprising one deputy principal and two programme co-ordinators. Commendably a guidance counsellor attends some meetings. Membership of this team should be extended to include key teachers on the programme, including a SEN co-ordinator.

- Collaborative planning for teaching and learning in LCA requires development. Currently planning is the remit of individual teachers and there are insufficient opportunities for LCA teachers to meet, collaborate and reflect on the quality of learner outcomes. The role of the core team should be extended to include leadership and evaluation of teaching and learning in LCA. Additionally, a forum for programme teachers to collaboratively plan, needs to be established.

- School data on student attendance and attainment is LCA is underutilised as a means of informing on-going improvements in teaching and learning across the programme. The core team should conduct a deeper analysis of the available data to agree and implement a set of targeted strategies that will further support student learning across the programme. This analysis should inform an action plan that identifies specific priorities and strategies which will support learning and negate the identified barriers to success.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the senior management team and programme co-ordinators of LCA 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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<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 <em>outstanding</em> 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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