Programme Evaluation in Leaving Certificate Applied

REPORT

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<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Castlemeadows Thurles County Tipperary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Úimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>72490C</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 22-03-2019
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 Leaving Certificate Applied

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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>21 &amp; 22 March 2019</th>
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<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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<tr>
<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 programme co-ordinator</td>
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<td>Student focus-group interview</td>
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School context

Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed is a co-educational post-primary school in Thurles operating under the auspices of the Tipperary Education and Training Board. It participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department’s action plan for educational inclusion. At the time of the evaluation, 489 students were enrolled in the school, of which 150 of these were Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) students. The school offers an optional TY programme, the LCA programme, LCVP, the Leaving Certificate, and a range of PLC courses. The number of students participating in the LCA programme stood at sixteen in Year One and seven in Year Two.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching was good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good.
- The preparation for lessons was generally very good and learning intentions and success criteria were shared with students in most lessons.
- The quality of learning was good overall; there was scope to further improve on literacy and numeracy skills and questioning strategies.
- Whole-school provision for LCA is good and senior management effectively supports the development of the programme; further choice in relation to the modules and electives offered to students should be explored.
- Key teachers are involved in teaching and supporting the programme and teachers, both established and new, are facilitated to engage in appropriate continuing professional development (CPD).
- The LCA programme is well co-ordinated with some effective schemes and informal evaluations undertaken.

Recommendations

- While learning intentions were shared with students, they should be used more effectively to check on student learning through distributed questioning or other assessment-for-learning (AFL) strategies rather than over relying on chorus answering.
- While the promotion of literacy and numeracy was very evident in some lessons, the coordination team should devise LCA-specific strategies to ensure that a consistent approach to assessing progression in literacy and numeracy occurs in all modules of the programme.
- The school should look to provide students of LCA with further module and elective choices in areas where teaching resources are available.
- The schemes of work of the various subject modules should be consistent and teachers should ensure that specific methodologies are linked to the learning outcomes.
- Formal evaluations of the LCA programme should be carried out annually which seek the views of teachers, parents and students.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

• The quality of teaching was good overall. Lessons were generally very well planned. Teachers chose suitable resources and materials and made very good links to students’ experiences and interests. Cross-curricular planning between different modules was also evident. Most lessons had a good balance between the time spent on student activity and teacher input. In some instances, there was a need for the teachers to reduce periods where students were passive in their learning; this could be achieved by decreasing the use of text-heavy slides and the requirement for extended note-taking by students.

• Learning intentions and success criteria were shared with students in most lessons. These practices should be extended to all lessons. Teachers should refer to intentions more often during lessons and sufficient time should be provided to check intended learning. Students should also be encouraged to use learning intentions to reflect on their own learning.

• Effective methodologies were observed. For example, student use of digital technology was a regular feature of lessons for the completion of project work or individual tasks. Group tasks were generally well planned, though timeframes should be used and feedback should be sought in a structured manner in all cases.

• Promoting literacy and numeracy skills was a strong feature of some lessons. As these key skills are underlying principles of the LCA programme, the co-ordination team, in conjunction with the special educational needs (SEN) department, should devise strategies and set targets in relation to literacy and numeracy so that there is a consistent approach in all modules of the programme. In so doing, the co-ordination team would be able to assess students’ progression in literacy and numeracy and review the effectiveness of any strategies periodically.

• The quality of learning was good overall. Classroom management was very good in most lessons and student-teacher interactions were generally very positive. There is scope for LCA specific charts, posters, and students’ work to be displayed more prominently in classrooms.

• Lessons were suitably differentiated and students were observed often to work on sufficiently challenging tasks or in differentiated groups. Teachers provided appropriate guidance when necessary.

• The quality of assessment was good. Questioning was the main form of assessment observed. Some very good AfL strategies were used in lessons. However, in some cases, there was an over-reliance on global questioning, resulting in chorus responses or the same cohort responding on a regular basis. Teachers should consider using distributed questioning on a more regular basis to try to build student confidence and oracy skills.

• Student attendance is monitored appropriately. Overall student attendance in the programme is satisfactory; while the majority of students have good attendance records, some students are not attending regularly.

• Noticeboards highlight the activities for LCA in prominent areas of the school and staffroom. Students reported that they were very satisfied with the programme and particularly the work experience element of the course.

• Key assignments and student work are reviewed and stored appropriately. Oral and written feedback were used to support assessment for learning, though the oral feedback was more evident. A better balance of written formative feedback and oral feedback should be provided by all LCA teachers in order to help students identify commendable work as well as areas for improvement.
2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support for LCA is good. The programme has been running in the school for fifteen years and senior management views it as an important component of the school’s curriculum. Students are included in all the various aspects of school life such as sporting occasions, house examinations, award ceremonies and assemblies.

- The teachers involved in the delivery of the modules and electives in the programme are assigned appropriately. Some of the teachers have experience of correcting LCA for the State Examinations Commission. All teachers of LCA, both new and established, are facilitated to engage in appropriate CPD on an ongoing basis.

- The selection process for entry into the programme is good. The LCA co-ordinator works with the SEN and guidance departments, as well as the School Completion Programme, home-school-community liaison officer and other key staff in supporting students and parents in terms of information about the course and possible career paths and further education options. Students are interviewed prior to entry on the programme and sign a contract of conduct once they start the programme.

- Currently, students study the Crafts and Design specialism and have an option of Engineering or Childcare/Community Care as their other specialism. The interview process should be used to ascertain what other modules the students may have an interest in studying and provide a choice, where possible, in the specialisms prior to starting the programme. Currently, electives must be selected from within the area of Information and Communications Technology. While this allows for the development of digital technology skills, students should be provided with a wider choice of electives.

- The students undertake the modules of work experience on Wednesdays. 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. There is a need to review the duration of the work experience modules. The four-day week allows for time for other activities, such as induction, educational trips and extra-curricular and co-curricular events so that the time afforded to these activities does not detract from tuition time.

- The scheduling and timetabling of the various modules is good in the main. Some of the core subjects have too much time allocated to them however and other modules such as Social Education and the electives are below guidelines. These issues should be addressed in future timetabling.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The LCA programme is well co-ordinated. The relevant plan contains good organisational details and ensures that administration aspects of the programme are supported. Subject plans for the programme are in place; the standard of these range from satisfactory to very good. Greater consistency is needed across these plans. Where not the case already, all the schemes should contain timeframes, teacher reflection notes and better links between learning outcomes and specific teaching methodologies.

- A core team should be established and this team should meet periodically throughout the year. Minutes of meetings should record discussion and actions taken in relation to any strategies and targets devised for the programme, especially in literacy and numeracy.

- While there is evidence of informal evaluations of the programme taking place, formal evaluations of LCA, seeking the views of teachers, parents and students, should be carried out annually.
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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<tr>
<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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<tr>
<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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<tr>
<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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<tr>
<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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