

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in LCA

REPORT

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Ainm na scoile / School name | Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Frederick St. Clara Co. Offaly |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 72530L |

Date of Evaluation: 06-03-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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 | 05 & 06-03-2019 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, LCA co-ordinator and teachers |

School context

Ard Scoil Chiarán Naofa is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. All curricular programmes are offered in the school including an optional Transition Year programme. The school has a current enrolment of 321 students.

Introduced in 2003, the LCA programme is generally provided as a senior cycle curriculum option each year, depending on demand. Currently, eighteen students are enrolled in the programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good; it included some aspects of satisfactory practice, with excellent teaching also noted.
- Teachers provide oral feedback in a sensitive and supportive manner; there is some scope to improve the provision of written formative feedback.
- Management is strongly committed to the provision of LCA through the range of resources provided to support the programme for a relatively small cohort of students.
- Time allocated to LCA is generally very good but should be reviewed particularly for the Introduction to Information and Communication Technology module.
- The quality of individual planning and preparation for lessons and for the LCA programme is very good.

Recommendations

- The LCA teachers should collaborate and develop strategies to provide more regular formative written feedback on students' work, which should also encourage students to share in the responsibility for recording oral feedback provided during lessons.
- Time allocated to the Introduction to Information and Communication Technology module should be increased to ensure that there is sufficient time to complete the module in line with programme requirements.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good; it included some aspects of satisfactory practice, with excellent teaching was also noted.
- Very good planning was evident in all lessons. Teachers were keenly aware of their students' abilities and planned their work to support and progress learning.
- Classroom management was very good, with interactions being both positive and respectful. Students' contributed to lessons to the best of their abilities.
- Very good attention was paid to the literacy development of students, in line with the overall school policy. Numeracy, while not as obvious, featured appropriately in lessons as necessary.
- Learning intentions were clearly communicated to students in all lessons, adding to the overall structure of the classes. Of particular note was the review undertaken by the teachers at the end of the lessons to check on students' learning.
- A range of teaching approaches was observed in lessons visited, including, high-quality whole-class teaching, active methodologies and teacher demonstrations in practical settings.
- The most successful lessons were characterised by a very good balance between teacher input and students being actively engaged in their learning. In those lessons where tasks were meaningful and developed to progress learning, students made very good progress.
- Where tasks were less successful, students did not fully engage in the activity and were less motivated to contribute to the lesson. In a small number of lessons, there was a tendency at times for the teacher voice to dominate which was less effective.
- Questioning strategies were used in all lessons and were mostly very effective. Very good use was made of directed questions that linked current and prior learning and topics across the curriculum, as evident for example in English and Communications, where frequent reference was made to Enterprise Education.
- All classrooms were well equipped with subject-specific materials, and information and communications technology. A print rich environment was evident in all lessons thereby enhancing and supporting the learning for students.
- Use of resources was effectively integrated into lessons to support the learning. For example, video clips and presentations were used to stimulate conversation or to provide examples of the key learning for the lesson. In the Art and Craft lesson, for example, visuals were used to excellent effect to link current learning with prior learning.
- Students received very good and appropriate levels of affirmation. Frequently teachers took opportunities to circulate in the classroom to provide advice and guidance to students in a positive and pastoral manner.
- A review of students' key assignments, copybooks and classwork was undertaken during the evaluation. Students generally receive oral feedback during the lessons. There was some excellent written formative feedback noted on students' work. It is recommended that the LCA teachers share and develop a common approach to the provision of written formative feedback on students' work. Practice that encourages students to share in the responsibility for recording oral feedback provided during lessons should also be developed.
- Overall, student attainment is very good. Students' results in certificate examinations are collated and monitored. Commendably, the LCA co-ordinator meets with each student and provides overall feedback following the awarding of credits at the end of each session.

- Attendance was monitored in all lessons. The use of a personalised student attendance record, developed by the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator is an excellent document.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, there is excellent support from management for LCA.
- School management values the LCA as a central component in the schools' curriculum and facilitates the creation of a class groupings with relatively small numbers in each year.
- Staff are assigned to the programme based on interest and availability with all staff having an opportunities to teach the programme. This is very good practice as it develops capacity in the programme.
- Time allocated to LCA modules is mostly very good. There is a need, however, to increase the time allocated to the introductory module of Information and Communication Technology.
- A curriculum review of LCA resulted in some changes to the vocational specialisms to support the learning needs and interests of the students.
- Work experience is undertaken each Friday. Monitoring and reflecting on work experience takes place by students.
- Management supports and encourages staff to participate in ongoing continuing professional development as evident in the range of in-service events teachers have attended.
- Practices and procedures to enter the LCA programme are very good. Presentations to students and parents take place to support students making informed decision about the programme. A formal induction programme takes place for students early in the school year for year one of the programme.
- There are very good and well established links between the school, the local community and businesses. These links are used by students to access work experience and to support learning in the programme.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The quality of planning and preparation for the LCA programme is very good, including collective and individual planning.
- A written plan has been developed for the LCA programme and encompasses individual subject plans for the various subjects offered. Most plans reviewed follow a general template with evidence that some teachers are annotating their plans as the year progresses to inform further plans. This is very good practice.
- The LCA co-ordinator provides very good co-ordination of the programme. Teachers of the LCA programme are facilitated to meet throughout the year.
- Meeting time is mostly used to discuss organisational arrangements. Going forward time at meetings could usefully be apportioned to discussing topics such as teaching and learning and the development of formative feedback procedures.
- Commendably, plans are in place to undertake an evaluation of the LCA programme. It is proposed that this evaluation will include staff, parents and students directly involved in the programme.

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.

| Level | Description | Example of descriptive terms |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Very Good | <i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision. | 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 |
| Good | <i>Good</i> 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 <i>very good</i> standard. | Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement |
| Satisfactory | <i>Satisfactory</i> 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. | Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas |
| Fair | <i>Fair</i> 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. | Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve |
| Weak | <i>Weak</i> 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. | Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties; |

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM and the school community welcome the findings of the recent Leaving Certificate Applied Programme Evaluation which acknowledges the excellent support from management for LCA and the priority we place on providing the Programme to meet the needs of our students. We commend the staff for the very good quality of teaching and learning recognised in the report.

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

In advance of this evaluation, we had already identified the area of written feedback as an area of focus for improvement and work has already started at a whole school level, to formalise a written formative feedback template for use on a whole school level. Our exam booklets for house exams are being amended to reflect an agreed template where students identify the strength of their work and the areas for improvement. Our school journal will also include a template for feedback for use commencing in the next academic year. We are also researching the feasibility of using a specific reflective journal for Leaving Certificate Applied students to encourage more reflective practice and to record oral feedback given by teachers.

We are currently reviewing our timetable to provide sufficient time to complete the Information and Communication Technology module.