

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Programme Evaluation in Transition Year**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Larkin Community College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Champions Avenue Dublin 1
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	760770

**Date of Evaluation: 29-11-2017**



## **WHAT IS A 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 Transition Year 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.

## Programme evaluation in TY

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	27-29 November 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal</li><li>• Meeting with key staff</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Student focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Feedback to senior management team and coordinators</li></ul>

### School context

Larkin Community College is a co-educational school under the auspices of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb), with a current enrolment of 402 students. The school offers Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of the TY programme in Larkin College is good; plans are in place for further development of the programme.
- The overall coordination and planning of the TY programme is good and the programme is highly valued and supported by the coordinators and senior management; there is scope to further develop subject planning within the programme.
- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to good in the lessons observed; there was scope for improvement in the area of active learning in a significant minority of lessons.
- Very good links have been developed with the local community.
- A number of trips and valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences are provided.
- Student successes are celebrated appropriately and a good overall assessment framework is in place to monitor student achievement; there is scope for development of subject-specific assessment practices.

#### Recommendations

- Subject planning should be further developed using a common template which includes expected learning outcomes and a stronger focus on essential skills development.
- All teachers in TY need to incorporate teaching methodologies that promote active engagement and help students to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Assessment procedures for each TY module should be aligned more explicitly to the overall assessment framework.
- Information related to TY should be included in the school's admissions policy.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to good in the lessons observed. There was scope in a significant minority of lessons to promote more active engagement in learning and to incorporate strategies that support students to take more responsibility for their learning.
- The majority of lessons were characterised by respectful interactions between teachers and students. Students' participation in classroom activities was monitored closely by teachers and students' contributions and efforts were affirmed.
- Students demonstrated high levels of interest in learning when the purpose of the lesson or task was explained clearly. This was most effective when learning intentions were expressed in terms of what students should know or be able to do and reviewed at the end of lessons in order to assess students' progress. This approach should be adopted more widely so that students know what they are expected to achieve and take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Student participation and engagement were highest in lessons where the methodologies chosen allowed students to be active learners and provided sufficient time for them to engage in a meaningful way either independently or by working collaboratively. In these lessons, students worked purposefully on specific tasks which were appropriately differentiated. They were given opportunities to contribute their opinions and to ask questions related to topics such as a careers investigation or characters from a novel.
- In a minority of lessons, students were not clear about what they were expected to do, resulting in disengagement. Teachers should be mindful that TY provides opportunities to ensure students are actively engaged in experiential learning and are supported to take more responsibility for their learning. Lessons should be planned with these principles in mind.
- A good emphasis on literacy development was evident in the majority of lessons. Very good practice was evident when students were provided with time to read for enjoyment. Students commented on how much they enjoyed going to the library.
- All classes are mixed-ability, as is recommended for TY. In a small number of lessons, students' behaviour had an impact on the progression of the lesson. In these cases, there was a need for clear and consistent classroom routines to support student engagement with the variety of learning experiences offered as part of TY.

### **2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The quality of the TY programme is good overall. The curriculum is structured appropriately around an academic core, optional subjects and engagement with various initiatives or activities.

- TY is highly valued and supported by the coordinators and senior management. Uptake levels have increased this year and the newly appointed coordinators have plans to develop the programme to support further engagement.
- At the time of the evaluation, the admissions policy did not include reference to enrolment for TY. It is recommended that information related to TY be included in the school's admissions policy.
- Work experience is well integrated into the programme. In keeping with good practice, students source employers in line with their interest.
- Very good links have been developed between TY and the local community. These links provide good opportunities for personal development through working with children and the elderly. For example, TY students are involved in initiatives such as a party for senior citizens.
- There is a good emphasis on peer teaching, developing communication skills and public speaking for the students involved in the Peer Education programme and Jigsaw. TY students involved in this initiative spoke of the benefits and the skills they have learned in delivering workshops on mental health or in their role as mentors to junior students.
- A number of trips and valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences are provided. For example, a good range of sporting activities is available; through involvement with outdoor pursuits and a peer programme, TY students get involved in physical education activities with primary-school pupils.

### **3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW**

- The programme is well coordinated and good-quality work has been carried out to date in terms of planning for TY. The written plan contained good-quality organisational details.
- Subject-specific schemes of work provided a good indication of the areas of study; however, the quality of these individual subject plans varied. Subject planning should be further developed using a common template which draws on the principles of an effective TY. Plans should include the expected learning outcomes, a variety of assessment modes and a stronger focus on essential skills development. In addition, planning for optional subjects should provide appropriate levels of differentiation for students, some of whom may not have studied the subject previously.
- Students' achievements are celebrated appropriately as part of weekly assemblies and at the end of the year.
- A good overall assessment framework, based on a credit system, has been devised for TY. All subject plans included strategies for assessment. However, assessment procedures for each TY module should be aligned more explicitly to the overall assessment framework. For example, the general criteria for projects and presentations should be agreed across all areas of study and be taught explicitly so as to encourage students to engage in self and peer assessment.
- The success of the TY programme has been evaluated by the school through review of students' folders and feedback from questionnaires. There are plans to further develop the

formal evaluation instruments used for teachers, students and parents. An analysis of this feedback should be collated and will provide a more inclusive and robust improvement agenda for the programme. An evaluation of students' views who do not choose TY may also provide useful insights.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<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
<b>Good</b>	<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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<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
<b>Fair</b>	<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
<b>Weak</b>	<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;