

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in LCVP

REPORT

School name	Ratoath College
School address	Jamestown Ratoath County Meath
Roll number	76088T

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 LCVP 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 LCVP

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

School context

Ratoath College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school has a current enrolment of 1059 students. The school offers Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good.
- Lesson planning was very good; teachers shared learning intentions with students and consolidation of learning and assessment of students' understanding were strengths in the lessons observed.
- The LCVP students who were interviewed spoke very positively about their experience of the programme; they valued the practical learning experiences, the links to the world of work and opportunities to acquire additional college entry points.
- The overall quality of programme provision and whole-school support is fair; the provision of just one lesson period per week on fifth and sixth year timetables is substantially below the recommended timetable provision.
- LCVP planning has scope for improvement; currently, it is too closely aligned to the business department with insufficient identity for LCVP as a programme rather than a subject, and a formal review of the programme has not been undertaken.
- Programme co-ordination is fair; in particular, current links between the teachers delivering the LCVP programme and the programme coordinator are not adequate.

Recommendations

- Timetabled provision for LCVP should be increased.
- Planning needs to be aligned and informed by the teaching and learning of LCVP and adequate time should be provided to plan and prepare specifically for LCVP; a portion of the school's overall co-ordination hours should be allocated to planning LCVP activities.
- LCVP should be reviewed and evaluated annually and the views of all stakeholders should be considered.
- Arrangements should be put in place to enable the co-ordinator of posts to hold regular planning meetings with the LCVP team.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good. A variety of methodologies was used to support students' learning.
- Lesson planning was very good; teachers shared learning intentions with students at the beginning of lessons and, in some lessons, teachers used an exit strategy to assess students' understanding of the lesson content. This enabled students to consolidate their learning and facilitated teachers in assessing students' understanding; these findings should be used to shape the beginning of the next lesson.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) was good. ICT assessment should be included when assessing students' portfolio work.
- Students' participation and sharing of knowledge was enhanced in lessons where teachers used a variety of differentiated questions. This good practice should be further embedded across the whole department.
- Teaching and learning observed were in line with the LCVP department planning document.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons during the evaluation. The regular assignment of homework needs to be developed in LCVP and teachers should pay close attention to students' journals and their recording of homework.
- The online platform is used very well to store students' portfolios and keep them informed of relevant programme material. By extending the use of the online platform to incorporate feedback students would have more scope to develop their portfolio work.
- Commendably, teachers set common level examinations collaboratively and each class group sits formal summative assessments at key points during the academic year.
- Students are continuously assessed on their portfolio work which is very good practice and accounts appropriately for a substantial percentage of marks in house examinations.
- Students interviewed spoke very positively about their experience of LCVP in the school, they valued the programme in terms of practical learning experiences, links to the world of work and opportunities to acquire additional college entry points.
- The pace and structure of lessons were good with smooth transitions managed from one stage to the next; students engaged well with the learning activities and interactions between students and teachers were very respectful in all lessons.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of programme provision and whole-school support is fair, the provision of just one lesson period per week in both fifth and sixth year is substantially below the recommended timetable provision and it is advisable that the overall provision be increased.
- Student attainment in LCVP is good with the proportion of merits and passes in line with national norms; however, the proportion of distinctions has been significantly below the national average for a number of years.
- Access to LCVP is open to all students who fulfil the VSG requirements and students' uptake of the programme is good.
- Teachers assigned to teach LCVP have expertise in business subjects. The programme needs further support from the guidance department, particularly in preparation of the portfolio items.
- In line with programme requirements, German is provided for students who are not studying a modern foreign language.

- There is a need to have better arrangements in place so as to ensure that a school contact person is available to students at all times during their work experience.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The quality of programme planning is good; there is a collaborative team approach evident across the LCVP department. There are areas for further development in relation to students' opportunities to engage with visits in and visits out as outlined in the programme.
- Programme co-ordination is fair; in particular, current links between the teachers delivering the LCVP programme and the programme coordinator are not adequate.
- Planning needs to be aligned and informed by the teaching and learning of the programme. LCVP is a programme and not a subject but, at present, it is being planned in line with the business department. Adequate time should be supplied to plan and prepare discretely for LCVP. A portion of the school's overall co-ordination hours should be allocated to planning LCVP activities.
- Currently, there is no formal review of the programme. LCVP should be reviewed and evaluated annually and the views of all stakeholders should be considered.
- During the evaluation, senior management carried out an analysis of attainment in certificate examinations. The LCVP core team, along with the guidance department, should carry out a more in-depth and regular analysis of student attainment to inform teaching and learning.
- The school should develop a clearer profile of students' progression from Leaving Certificate to all higher level, further education courses and the world of work in recent years. A data based profile of this type would provide reliable data of the trends in the pathways students take. These trends would provide valuable material to inform a review of 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;