

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in LCA

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Killinarden Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Killinarden Tallaght Dublin 24
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91337B

Date of Evaluation: 19-04-2018



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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 was not 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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 1 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

Programme evaluation in LCA

Dates of inspection	17-04-2018 & 19-04-2018
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 interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, the LCA co-ordinator and teachers

School context

Killinarden Community School is co-educational with a current enrolment of 471 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- While the overall quality of teaching and learning was good, and practice ranged from satisfactory to very good, there is, however, scope for improvement.
- Classroom management was very good and students were very well behaved and mostly attentive during the lessons.
- Poor attendance and retention rates among LCA students were noted, which is impacting negatively on their overall attainment in the programme.
- Timetabling arrangements in many areas of the LCA programme was found to be unsatisfactory, which will impact on the validity of credits awarded to students.
- The overall quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review of the LCA is fair.
- The LCA plan provides an overview of the programme but should be developed to include action plans to support key areas for improvement.

Recommendations

- A review of teaching and learning strategies should be undertaken to ensure that those being used best meet the need of student learning styles.
- A systematic review of the LCA programme should be undertaken, to encompass all aspects of the programme, including ensuring that robust entry criteria for participation into the programme and that timetabling arrangements are in line with programme requirements.
- Appropriate arrangements for the storage and retention of key assignments should be undertaken in line with Circular S65/09 Arrangements for Certification of the Leaving Certificate Applied.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with practice ranging from satisfactory to very good; however there is scope for a comprehensive review of teaching and learning approaches to ensure that they best meet the learning needs of the students.
- Classroom management was very good and students were very well behaved and mostly attentive during the lessons. Overall there was a very good rapport between students and their teachers.
- In many of the lessons, students literacy needs were attended to as the teacher circulated. Consideration should be given to continually checking with students for their understanding of key words used in lessons and where appropriate to displaying the correct spelling of words to support students' learning.
- A good selection of resources was used in lessons including, information and communication technology, teacher prepared handouts and relevant textbooks. On occasion the use of additional visual aids would have benefited students in their lessons and supported the wider learning needs of students.
- Teachers generally began lessons by sharing the topic, with learning intentions explicitly stated in a few instances. A review of the learning was not always observed or in others the teacher summarised the lesson content. It is recommended that time be allowed to ascertain what learning has been achieved.
- A range of teaching approaches was noted in the lessons. Successful approaches included, "Think, pair and share", independent activities, brainstorming and whole-class guided discussion. In the majority of lessons there were good opportunities for collaborative learning. This was most effective when there was a good structure to the assigned activities and when time was assigned to take responses from the students. However, classroom seating arrangements should be reviewed to further support effective collaborative learning where appropriate.
- In the most successful lessons, there was a very good balance between the teacher input and students being active in their learning. In a very small number of lessons, a teacher-led approach dominated and although students were attentive, the level of challenge should be increased. In such instances, there was scope for greater differentiation to support the range of student abilities.
- Questioning was used in many lessons to facilitate a link between current and prior learning. Very effective practice was noted where teachers posed challenging questions that required students to provide a justification for their responses. There is a need for teachers to continually strive to include questions that challenge all students in their learning.
- In general, students demonstrated good understanding in their learning.
- Specialist rooms and teacher based classrooms were visited during the evaluation and in some, displays of students' work featured, which enhanced the learning environment. In some classrooms, additional subject specific displays would have enhanced and supported students' learning.
- Students' copybooks and classwork indicate that monitoring is undertaken by teachers. However, there was little evidence of formative feedback on students' work. This is an area that requires attention.
- Homework was not assigned in many of the lessons observed and there was limited entries noted in student journals of regular homework being assigned. Teachers of LCA should develop an appropriate assessment policy for the assignment of homework to their LCA students to reinforce in class learning.

- At the time of the evaluation arrangements for the retention and safe storage of key assignments was unsatisfactory. School management and the LCA co-ordinator should make appropriate arrangements in line with Circular S65/09 Arrangements for Certification of the Leaving Certificate Applied.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- A generous allocation of teachers is provided by management to the LCA programme. For example, students are offered a choice in one of their specialisms and additional teachers are deployed to some subjects in a team teaching capacity. There is scope to develop team teaching as a model of support in the context of a wider programme evaluation.
- Teachers involved in the delivery of the programme are assigned appropriately. Opportunities to access continuing professional development events are facilitated by management.
- Overall, timetabling arrangements for LCA were poor in many areas. For example, some modules are not in receipt of an appropriate time allocation to complete the modules, which impacts on the validity of the credits being awarded. In addition, some subjects are timetabled twice on the same day, which is not ideal. Current provision for Arts Education and guidance is unsatisfactory, and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. It is recommended that a systematic review of timetabling arrangements be undertaken by school management and the LCA co-ordinator.
- Work experience takes place one-day per week for each of the two-year groups. In general students source their own work placements and are supported by the programme co-ordinator as necessary. It was noted however, that some students particularly, some in year one of the programme are not attending work placement. This is a matter that requires immediate attention as it is impacting negatively on students' overall attainment in the programme.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- The overall quality of programme planning, co-ordination and review of the LCA is fair.
- The co-ordinator of programmes undertakes the role of LCA co-ordinator at assistant principal level. Specific duties associated with the role should be documented and included in the LCA plan. It may be necessary to review aspects of the role in line with Circular Letter 0003/2018.
- Minutes of meetings reviewed indicate that in addition to general organisation of the LCA, behavioural issues dominated meetings. It is recommended that time at LCA meetings be allocated to teaching approaches including differentiation suitable for the LCA lessons. An annual review and evaluation of the programme should take place to support the ongoing development of the programme.
- The overall plan for LCA could be enhanced to include a more comprehensive overview of the programme and how it operates in the school.
- The quality of planning for individual LCA modules varied. The majority of module plans were reproductions of the module descriptors provided by the Department of Education and Skills and did not reflect the effective practices observed in lessons. Teachers should develop active module plans that reflect the teaching and learning occurring in the classroom.

- An analysis of overall student attainment is undertaken by the co-ordinator. It was noted that increasing the number of distinctions has been identified as an area for improvement. However no action plan has been devised to support and progress this. It is also recommended that each subject department undertake a review of the attainment by students the subject areas and identify for improvement.
- A review of the school's records for LCA students indicates that many students are not successful in achieving credits due to poor attendance and retention. Management is keenly aware of this matter. It is recommended that a comprehensive review of all aspects of the LCA programme is required.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the programme co-ordinator 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 in 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;