Programme Evaluation in LCA

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Boyne Community School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Trim Co. Meath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>91508C</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 29-03-2019
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 LCA

Dates of inspection

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<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
<th>Observation of teaching and learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>• Meeting(s) with key staff</td>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to deputy principal, co-ordinator and teachers</td>
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<td>• Student focus-group interview</td>
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School context

Boyne Community School is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 777 students: 623 boys and 154 girls. The school provides the full range of curricular programmes. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons observed was good; the range and effectiveness of formative assessment strategies used varied significantly.
- In lessons observed, a deliberate emphasis was placed on supporting students’ literacy skills; however, the monitoring of literacy skills was not as well addressed in the copybooks and key assignments reviewed during the evaluation.
- The quality of whole-school support and provision for LCA is effective overall; the school currently does not have a homework policy.
- The school has established effective procedures to track student attendance, punctuality and attainment in the LCA programme.
- Overall, the quality of programme planning, coordination and evaluation is good; individual planning for LCA modules requires attention.
- The programme is coordinated in a committed manner; however, regular meetings of the core team are not scheduled.

Recommendations

- Further use should be made of higher-order questions in lessons, with increased wait time, to foster deeper understanding of lesson content.
- Strategies should be developed that provide for highly-effective formative feedback on students’ written work, and includes advice on spelling and grammar.
- The core team should hold more regular meetings in order to lead collaborative planning for and evaluation of teaching and learning in LCA.
- A LCA planning template that supports teaching and learning of each module and the continued implementation of relevant DEIS targets should be developed by the core team.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with a few instances of very good practice noted. In many of the lessons observed, there was scope to deepen students’ learning and to challenge all learners appropriately through enhanced formative assessment practice.

- All lessons were very well planned and conducted in an affirming and supportive atmosphere. Highly-effective learning was facilitated in lessons where the learning intentions and teaching approaches chosen enabled students to actively link content to prior learning or experiences.

- A range of methodologies such as whole-group instruction and one-to-one tutorials were used in lessons. Students were also provided with opportunities to engage in tasks either individually or as part of a group. In some of these instances, students’ learning from group work was less than optimal. To maximise the learning experience from group work, teachers should ensure that students have a clear understanding of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities when undertaking group activities.

- The quality of assessment observed was effective overall; however, the range and effectiveness of formative assessment strategies currently in use is less than optimal and practice should be developed.

- Questioning was the dominant assessment strategy used in all lessons. In many instances the questions posed tended to be lower-order, requiring very brief answers, with teachers then expanding on the answer themselves. Further use of higher-order questions, with increased wait time, is recommended to foster a deeper understanding of lesson content.

- A deliberate emphasis was placed on supporting students’ literacy in lessons. Practice proved particularly successful when conscious efforts were made to ensure that students understood and used relevant key terminology in classroom discussions. Observation of students’ copybooks and key assignments indicates that there is scope to enhance monitoring procedures for supporting literacy skills such as spelling and grammar.

- A few very good examples of written constructive feedback were noted in the sample of student work reviewed. There is scope to extend the use of formative feedback with a focus on showing how and where improvement can take place. It is recommended that strategies which provide for highly-effective formative feedback on students’ written work, and includes advice on spelling and grammar, be developed.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support and provision for LCA is effective overall. Teachers are committed to the on-going development of the programme and to their continuing professional development (CPD).

- Overall, timetabled provision is appropriate for each programme component. It was noted that a subject is timetabled twice on the same day. The impact of this arrangement on students’ progress should be kept under review.

- A review of student journals indicated that LCA students do not regularly record homework. It was noted that the journal in some instances is only used to record key dates for assignments and tasks. Currently there is no whole-school homework policy and its development is advised. In progressing this policy the core team should discuss and
standardise expectations around homework for LCA students. Furthermore, the school should look at the purpose and effectiveness of the journal for LCA students, as currently its use is less than optimal.

- Good procedures are established to track student attendance and punctuality. During the evaluation it was noted that while all key assignments are completed, a small number of students may not get credits due to their attendance in some subjects. The attendance rates should continue to be reviewed and analysed to inform on-going programme planning and timetabling.

- The LCA co-ordinator links very well with local employers to monitor students’ work placements. It was noted during the inspection that work placements for all programmes, including Transition Year, occur on the same day of the week. The school is aware of the potential burden placed on local employers. It is advised that this arrangement be reviewed.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- Overall, the quality of programme planning, coordination and evaluation is good; however, there is a need to improve individual planning for teaching and learning of LCA modules.

- The programme is coordinated in a committed manner. Very good systems are in place to track students’ attainment. The co-ordinator has oversight in tracking the completion of key assignments and in the allocation of credits. Currently students do not formally track their own progress. They receive their session results at intervals during the school year. It would be worthwhile now for the co-ordinator to look at procedures to include students in tracking their progress.

- The core team meets formally at the beginning of the year, and informally on a needs basis during the year. The SEN co-ordinator liaises with the LCA co-ordinator, but formal meetings are less regular. It is recommended that the core team establish a regular meeting schedule to lead planning for and evaluation of teaching and learning in LCA.

- The LCA teaching team meets twice a year. While it is recognised that informal meetings also occur, the school should look at scheduling more formal meetings where feasible, in order to facilitate high-quality collaborative planning to support teaching and learning in LCA.

- Overall, the quality of planning for individual LCA modules was adequate. Best practice was noted in the samples reviewed where teachers linked appropriate lesson activity with assessment. It is recommended that the core team devise a subject planning template that can be used by all subject departments. This template should take cognisance of action planning for the continued implementation of DEIS targets which are relevant to the teaching and learning in LCA.

- The school has recently adapted the LCA curriculum to meet the interests and intended progression routes of students. This happened following a survey of LCA students and discussions with local further education colleges. Notwithstanding this good practice, systematic procedures for regular reviews of LCA that includes all stakeholders should be established. The impact of recent curriculum changes on the quality of learner outcomes should be appraised and monitored.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal and 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 of each area.

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Very good 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 <em>outstanding</em> 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>Good 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 <em>very good</em> 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>Satisfactory 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>Fair 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>Weak 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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