An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation
Leaving Certificate Applied
REPORT

Rosary College
Crumlin, Dublin 12
Roll number: 60841M

Date of inspection: 7 January 2015
REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED (LCA)

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>6th and 7th January 2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and key staff</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</td>
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<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory and ranged from fair to good with scope for improvement identified in the use of strategies more appropriate to the overall aims of the programme.
- Senior management view LCA as a vital component of the school’s curriculum and is committed to improving the organisation of the curriculum and the deployment of staff to the programme.
- Student enrolment procedures for LCA have begun to develop into a more inclusive and robust process.
- The LCA curriculum is broad and balanced but there are a number of scheduling anomalies that require attention.
- The programme co-ordinator maintains good records but programme plans for curricular subjects have yet to be developed.
- The co-ordinator’s administrative duties are carried out effectively with scope for developing an increased leadership and developmental role.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Senior management and the programme co-ordinator should work towards developing an approach to teaching and learning in the LCA programme that is more closely in line with the overarching principles of the LCA as set out in the LCA programme statement document.
- Senior management should focus on improving the organisation of the curriculum and the deployment of staff to the LCA programme.
- Appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities should be identified and provided for the LCA teaching team.
- Subject plans should be developed collaboratively and incorporated into the overall LCA programme plan.
INTRODUCTION

Rosary College is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 150 students. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School (DEIS) initiative and welcomes students from a diverse range of social and economic backgrounds. The LCA programme is a long standing element of the school’s curriculum.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory and ranged from fair to good with scope for improvement identified in the use of strategies more appropriate to the overall aims of the programme.
- Teachers prepared suitable resources for all lessons observed. These resources included worksheets, process sheets and materials for students’ activities. Information and communication technology (ICT) was integrated into a number of lessons, primarily by students, to record their task work and to revise and apply prior learning. Opportunities to develop and integrate innovative and interesting ICT applications should be researched and employed by teachers where appropriate.
- All lessons had a specific learning intention. These intentions were rarely shared with students and were never reviewed during a focussed summation of the lesson. This and other assessment for learning (AFL) practices should be incorporated into the teaching strategies employed within the programme to enhance students’ learning.
- Overall, the teaching and learning approaches taken in the lessons observed require review. Alternative approaches and strategies, more appropriate to the aims of the programme should be researched and implemented. One example where active methods were employed was in a Social Education lesson in which students took part in a walking debate and contributed to a classroom discussion. Increased use of this and similar methods would result in higher levels of student participation and more meaningful contributions to classroom discussions.
- Classroom interactions were mutually respectful and a good rapport between teachers and students was evident in all lessons observed. Students received good levels of affirmation and their efforts and contributions were encouraged and acknowledged in the lessons observed.
- Good procedures are implemented to record students’ attendance in all lessons which enable all teachers to identify student absenteeism very quickly. Procedures to address absenteeism are in place which involved the home, school, community liaison (HSCL) coordinator and school completion programme (SCP) teams.
- Questioning and individual monitoring of students’ tasks and assignments were the key modes of assessment used to evaluate students’ understanding, progress and achievement. Students’ work was monitored effectively by teachers during the evaluation. Students received good levels of formative feedback enabling them to re-draft and improve the quality of reports and journals in some instances, and this should be extended to all areas where practicable.
- Students were engaged purposefully in all lessons observed. Activities were primarily individual in nature. Opportunities to extend students’ experiences to include more collaborative learning should be provided whenever possible. An improved balance between teacher input and student activities should also be achieved in some subjects,
particularly subjects where task-based activities and practice are essential. In these instances, teachers should demonstrate skills, develop topics and procedures prior to student activity and not rely solely on students completing assigned exercises in order to gain proficiency.

- Student attainment is monitored effectively and student achievement in certificate examinations is analysed annually. Some areas for development have been identified and strategies to achieve improvement in student attainment are being investigated. This is a positive initiative and with support from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), a strategic plan can be developed to bring about sustainable improvement in the areas identified for development.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Senior management view LCA as a vital component of the school’s curriculum. The programme requires greater support to ensure its development. The newly appointed principal is committed to improving the organisation of the curriculum and the deployment of staff. In addition to these specific areas, senior management should also prioritise appropriate LCA specific CPD for teachers across the range of subjects provided.

- The systems employed to target and select students for whom the LCA may be suitable require improvement. The co-ordinator has identified a more collaborative and inclusive model that should be embedded and refined over time to maximise the potential benefits of the programme for students.

- Recently, LCA students have been included in the resource and learning support provided by the school. This should be further embedded and developed as part of the programmes’ ongoing development.

- The LCA curriculum is broad and balanced. A number of anomalies were apparent in the scheduling and deployment of staff to teach the curriculum including the deployment of three different teachers to the delivery of the information technology course and the anchoring of the practical achievement task in the amalgamated Leisure and Recreation group. These anomalies should be addressed to ensure a more systematic approach to the delivery of the syllabuses and to the completion of the practical achievement task.

- Students have access to an appropriate range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities to enhance learning. These include mixed martial arts and a partnership with a large financial institution

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Good quality assessment, attendance and behavioural records are maintained by the programme co-ordinator. A structured and cohesive LCA programme plan has yet to be developed by the teaching team. As part of programme planning and development, the teaching team should prepare individual plans for each course. These plans should reflect practice and help to increase meaningful professional dialogue to improve students’ experiences and learning.

- The programme co-ordinator has a defined role which focuses particularly on the areas of student management and programme administration. These roles are carried out very effectively. Senior management should facilitate the development of the leadership aspect
of this role in areas such as the planning of the programme’s curriculum, developing student selection criteria and leading aspects of teaching and learning in the programme. The teaching team should focus on the greater implementation of collaborative active learning strategies, literacy and numeracy initiatives and more innovative use of ICT.

- Currently, a core group of teachers has not been identified to plan, monitor and evaluate the programme. These tasks occur on an ongoing basis within the co-ordinators remit and are addressed during three team meetings held annually. A more systematic approach to the achievement of these key tasks should be adopted.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and programme co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation. 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.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The report is accurate and fair.

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

- Selection criteria for LCA reviewed.
- LCA core group established to review content of curriculum and recommendations made.
- Staff training on LCA teaching methodologies by Harry Freeman, PDST on 16th April, 2015.
- Visits to other schools planned to view good practice.