

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Programme Evaluation
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
REPORT**

**St Mac Dara's Community College
Templeogue, Dublin 6W
Roll number: 70260V**

Date of inspection: 9 December 2014



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN LEAVING CERTIFICATE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMME (LCVP)

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of inspection	8 and 9 December
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was good to very good.
- In link module lessons, teachers' expertise was maximised through team teaching.
- Teachers used a good range of methodologies to facilitate active and differentiated learning but there were inconsistencies in assessment.
- All students have open access to the LCVP and parents and students are well informed about the programme.
- Senior management's commitment to the successful implementation of the LCVP is reflected in the good provision of resources and teacher planning time.
- A LCVP plan is in place but it requires some additional detail so as to serve as a manual on how the programme is delivered in the school.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The very good teaching practices observed should serve as a benchmark for all link module teachers.
 - All teachers should implement agreed practices regarding the type and quality of homework assigned to students, and its correction.
 - The timing of work experience should be reviewed by management to ensure that pre and post evaluation takes place during term time.
 - Some of the allocated planning time should be devoted to formal meetings as a core team of link modules teachers and to the development of the LCVP plan, schemes of work and an annual evaluation of the programme.
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INTRODUCTION

St Mac Dara's Community College is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 868 students. The school is under the trusteeship Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The LCVP was introduced in 1994 and is a firmly established part of the curriculum.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was good to very good. Student learning was enhanced through the very good atmosphere, high expectations and affirming environment evident in lessons.
- Team teaching was deployed in link module lessons. The well planned learning activities ensured that the skills of both teachers were maximised for the benefit of students whose learning was enhanced.
- A variety of good teaching methodologies appropriate to the programme was used in lessons including co-operative learning, discussion, questioning and good use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- In all lessons, teachers used good questioning strategies. Student-targeted questions were good; they served to differentiate learning and to develop the good class discussions observed. In a lesson where the teacher sought feedback from groups, all students' benefitted as the activity deepened their learning.
- Most lessons, had a clear structure with the introduction of lesson material and assigning of homework based on the lesson learning outcomes. Ideally, the specific learning outcomes of the unit relative to the topic should remain visible throughout all lessons and their attainment should be referenced as the lesson concludes.
- In some lessons very good cross curricular links were made with other Leaving Certificate subjects and it is advisable to expand this where ever possible.
- An examination of a sample of work revealed that, in some lessons, a limited level of homework was assigned to students. Homework tasks related to classroom activity should be assigned on a regular basis so as to embed students' learning. Students should also be regularly challenged with relevant examination-style questions at the end of activities and units of learning so that they can improve their competence in answering theory questions.
- Many students' folders were well organised and contained drafts and final editions of portfolio items and learning materials. The dedicated email account and electronic storage system for portfolio preparation, observed in one class group, is praiseworthy. It is advisable that students compile a résumé of their learning from each activity as an aid memoir. To further develop students' responsibility for their own work they could receive a schedule at the start of each year which outlines the cut-off dates for completion of each portfolio item.
- Teachers noted formative comments on students work and this helped students' to improve their learning. The use of student self-assessment and peer-assessment using appropriate marking schemes also featured strongly in some lessons and this can be further expanded.

- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and outcomes are good in certificate examinations. It is advisable that an analysis of yearly attainment in certificate examinations be used as part of the evaluation of the programme.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Access to LCVP is open to all students who fulfil the necessary vocational subject requirements. At the subject options information night the principal and guidance counsellor make a presentation on the programme. The school endeavours to write to students who qualify for the programme so as to give them the opportunity to participate.
- Senior management's commitment to the successful implementation of the LCVP is reflected in the good provision of resources to the programme in terms of access to ICT facilities and the facilitation of team teaching in lessons.
- Teachers with specialisms in Business, language and information technology are represented on the LCVP teaching team; however, there is no formal Guidance representation which would be advisable. Teachers appropriately engage in continuing professional development.
- There is a good focus on Enterprise Education as part of the programme of learning activities. Students engage in visits out to enterprises and organise guest speakers into the school. Students also carry out an investigation of 'My Own Place' and this is beneficial as it provides students with additional material for writing reports and greater choice when selecting portfolio items.
- The students interviewed indicated a high level of satisfaction with the programme and the opportunities it provides to learn new skills and engage in experiential learning activities.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Formal planning of one period a week is allocated to link module teachers of each year group. Informal notes are maintained of these meetings it is advisable that formal minutes are recorded and that some of the planning time be devoted to teachers to meet as a link module subject department so that the overall organisation and planning of link modules as a two year LCVP programme can be accomplished.
- Currently, the principal and deputy principal each assume some co-ordinator responsibilities. While teacher's plan and co-ordinate activities for their respective class group, it is advisable to appoint an overall co-ordinator from the team of teachers of link modules so as to provide an overarching framework for the operation of the modules. This position should rotate among the team.
- The LCVP subject plan contained information pertaining to many aspects of the programme. The subject plan should be further developed and expanded so as to act as a manual on how the programme is organised and delivered in the school. A detailed scheme of work for each year group should be compiled by linking each activity to its specific learning outcomes, resources, and range of teaching and assessment methodologies.

- Currently there is no formal review of the programme. It is recommended that the programme be reviewed and evaluated annually and that the views of the LCVP students, their teachers, parents and employers be included in the process.
- Practical and evaluation arrangements for the work experience placement should be reviewed. Students source their five days of work experience and work experience is completed during students' holiday time. This should be reviewed in terms of pre and post evaluation of the activity. In addition, formal contact by phone or in person with the workplace to check on the progress of students is advisable as is a formal employer evaluation on student performance.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and relevant key staff 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 Board of Management welcomes the main findings of the report and will use its recommendations to guide the future development of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme(LCVP) in the school.

The Board of Management appreciates the hard work and enthusiasm of the members of the LCVP department in their promotion of teaching and learning as a positive and rewarding experience. It welcomes that the report acknowledges the following: the use of a good range of methodologies in lessons, the use of team teaching, good questioning strategies and good formative comments on students' work.

The Board of Management welcomed the recognition of the school management's commitment to the successful implementation of the programme.

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

The Board of Management welcomes the recommendations and notes the following which will be addressed: the timing of work experience to be reviewed, the meetings of the core LCVP team to be held on a formal basis and the LCVP plan to be developed to include schemes of work.

The core team will review the area of assigning homework and its assessment with a view to having a common policy.