Programme Evaluation
Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)
REPORT

Larkin Community College
Dublin 1
Roll Number: 76077O

Date of inspection: 26 November 2013
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>25 and 26 November 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff</td>
<td>Feedback to principal, deputy principal and programme co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to very good, with some very good practices noted in the majority of lessons.
- Some very good practice in enhancing students’ literacy skills was evident.
- Students are making good progress in LCA but there is scope to raise expectations for the standard of the completed work.
- A holistic and integrated approach is adopted to supporting students participating in the programme.
- The current timetabling arrangements narrow the breadth of the programme and restrict continuity in teaching and learning.
- The LCA co-ordinator and teaching team are highly committed to ongoing programme planning and review.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Effective strategies that support higher-order literacy skills such as critical thinking and self-reflection should be agreed and implemented in all lessons.
- The timetabling of LCA, including the organisation of work experience in LCA year two, should be reviewed.
- Core team meetings should be facilitated to support collaborative programme planning and evaluation.
- Planning for the relationships and sexuality (RSE) component of Social Education should be an integral component of the senior cycle RSE programme and a whole-school RSE policy should be devised in accordance with the procedures outlined in Department Circular 37/10 *Relationships and Sexuality Education*. 
**INTRODUCTION**

Larkin Community College is a co-educational school under the auspices of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 445 second-level students and participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. The school is committed to providing a broad curriculum to meets the needs of all students. LCA, which is well-established in the school, plays a significant role in this regard.

**TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to very good, with some very good practices noted in the majority of lessons.
- Good quality advance preparation was evident for all lessons. The fast pace of some lessons limited opportunities for students to assimilate new concepts. Learning outcomes for all lessons should demonstrate an appropriate balance between knowledge acquisition and understanding, skills development and student reflection. The attainment of these outcomes should inform the subsequent lesson structure.
- Learning outcomes were shared in all lessons. Best practice was evident when the chosen outcomes built on students’ prior learning and supported a logical and incremental sequencing of new material.
- Some strategies proved very effective in enabling students to engage actively in their learning. One Mathematics lesson began by asking students what they already knew about the topic and by discussing the everyday application of the concepts. In other lessons, learning from film clips and websites was well structured through the use of worksheets. In a few lessons, there was scope to use additional resources or further student-led activities to enhance understanding and facilitate the processing of information.
- In all of the lessons observed, learning and teaching took place in a supportive environment. However, the length of lesson periods poses a challenge for some students to remain fully engaged.
- Teachers used a range of very good strategies to ensure that students understood and used the key terminology in lessons. Subjects such as Hotel, Catering and Tourism are using effective strategies to support additional literacy skills like critical thinking and self-reflection, with some impressive outcomes. LCA teachers should share expertise in this area. It is recommended that effective strategies that support skills such as critical thinking and reflection be agreed and implemented in all lessons.
- A review of students’ written coursework indicated that a good range of activities is completed. Very good summative assessment practices are evident. The plans to enhance the format of the LCA student report are commendable.
- Very good attention is paid to recording the completion of key assignments. Excellent practice was noted in subjects where students had to reflect on their learning from a key assignment, and where teachers provided quality written feedback suggesting areas for improvement. There is scope to improve the learning potential of key assignments in some subject areas by raising expectations for the standard of the completed work and through the provision of constructive written feedback on students’ classwork and
completed assignments. It is recommended that the core team, in association with subject teachers, discuss strategies that support students in producing quality work and implement these strategies in all subject areas.

**PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The programme is well resourced in almost all instances. School management should resolve the outstanding resource issues in the Engineering room, as soon as is feasible.

- Teachers are very committed to implementing a quality LCA programme. Good practice is evident in the deployment of staff. However, the practice of two teachers sharing a class group should be minimised. There is a need to re-engage with LCA-specific continuing professional development (CPD).

- Systems are established to monitor and track attendance, punctuality and retention, with notable improvements achieved in retention figures. Attendance remains a significant issue. Strategies that acknowledge good attendance could be investigated.

- The timetabling arrangements for LCA merit review. All teaching time is organised into lessons of one hour duration which reduces the overall number of class periods available. As a result some programme components have a generous timetable allocation while others are in deficit. Work experience arrangements for students in LCA year two impacts on the spread of lessons throughout the teaching week. It is recommended that timetabling of LCA should be reviewed to address the issues highlighted.

**PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION**

- The programme co-ordinator has established key systems to oversee the organisational aspects of the programme. There is a significant variation in the quality of the programme plans reviewed. It is recommended that the co-ordinator, in association with the core team, devise a programme planning template that could be used by all subject areas. The well-developed plans already evident should inform the template design.

- Planning for the RSE component of Social Education merits particular attention. It is recommended that RSE in Social Education be integrated into the the senior cycle RSE programme and delivered by teachers who have availed of the necessary CPD. A whole-school RSE policy should be devised in accordance with the procedures outlined in Department Circular 37/10 *Relationships and Sexuality Education* to provide staff with clear guidelines for the management, organisation and delivery of the RSE programme.

- The co-ordinator and core team are committed and reflective in their approach to programme implementation and review. Their complementary roles ensure that a holistic and integrated approach is adopted to supporting students. It is recommended that meetings of the core team and additional planning meetings with LCA teachers are routinely scheduled.
The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and programme co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation. 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.

Published March 2014