An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

REPORT
Árdscóil Rath Iomgháin
Rathangan, County Kildare
Roll number: 70730J

Date of inspection: 9 March 2016
REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMME (LCVP)

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

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<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>9 March 2016</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods  
• Examination of students’ work  
• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |
| • Review of relevant documents |  
• Discussion with principal and key staff  
• Interaction with students |

MAIN FINDINGS

• The LCVP as implemented in Árdscoil Rath Iomgháin is a high quality programme with good outcomes for students.

• Student-centred, active-learning methodologies were to the fore during lessons, in keeping with the ethos of the programme.

• The school maintains appropriate links with a range of voluntary and business enterprises.

• Implementation of the LCVP is guided by a comprehensive plan.

• Programme coordination is effective and there is a hard-working core team in place.

• The implementation and outcomes of the programme are evaluated on an annual basis.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• Subject to resources, a means for providing an additional class period each week in fifth year should be examined.

• The guidance plan is included in the LCVP folder, however, reference is needed in this plan to reflect the role the guidance counsellor plays in supporting LCVP students.

• It is recommended that an enhanced whole-school awareness of the programme be promoted over time.

• To enhance the quality of the programme in a more efficient manner, it is recommended that targets be set for improvement and that the actions to be taken be described and documented.
INTRODUCTION
Árdscoil Rath Iomgháin is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 686 students, mostly from a large rural hinterland and from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is a significant element of the school’s senior cycle curriculum.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
• The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good. The lessons were well prepared and all required resources were to hand.

• Lesson objectives were shared with students at the outset and lessons were designed to achieve these outcomes. Each lesson was well pitched and proceeded at an appropriate pace.

• The teaching approaches used were student centred and active-learning methodologies were to the fore, including questioning, discussion, group work, brainstorming and the use of work sheets.

• Teachers encouraged students to give feedback following group work and this generated further discussion, allowing students the opportunity to put their learning into practice. It is recommended that such feedback always be recorded on the classroom board.

• Student management and classroom management were excellent at all times and the level of student-teacher interaction was very high, enabling a differentiated approach to teaching and learning as well as allowing teachers to assess student understanding on an ongoing basis.

• In one lesson, there was very good consolidation where an inquiry-based approach to debriefing students on their work experience was very helpful in assisting students to recognise and document their learning.

• An appropriate system of assessing and giving feedback to students as they prepare items for their portfolios is in place. This is done in a very supportive manner which encourages reflection and self-evaluation by the students themselves of the standard of their own work.

• Appropriate and useful charts and posters were on the walls of the classroom and computer room where Link Module lessons were held, and these served to both inform and stimulate students. A good level of attention was paid to students’ literacy and numeracy development and there was good use of appropriate terminology.

• The students engaged very well in the learning process, and they made significant contributions to lessons in a positive and supportive learning environment. Students, when interviewed, expressed their confidence in their teachers and the quality of the LCVP programme provided to them.
PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Planning for and implementation of the programme are both of a very good standard. The effective support of management ensures that students are afforded the opportunity to benefit from a high quality programme.

- Clear and timely information is provided to students and parents to help them make informed choices. There is an appropriate level of contact with parents regarding out-of-school activities.

- Staff are appropriately assigned to the LCVP and adequate resources are made available to support a good quality of provision. Teachers’ continuing professional development in relation to LCVP has been facilitated and availed of to the greatest extent possible.

- Two periods per week are allocated to both fifth-year and sixth-year students. Subject to resources, a means for providing an additional class period each week in fifth year should be examined.

- Enrolling in the LCVP is optional for qualified students. Uptake is high and increasing and there is good evidence of positive outcomes for students.

- The school maintains appropriate links with a range of voluntary and business enterprises and these are used to provide appropriate learning experiences for students.

- An appropriate and balanced curriculum with a mix of learning events, such as visits out and in, is provided for LCVP students.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- An appropriate current written plan is in place. The LCVP department folder is of a high standard and comprehensively describes and guides the implementation of the programme. The guidance plan is included in the LCVP folder. However, reference is needed in this plan to reflect the role the guidance counsellor plays in supporting LCVP students.

- The programme is well laid out and course delivery is well scheduled over the available time. This information is shared with students via a well-placed notice board.

- Programme coordination is effective and there is a hard-working core team in place. The good quality of communication amongst members of the core team and with school management ensures the smooth running of the programme.

- It is recommended that an enhanced whole-school awareness of the programme be promoted over time. The areas of commonality between the LCVP and other subjects should be explored with the relevant subject departments and used as the basis of enterprise and other relevant LCVP activities and events.

- School management and the LCVP core team evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the programme on an annual basis. It is commendable that the views of parents and students are also sought in the annual review. Positive changes to the programme have been made as a result of reviews.
• To enhance the quality of the programme in a more efficient manner, it is recommended that targets be set for improvement and that the actions to be taken be described and documented.

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 accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and does not wish to respond formally to the report.