An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in LCVP

REPORT

School name	Loreto Secondary School
School address	Spawell Road Wexford Co Wexford
Roll number	63660A

Date of Evaluation: 24-03-2017

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

WHAT IS A 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 LCVP 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

LCVP

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	24-03-2017
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Examination of students' work	• Observation of teaching and learning during one double lesson • Interaction with students • Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Loreto Secondary School, Wexford is a voluntary secondary school with 719 female students. It is under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school offers the Junior Certificate, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching in the link module lesson was good.

- The good atmosphere, and affirming environment in the lesson created a successful learning environment.

- There is good whole-school support and programme provision for LCVP in the school; current provision of the programme as an optional subject is not in keeping with the programme's ethos.

- Students are afforded many opportunities during the two-year programme to participate in experiential learning activities.

- Co-ordination of LCVP is good; there are some possibilities for improvement in curriculum planning and review procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The provision of LCVP as an optional subject in the school should be reviewed to ensure it does not preclude students who do not choose it an optional subject but still wish to participate in the LCVP.

- The LCVP curriculum plan should be developed further by linking each activity to its specific learning outcomes, resources, and range of teaching and assessment methodologies.

- The annual review of the programme should be expanded to include the views of the LCVP students, their teachers, parents and employers.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in the link module lesson was good. A variety of good teaching methodologies such as effective co-operative learning tasks and questioning strategies appropriate to the programme were observed. The good atmosphere, and positive student affirmation created a successful learning environment.

- The lesson was well planned and followed a logical sequence of activities. At the outset of the lesson, learning intentions were shared with students and as the lesson concluded, a good review of lesson learning took place. In addition, references were made to the specific learning outcomes of the unit being delivered.

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching tool was good. Students have timetabled access to the computer room and this is good practice, as is the sharing of learning resources with students through an internet hosting site.

- The well-organised students' folders contained learning materials, drafts and final editions of portfolio items. A substantial portion of the portfolio is completed under the direct supervision of the teacher. This is good practice. Students are responsible for improving the quality of their portfolio items in line with the good formative teacher feedback.

- Each year group participates in an out-of-school visit to an enterprise, guest speakers' visits to the classroom, work experience and an enterprise activity. The very good preparation for and review procedures of work placement helps to ensure it is a good experiential learning activity.

- There are good cross curricular links between the vocational subject groupings (VSGs) and programme activities such as visits to enterprises and the organisation of fundraising events. Students could consider the compilation of a résumé of the learning and skill development gained from activities to serve as an aide memoire for the completion of portfolio items.

- The students interviewed were very positive about their experiences in LCVP. Students valued the programme in terms of its practical learning experiences and activities such as the development of research and communication skills.

- Students are continually assessed on their portfolio work in fifth year. In sixth year, students sit formal summative assessments at key points in the academic year. The assessments follow the same format as certificate examinations. This good practice could be extended into fifth year to aid student competency in answering written examination-type questions. There are well-established procedures for reporting on students' progress regarding their coursework.

- The development of students' literacy skills was well supported by clear explanations of unfamiliar terminology and keywords. To further progress the schools' agreed literacy target of increasing the percentage of students who have knowledge of current affairs, the use of print and electronic exemplars of enterprising people and companies could be further developed.

- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential. Student outcomes are very good in certificate examinations.

2. PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good whole-school support and programme provision in the school. However, the current provision of the program as an optional subject on the schools' timetable merits review.

- The LCVP is a component of the school's curriculum since 1996. Appropriate guidance support and information on the programme is given to prospective students and parents to assist them in making informed choices.

- LCVP is offered to students as an optional subject within an option block. The programme was designed to enhance the vocational dimension of the established Leaving Certificate and to be taken in addition to student's chosen Leaving Certificate subjects. The provision of LCVP as an optional subject in the school should be reviewed to ensure it does not preclude students, who do not choose it as part of an optional subject but wish to participate in LCVP.

- The weekly allocation of five lesson periods to the programme includes time for the provision of an ab-initio language module for students who are not studying a modern European language for their Leaving Certificate.

- Teachers on the LCVP teaching team are appropriately deployed to the programme with a range of specialisms in the areas of business, language and ICT. Attendance by teachers at relevant in-service training is accommodated by senior management.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- Co-ordination of LCVP is good; there are some possibilities for improvement in curriculum planning and review procedures.

- The school's overall programme co-ordinator assumes responsibility for some administration aspects of work experience. The LCVP co-ordinator as part of the core teaching team successfully organises the other administrative elements the programme.

- The LCVP team has regular formal and informal meetings to co-ordinate its work. It is advisable to include discussions on pedagogy practice at meetings. In addition, the guidance teacher could attend planning meetings on occasion.

- The overall plan for LCVP is good. Of particular merit is the detailing of how whole-school literacy and numeracy targets are deployed in the delivery of the programme.

- The curriculum plan for the delivery of link modules requires further development. A detailed yearly plan should be compiled by linking each activity to its specific learning outcomes, resources, and range of teaching and assessment methodologies.

- Programme activities such as 'My Own Place' could be included as an experiential learning activity for students. In addition, the planning team should review the sequencing of activities to ensure they are interlinked.

- The quality of the programme's provision is evaluated within the school by a comparison of students' attainment in certificate examinations with national norms, an analysis by link module teachers and the employers' performance reports. It is recommended that the views of students, parents and employers also inform evaluation of the programme.

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.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management welcomes the affirming content of this inspection report.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the   inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The time currently provided for LCVP is well above recommended guidelines and the programme is made available to all students as an optional subject following a recommendation from LCVP staff and students in 2004. Whilst this provision will be reviewed, the board of management has concerns about offering the programme in addition to the seven subjects taken by most students and about the timetabling implications arising from such a recommendation.

The existing good curriculum plan will be further expanded to link activities to learning outcomes, resources, teaching and assessment methodologies.

Additional views will be sought when reviewing the programme annually.

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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	*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 *outstanding* and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	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
Good	*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 *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	*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.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	*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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	*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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;