

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation in Leaving Certificate Applied

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Corran College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballymote Co Sligo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	72300R

Date of Evaluation: 11-October-2017



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 LCA 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 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.

Programme evaluation in LCA

Dates of inspection	9 and 11 October 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team and co-ordinator

School context

Corran College is a co-educational post-primary school located in Ballymote. It has an enrolment of 96 students. The college operates under the auspices of the Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion. All students in junior cycle take the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP). The school offers the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA). The number of students participating in the LCA programme stood at 11 at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good, with some exemplary practices observed.
- Preparation for lessons was good, learning intentions were shared and some good use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) by students.
- The quality of learning was good overall and most lessons had a good balance between active learning methodologies and teacher instruction.
- Whole-school provision for LCA is good and senior management supports the on-going development and embedding of the programme in the school effectively.
- The school supports teachers in engaging with appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) for the LCA programme.
- The LCA programme is well co-ordinated and some schemes of work have good levels of detail recorded.

Recommendations

- Learning intentions should be used to check if students have achieved in their learning and students should be encouraged to use the intentions to reflect on their learning.
- While the promotion of literacy and numeracy was evident in lessons, the co-ordination team should devise strategies and set targets, to ensure that a consistent approach to assessing students' progression in literacy and numeracy occurs in all modules of the programme.
- The schemes of work of the various subject modules should be consistent and ensure that specific methodologies are linked to learning outcomes, and separate schemes for LCA 1 and LCA 2 should be devised as the two year groups are taught together.
- A formal approach to the internal evaluation of LCA, which seeks the views of students, parents and staff involved in LCA, should be established.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1 TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Some approaches to teaching were exemplary. The classrooms where lessons took place were generally well presented with suitable material for LCA students.
- Lessons were well prepared. Good use was made of resources and equipment. Learning intentions were shared with students at the outset of all lessons and the focus of what students were expected to learn was clear. Teachers should refer to the learning intentions during their lessons to check if students have achieved the intended learning. Students should be encouraged to use learning intentions as part of their revision to reflect on their learning.
- Teachers used an effective range of classroom methodologies throughout the evaluation. These included individual student tasks, clear teacher instruction, project work, student discussion and group tasks. Most lessons contained a good balance between the time spent on student activities and teacher instruction. In some cases, the groups should have been provided with better structures around time keeping and assigned roles for group members. While there was good use of ICT by teachers and students, in one instance there was an over-reliance on presentation software, which in turn led to long periods of student passivity. This approach should be avoided where at all possible.
- Teachers used a variety of methods to develop literacy and numeracy skills during lessons. However, as these skills are part of the underlying principles of the LCA programme, the LCA team should devise strategies and set targets in relation to literacy and numeracy in order to assess students' progression in literacy and numeracy. This would allow for a consistent approach in all modules. The effectiveness of any initiatives should be reviewed regularly.
- The quality of learning was good overall. Classroom management was very good and student-teacher interactions were very positive, because of the fact that teachers know their students due to the small size of the school. Lessons were suitably differentiated by task and content, and the teachers have access to plans with educational needs that their students required. There was scope to provide the more able students with additional challenges, with particular attention given to the fact that LCA 1 and LCA 2 are taught in the same lessons.
- The quality of assessment was good. Questioning was the main form of assessment used and it was generally of a good standard. In some cases there was a need to distribute questions more widely across the student cohort to ensure that more students are given opportunities to respond. Students' responses showed that they had good understanding of the topics being taught. Student oracy skills were tested regularly throughout lessons and students confidently projected their voices when called upon.
- Student attendance is monitored by the teachers during their lessons and was generally reported to be very good.
- In order to further promote the programme, the co-ordination team should consider providing a noticeboard in the common area of the school for LCA activities undertaken throughout the two-year cycle.
- Student work and key assignments are stored and reviewed by teachers appropriately. Verbal and written feedback was used to support assessment for learning, though the oral feedback was more evident. A balance of written formative feedback and oral feedback should be provided by all LCA teachers in order to identify commendable work as well as areas for improvement.

2 PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of programme provision and whole-school support for LCA is good. A clear admissions policy for LCA, which includes a contract of conduct for students, has been created. The programme is well established within the school and the numbers enrolled are consistently good. LCA students are well catered for and included in the school community.
- The teachers involved in the programme are assigned appropriately and have good understanding of the principles of LCA. The co-ordination team and senior management facilitate teachers in accessing CPD on a regular basis. Senior management should consider creating a core team for LCA with dedicated time for meetings throughout the year.
- Good communication channels between the LCA co-ordinator, the guidance department and the special educational needs department exist. These departments as well as the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator and school completion programme are involved in a streamlined selection process for entry to LCA. Good information about the LCA programme as well as career and further education options are provided to students and parents in third-year.
- Students are offered a choice between the Graphics and Construction Studies specialism or the Craft and Design specialism at the start of the programme. This is good practice as it gives students a sense of ownership of the programme. Senior management should look to see if further choices between specialisms and electives are possible, where resources allow. While an induction process is in place for LCA 1 students at the start of the programme, thought should be given to expanding the duration of the induction as well as trying to involve the parents in this process.
- Good links with the wider community for work placements are established and students reported that they experienced a variety of placements during their time in LCA. The students, over the course of the two years of the programme, undertake all four modules of work.
- The timetabling of the programme over the two-year cycle is generally very good. Effective planning for the concurrent timetabling of both years is in place. LCA 2 students completed the Irish modules last year and currently along with LCA 1 are studying French this academic year.

3 PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW

- LCA is well co-ordinated. A good plan with organisational details has been created. Subject plans for the modules offered on the programme are in place and some of these are of a good standard. However, there is a need for the schemes to link the learning outcomes of the modules to specific methodologies so that they can be used more effectively as working documents. Greater consistency across the schemes is needed in some cases and all modules should have separate schemes for LCA 1 and LCA 2 to ensure that lessons are suitably differentiated by year group.
- Minutes of any LCA meeting that occur are maintained and kept on file. While some informal evaluation of the programme occurs, a formal approach to the internal evaluation of LCA, which seeks the views of students, parents and staff involved in LCA, should be established.

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 positive LCA report and are particularly pleased that the report acknowledges the many strengths of the programme including the caring ethos of the school and the commitment of the teaching staff to using a wide variety of teaching methodologies and resources.

The report reinforces the positive teaching and learning atmosphere, the programme provision, coordination and whole school support. We welcome the opportunity to enhance the programme through further planning, discussion and evaluation.

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 LCA coordination team will discuss, devise strategies and set targets to ensure students' progress in literacy and numeracy is consistent throughout the LCA programme.
- Staff are encouraged to use the learning intentions more effectively to support student engagement in reflective practice during lessons and throughout the LCA programme.
- The school management and LCA coordination team will discuss with the teaching staff a template to be used in the development of their subject modules for LCA1 & LCA2.
- The LCA co-ordination team will discuss the opportunity to develop a formal approach to an internal evaluation of the LCA programme.
This evaluation, supported by school management, will seek the views of students, staff and parents as their voices and experiences are essential to the ongoing development of the LCA programme.
- An LCA noticeboard has been established in the school to highlight the LCA activities taking place together with all of the key information of the LCA programme.

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 of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;