

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Programme Evaluation**  
**Leaving Certificate Applied**  
**REPORT**

**Glanmire Community College**  
**Glanmire, County Cork**  
**Roll number: 76064F**

**Date of inspection: 25 February 2016**



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

# REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED PROGRAMME

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## INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	24 and 25 February 2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to fair, with some instances of exemplary practice.
- In some lessons, very good examples of active learning and collaborative strategies enhanced students' learning experiences.
- Classroom atmosphere was positive.
- Whole-school support for the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme is very good.
- The needs and interests of students are prioritised in curricular design and implementation.
- The quality of co-ordination of the LCA programme is very good.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explicit planning for and facilitating of the development of students' numeracy skills should occur to a greater extent in lessons.
  - Teaching and learning should be included on the agenda of LCA team meetings to facilitate focused discussion on specific teaching strategies.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Glanmire Community College provides education for the boys and girls of Glanmire and its surroundings. It operates under the auspices of Cork Education and Training Board and the Diocese of Cork and Ross. Currently, it has an enrolment of 1,010 students. It offers Junior Certificate, Transition Year, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) to its students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to very good, with some instances of exemplary practice.
- Almost all lessons were very well structured. In these lessons, learning outcomes were clearly shared at the outset and whole-class discussion and questioning were interspersed with individual, pair or group activities, thus facilitating ongoing engagement. In some instances it was recommended to factor in time for recapitulation.
- Where student learning was at an optimum, lessons were very well prepared and challenging and interesting tasks were included. Questioning was effectively used to ascertain learning and develop lesson content. In addition, in a few instances, higher-order questioning was very effectively used to develop students' critical thinking skills.
- Very good practice was observed where individual attention from teachers clearly supported students as they completed their practical and task work.
- In one instance, it was recommended that where students conduct research and present their findings, a clear framework should be given to support the students in advance. Ongoing support should also be provided to the students as they conduct the task in order to ensure that they understand the information gathered. In this way, students' self-esteem, confidence and communication skills can be supported and developed, and the student presenting can then more easily answer questions from peers.
- In some lessons, very good examples of active learning strategies, including pair work and group work, enhanced students' learning experiences. For example, the use of role play in one lesson gave a real context to and enhanced students' learning. In other lessons the use of brainstorming to ascertain students' previous learning was very effective in setting the scene for the structured collaborative activities that followed. In these lessons the collaborative activities were interspersed with whole-class discussion, thus successfully consolidating students' learning.
- Overall, a very good emphasis on developing students' understanding of key terms and concepts was evident, and the quality of teacher explanation was very good. Student literacy development was further supported by the facilitation of opportunities to listen, to use the vocabulary that they were learning and to write. This is commended.
- In one lesson, students were asked to justify the selection of specific terms they were using. This was very good as it assisted in the development of students' critical thinking skills.
- Explicit planning for and facilitation of the development of students' numeracy skills should occur to a greater extent in lessons.
- In one instance students were asked to peer assess, 'two stars and a wish'. This very good approach should be used across lessons.

- Classroom atmosphere was positive. The positive classroom atmosphere and good humour of students and teachers added to student learning in some lessons. On the rare occasion it was needed, discipline was sensitively maintained.
- Performance in certificate examinations compares favourably with national norms.
- It is clear from examination of students' written work that significant progress has been made in their learning and skill development. In addition, considerable development of students' written presentation skills has taken place over the course of the programme.

#### **PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Whole-school support for LCA is very good. There is effective support for the on-going development of the programme in the school. Staff are appropriately assigned and inducted to teach the programme with effective continuity evident. Given the recent opening of a new extension, increased student access to information and communication technology (ICT) is recommended.
- Commendably, LCA students are an integral part of their specific year group and support is provided using the year-head and class-tutor structures.
- The programme co-ordinator teaches the LCA class and is ideally positioned to maintain close contact and rapport with all of the students involved. This is a major strength of the programme and contributes greatly to its overall cohesiveness and success.
- There are very good supports in place on the programme for students with special educational needs. Significantly, support is provided by means of withdrawal for those students who are exempt from Irish and French and in some instances team teaching. This is very good practice. The use team teaching is encouraged to a greater extent to support other students who require additional help.
- The needs and interests of students are prioritised in curricular design and implementation. Decisions regarding the courses to be offered are influenced by the preferences of students, within the constraints of teacher availability. This is in line with best practice. In recent times, changes to courses offered have been made following input from students. This is very good.
- It is commended that a choice of vocational specialism has been provided, where the number of students made this feasible.
- Practical subjects should be timetabled for at least one double lesson each week. This would facilitate, to a greater extent, lesson introduction, modelling of skill development as appropriate and particularly, time for significant engagement with the practical task and review of learning at the end of lessons.
- Students undertake work experience one day each week. This arrangement is working well, to the satisfaction of the school and the students. Work experience is very well integrated into the programme.
- Commendably, teachers are facilitated in engaging with appropriate continuing professional development (CPD).

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

- The quality of co-ordination of the LCA programme is very good. A comprehensive co-ordinator's planning folder has been devised to support this work.
- Planning for the programme is very effective. Written plans have been devised for the LCA courses, the majority of which are comprehensive. Those that were particularly good included reference to specific teaching methodologies, modes of assessment and evaluation, an approach that is encouraged.
- Minutes of LCA team meetings are kept by the co-ordinator and there is clarity of purpose among the whole programme team.
- Building on this good practice, it is recommended that teaching and learning be included on the agenda of meetings. Focused discussion could then take place on specific teaching strategies. The sharing of good practice and the implementation of agreed strategies could then occur.
- Lesson preparation was of high quality in almost all lessons observed.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals and co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.