



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Evaluation of Youthreach Provision Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Edenderry Youthreach
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Sr. Senan Road, Edenderry, Co. Offaly.
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	40538W
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	06-12-2023

What is an evaluation of Youthreach provision?

Evaluations of Youthreach provision are conducted in centres for education and community training centres. The evaluations examine the extent to which the centre is identifying and meeting the needs of the young people who attend it and the quality of the governance, leadership and management of the centre. They provide advice and support to teaching staffs, resource persons, centre coordinators and centre management

How to read this report

During these inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated provision under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Identifying and meeting the needs of the young people
2. The governance, leadership and management of the centre

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.

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.

Actions of the centre to safeguard young people

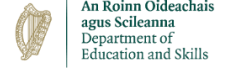
During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the centre's child protection and procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the child safeguarding statement are prominently displayed near the main door of the centre / in the reception area
2. The centre's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All learning practitioners visited have reported that they have read the centre's child safeguarding statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as a mandated person
4. The centre's child safeguarding statement meets the requirements of Children First 2015.
5. The minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child protection oversight report
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all centre personnel on child protection procedures in line with Children First 2015
7. Centre planning documentation indicates that the centre is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, RSE)
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location

The centre was not compliant with all checks after the post-evaluation meeting.

The centre met all the requirements in relation to seven of the eight child protection checks. The centre did not meet the requirements in relation to check 5 of the child protection checks.

Responsibility for ensuring the centre is fully compliant with these check(s) rests with the board of management. The Inspectorate will monitor the board's progress in achieving full compliance.



Youthreach Centres are co-funded by the Government of Ireland, the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020

Evaluation of Youthreach provision

Date of inspection	06-12-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation and engagement in learning settings• Interaction with young people and review of their work• Meetings with:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• centre management• staff• young people• parents/guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of documents and assessment data:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centre improvement plans• Plans for training and skill development, teaching and learning• Individual support plans• Relevant policies and procedures• Feedback to centre coordinator, ETB management and teachers

Centre context

Edenderry Youthreach operates under Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB). At the time of the evaluation the centre provided Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) courses at level three and level four, and a summer programme for learners. There were twenty-four learners enrolled in the centre. The centre was staffed by a co-ordinator and a team of six learning practitioners and supported by a guidance counsellor from LOEB's guidance service, on a part-time basis. The co-ordinator was responsible for the management of the further education and training campus, including the Youthreach centre which was located on the same campus in Edenderry.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The staff in Edenderry Youthreach were dedicated and committed and had significant experience working with Youthreach provision.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the centre was good with instances of very good practice observed.
- The quality of the learners' experience was good overall. Staff created a caring and welcoming environment for learners.
- The quality of governance, leadership and management of the centre was satisfactory: good practice existed in many areas, but key areas such as organisational planning and policy development required significant improvement.
- At the time of the evaluation the centre was not fully compliant with all child protection checks.
- At the time of the evaluation there was no board of management in place.

Recommendations

- LOETB should ensure that a board of management is in place. As a priority the board should develop a schedule to review, update and ratify all centre policies including matters relating to child protection oversight.
- Centre management should develop and implement an action plan to facilitate and improve attendance rates for learners across the centre.
- The curriculum should be broadened, to complement the current provision at QQI levels three and four, to meet the needs of all learners.
- In order to enhance the learner voice in the centre a learner council should be established.

- LOETB should ensure that there is an explicit focus on aspects of provision specific to the Youthreach programme including: compliance with the length of the Youthreach centre week; the provision of a formalised and structured key-working support; and the delivery of a more comprehensive work experience module for all learners.
- To meet the requirements of and to be fully compliant with Child Protection Procedures, LOETB and centre management should ensure that the minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child protection oversight report.

Detailed findings and recommendations

Learner Experiences

The co-ordinator and staff had created a caring, inclusive and welcoming environment for learners in Edenderry Youthreach. Student and parent responses to surveys conducted during the evaluation and many of the learners in the focus group were very positive about their experiences in the centre.

Learners expressed how much they enjoyed coming to the centre to learn and meet other young people. The positive relationship between learning practitioners and learners was built upon mutual respect and affirmation.

The majority of the learners were engaged successfully with level four QQI modules, with most learners aspiring to achieve a full QQI award. Where necessary, the centre had provided some additional short courses and QQI modules. All learners had access to an appropriate Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) programme.

The centre helped learners develop their life skills and a whole-centre approach was evident. Learners were provided with opportunities to develop practical skills such as catering, safe food preparation, first-aid, personal care and health and safety. Development of learner wellbeing was provided through modules such as health-related fitness. Programmes to assist with career preparation and work experience were also provided. Learners in the focus group expressed a desire to develop additional skills and centre management should explore the possibility of providing such training for learners.

Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning observed was good with very good practice in a number of instances. There was however, room for improvement in a small minority of lessons, in terms of encouraging further learner participation.

Lessons that were very good were well planned and prepared, had clear and coherent structures and were underpinned by identifiable and shared aims for the lesson. The effective strategies employed: successfully promoted learner responses to stimulus materials; included learners in whole-class teacher inputs; fostered meaningful engagement in tasks; and promoted the development of skills. These highly effective lessons had a realistic level of challenge for the learners in terms of: pitch and pace; task requirements; the level of responsibility placed on learners to engage and to achieve, and in the review of their learning. This practice should be developed across the centre.

During the lessons observed, classroom management and learner behaviour was good. Learners engaged well with their lessons and in some instances good one-to-one support was provided by practitioners. There was scope to further provide opportunities for learners to collaborate and work with their peers. These learning opportunities should be included in lessons with particular emphasis on ensuring a better balance between practitioner talk and learner inputs.

Information and communications technology (ICT), including good use of media clips, was used to good effect in some lessons. Given the extensive ICT facilities available in the centre consideration should be given to ways of extending the use of this valuable resource.

Questioning strategies were of a good quality and encouraged learners to explore subject content comprehensively. The quality of learners' work was high and reflected the range of abilities within the classrooms. The learners' folders contained structured module tasks, project work and evidence of ongoing review and reflection by the learners themselves. Formative feedback, however, was generally given orally and it is recommended that written supportive and informative feedback on the quality of learners' work should be provided where relevant.

In general, curricular plans were developed to a good standard with topics linked to the planned learning outcomes and teaching methodologies. However, most plans lacked details on modes of assessment and literacy and numeracy strategies. Plans should be updated to include this information.

The centre had a recognised teacher of SPHE who also taught the RSE component. The relevant training had been undertaken by the tutor who was following the SKILLY programme as well as the delivery of the Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching (TRUST) resource.

Notwithstanding the fact that staff members were working to capacity in the centre, the staffing situation at the time of the evaluation had resulted in the delivery of a restricted curriculum, which was determined by the skills of the existing staff, rather than by the needs of the learners. Centre management and LOETB need to work together to address this issue.

Learners' individual needs in lessons

As part of the induction process, the centre used assessment software to gauge learners' literacy and numeracy levels and to plot those onto a relevant QQI level three or four programme. The use of this baseline data of individual learners' competences should be extended and reviewed by learning practitioners and revised targets set. There was a need for a more focused approach to the assessment of learners at the point of entry and at regular intervals thereafter. It is recommended that a more structured induction programme be developed, which includes a comprehensive exploration of learners' education and career interests, social personal needs and individual strengths. Following this process, areas for development should be identified and the current individual learning and support files for each learner be re-devised. In addition, an action plan that charts the learner's educational aspirations and progress should be maintained.

To advance the learning programme within the centre, it is advised that the curriculum is broadened. The potential of providing opportunities to achieve a QQI level five for some learners in their third year in the centre should also be explored.

Life Skills

While there was no formal learner council, student voice was recognised through the learners' contribution to the centre's self-evaluation process. Consideration should now be given to the establishment of a learner council in the centre.

Life skills development was a focus for learners attending the centre. At a curricular level, this was included within each programme through the inclusion of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Health-Related Fitness and work placement. There was a particular focus on developing learners' confidence and social skills to assist them in their progression to further education and training, or to employment.

Supporting transition

On registration, the co-ordinator worked with individual learners to support them to settle into the centre through an induction programme. The centre's induction programme provided information for learners about the centre and was reinforced by a centre charter which all learners signed. Attendance requirements for learners and sanctions for continued non-attendance should be clearly communicated at the outset.

Systems for recording daily attendance were maintained and the co-ordinator monitored overall attendance patterns. Communication systems were in place to notify parents and guardians of learner absences. However, in general, learner attendance and punctuality trends were fair, and

lateness was a significant issue for a majority of learners during the evaluation. In order to improve overall attendance and punctuality, centre management, together with LOETB, should develop and implement an action plan. This action plan should include specific and measurable targets for improvement in individual learners' attendance. This may necessitate an examination of the hours during which the centre operates so as to align with available public transport which would facilitate students getting there on time every day while fulfilling their requirement to be onsite for the twenty-eight-hour week.

Supporting progression and Progression links

The social, emotional and academic needs of individual learners were discussed at staff meetings and care meetings. The outcomes of these discussions should be documented in individual learning and support files to facilitate tracking of individual learners' progress.

There was no formal mentoring programme in place across the centre. Learning practitioners, acting as mentors, should be established to facilitate learners in setting their own academic, career and personal goals and to engage them in related action planning. This process should be directly linked to the individual learning plans (ILPs) to enable regular monitoring and tracking of learners' progress.

Centre management and LOETB had started to develop positive links with post leaving certificate programme (PLC) providers and third level institutions to provide learners with various progression routes. This practice should be extended to providing appropriate work placement opportunities for learners linked to their career ambitions and prospects.

The centre had access to a trained guidance counsellor who was available one day per week and whose role was to advise learners about progression pathways. To further support learners, one-to-one guidance should be offered on a regular basis and learning and support files should be updated frequently to improve outcomes and experiences. Closer links should be developed between the guidance counsellor and the work experience co-ordinator to align work experience opportunities with the career interests of the learners. Both students and parents expressed a desire for more career inputs and more structured guidance about future progression pathways in education and training. It is recommended that the centre approaches LOETB to explore additional support for learners in social and personal counselling, where required.

Learners' achievements were recognised and celebrated within the centre. The centre hold an awards nights for all learners within its remit to celebrate their achievement. This was shared on the centres social media page.

2. The governance, leadership and management of the centre

The quality of governance, leadership and management of Edenderry Youthreach was satisfactory.

Governance

LOETB had ten FET centres under its auspices, five of which operated Youthreach provision. The ETB actively supported the Edenderry centre by providing resources and professional development for staff. There was no board of management in place to provide oversight of the centre. This should be addressed by the ETB on an individual level or through providing a board that effectively oversees the Youthreach centres in the LOETB region. The Adult Education Officer (AEO) was kept informed of centre activities through co-ordinator meetings and reports. Minutes of these meetings should be maintained. The development of communication and curricular provision should be enhanced and centre policies should be devised in consultation with the ETB and staff.

The quality of oversight needed to be improved. A range of centre policies had been devised in consultation with the ETB and staff. However, most of these policies were devised some years

before. Enhanced communication, broadening of curricular provision and updating of centre policies in consultation with the ETB and centre staff should be prioritised. Clear guidelines should be established relating to child protection, data management, enrolment, behaviour, suspension and expulsion and across many policy areas that require mandatory reporting. There is a need to review all policies on a regular basis and to involve parents and learners in policy development and review.

Internal communication between centre staff was facilitated through staff meetings, emails and through the use of an online digital platform. Staff meetings were held with agendas prepared. The recent good practice of holding monthly staff meetings was a positive initiative and should be continued. The documenting of the minutes relating to staff meetings should be examined, particularly relating to child protection concerns and further discussion should be provided around centre development, teaching, learning and the curriculum. The practice of discussing individual learners and their needs and recording the outcomes of these discussions in staff meeting minutes should cease immediately.

Relationships and communication with parents were observed to be positive across the centre. Parents expressed a level of satisfaction with the centre but would like to receive more information on learner progression and future career prospects for their children.

Centre organisation and leadership

The centre was staffed by a small team of dedicated and committed staff, many of whom had worked in Youthreach provision for several years. The highly experienced and long-serving co-ordinator was an able administrator. She was dedicated and hardworking, and was committed to the centre, while also managing the Further Education and Training (FET) section of the campus under the remit of the ETB. She promoted a culture of collaboration and fostered a commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity. She was ably assisted by an assistant coordinator. In light of the fact that the co-ordinator is managing the Youthreach and FET centre, the LOETB should look at providing further administrative supports in managing the overall campus.

There was a positive atmosphere in the centre during the evaluation. Learners and staff expressed a sense of belonging and connection. Staff focused on promoting a caring environment and supported learners' wellbeing through initiatives that were run across the centre. The standards of behaviour and social interaction amongst learners were observed to be good.

Meals were prepared by learners as part of their curriculum and learners were encouraged to eat together at lunch. Catering facilities were good across the centre and the development of the life skills of cooking was high on the agenda of the centre staff. The choice of food should be discussed with learners in order to increase participation and uptake of centre lunches provided. Promotion of a healthy lifestyle was in place through the curricular provision offered at QQI level 4 programme, Health and Fitness. The centre had also gained the rights to use a local gym and astro turf facility. The staff worked in a dedicated and committed manner with most having many years of experience of Youthreach provision.

The centre had actively engaged in the Green Schools programme and had obtained two Green Schools flags for recycling and water conservation and were actively working on obtaining a third. This was very good practice in relation to sustainability and was evidenced throughout the centre.

The centre provided a summer programme. However the learners reported that they were not aware of what that entailed. An effective summer programme should be developed, documented and put in place to meet the needs of all learners.

The co-ordinator, staff and learners had a sense of pride in the centre which was maintained to a very high standard. However, there was a need to ensure that the access points to the centre are securely maintained in order to ensure learner safety. The centre was very well resourced in digital learning facilities all learners had their own digital devices and access to an online learning platform.

The centre staff had good access to continuing professional development (CPD) offered by LOETB. The centre had built a good network of support with education and training providers. There was scope to strengthen links with employers and other voluntary bodies.

The centre co-ordinator and staff were open to new ideas and demonstrated a willingness to work towards improvement. The centre's improvement plan with identified actions was monitored and reviewed. With increased oversight and support by LOETB and the increased delegation of leadership within the centre there was good capacity for improvement.

The centre benefited from a favourable tutor-to-learner ratio and staff were highly qualified. Mainly due to transport issues, the centre was not providing the appropriate weekly hours of instruction to all learners. LOETB and all stakeholders should review the opening hours of the centre in order to comply with all necessary requirements.

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the centre 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 centre'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 centres in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <i>outstanding</i> and provides an example for other centres 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 centre 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 centre 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-centre 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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Observations on the content of the inspection report

LOETB welcomes the findings of this Inspection Report.

LOETB wish to express gratitude to the “dedicated and hard-working” Centre Manager and her “dedicated and committed” staff team who work tirelessly to provide a very effective and professional Youthreach programme in the centre and wish to congratulate them on this Report.

The Report’s findings that “the overall quality of teaching and learning was good with instances of very good practice observed” and that “Staff created a caring and welcoming environment for learners” are accurate and well-deserved.

LOETB’s FET Management Team will work with the team at Edenderry FET Centre to implement the recommendations for the benefit of all stakeholders.

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

LOETB accepts the recommendations of the Inspection Report as a positive contribution towards the continuous improvement and future development of the Youthreach programme in the centre. Since the Inspection, staff and management have been working to implement the recommendations.

Work continues on the development of common policies that will be implemented consistently across all Youthreach programmes within LOETB. This includes the development of an agreed single Code of Behaviour which will encompass learner behaviour, punctuality and attendance. As part of the consultative process, the draft policy will be discussed with staff, learners and parents before it is presented to LOETB management for approval. This policy will be subject to a periodic review (with version control tables), updating and ratification as are all FET centre policies.

The Learner Council in the centre has been re-established with two representatives from the Youthreach programme participating. Learner representatives will participate in the planning of the Youthreach Summer Programme, will provide feedback in relation to student issues such as lunchtime menus, module choices, centre activities and any issues relating to overall student experience.

A clear process in relation to reporting of Child Protection Oversight Reports is in place across all LOETB FET Centres. The FET Manager (Pathways) oversees the implementation of this process. LOETB’s Compliance Officer also conducts audits of all policies.

The Centre timetable has been amended with effect from January 2024. Classes now start thirty minutes later to facilitate students limited by bus timetables, with a consequential shorter lunch break. This has enhanced punctuality rates and helps to ensure that learners are fulfilling the required number of hours.