



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Evaluation of Youthreach Provision Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Bantry Youthreach
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Bantry, Lahadane, Co.Cork.
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	42279L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	12-10-2023

---

# 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 inspectors 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

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; a response was not received from the board.

## Actions of the centre to safeguard young people

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school'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 school 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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

*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

<b>Date of inspection</b>	12-10-2023
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation and engagement in learning settings</li><li>• Interaction with young people and review of their work</li><li>• Meetings with:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• centre management</li><li>• staff</li><li>• young people</li><li>• parents/guardians</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of documents and assessment data:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Centre improvement plans</li><li>– Plans for training and skill development, teaching and learning</li><li>– Individual support plans</li><li>– Relevant policies and procedures</li></ul></li><li>• Feedback to centre coordinator, ETB management and centre staff</li></ul>

## Centre context

Bantry Youthreach operates under the management of Cork Education and Training Board (Cork ETB). At the time of the evaluation, thirty-three learners were enrolled. Learners are offered the opportunity to achieve the following QQI awards: Employability Skills Level 3 and Employment Skills Level 4. Learners also explore Social, Personal and Health Education and undertake work experience.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The very positive relationships between learners and staff was a standout feature of Bantry Youthreach.
- Management and staff were keenly focused on the identification of personalised learner goals, with notable levels of mutual respect motivated learners to achieve.
- A progression-focused outlook supported learners to plan for further education and training and, ultimately, a career; a key aspect of this outlook was the recognition by all personnel of the need to raise individual learners' ambitions, hopes, and self-belief.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good.
- Learners benefitted greatly from the presence of an extremely dedicated centre coordinator, an equally committed staff team, a supportive and hardworking team of ancillary staff, and a dynamic adult education officer (AEO).
- Firmly established relationships with local organisations and businesses made a positive contribution to the work of the centre, especially in relation to work experience and progression opportunities.

### Recommendations

- To build sustainable leadership and empower others, the centre coordinator should promote collective responsibility for the operation of the centre through greater delegation of key tasks, as identified by this report and the Centre Evaluation and Planning (CEIP) report.
- The valuable practice of key working had been in place in the past but had been discontinued at the time of the evaluation; it was recommended that management should reinstate the key worker process and the related collaborative development of individual learner plans (ILPs).

- Data linked to the initial and ongoing assessment of learners was underutilised. Centre staff should use assessment data to establish a baseline, identify priority learning needs, and inform teaching and learning.
- Whilst acknowledging the valuable contribution that all staff personnel make to progression planning, the career guidance counsellor should be facilitated to lead this work.
- With a view to enhancing the overall good quality of teaching and learning observed, staff should provide greater opportunities for co-operative learning, with a particular emphasis on supporting the development of learners' confidence and oral language skills.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. Identifying and meeting the needs of young people

#### ***Meeting learner needs through effective learner experiences***

- The learner experience was found to be very positive overall, with some possibilities for improvement identified.
- The very positive relationships between learners and staff created an environment that almost all learners recognised as welcoming and secure, and they greatly supported staff in the ongoing identification of learners' strengths and needs.
- An initial challenge to needs identification was parent and learner reluctance to share information, but as learners settled into the centre this hesitancy diminished. This was attributed, by learners and parents alike, to the open, respectful, understanding and supportive manner in which all staff interacted with learners.
- There was an absence of formal information regarding the learners' previous educational experiences and outcomes. The whole staff should consider the information that would be useful in building a programme that meets individual learner's personal, social and academic needs, and devise a plan for when, where and how this information is accessed, with particular consideration given to formalising links with the learners' previous schools.
- The coordinator implemented the centre induction programme, one rooted in ensuring a personable and positive initial experience. There was scope for enhancing whole staff involvement in this foundational process. The development of a collaboratively designed and implemented, formal induction programme was recommended.

#### ***Identifying and meeting learner needs through individualised planning and tracking***

- In line with good practice, staff were keenly focused on the identification of personalised goals at classroom level. Learners' commitment to the achievement of goals was supported by a notable mutual respect and a developing sense of accomplishment, and all learners recognised that they were encouraged and supported by staff to work hard and improve.
- Staff responded proactively to learners' abilities and developing needs. Learners who demonstrated an aptitude and openness for further learning, for example, were supported to undertake additional modules. Similarly, options available to learners on Wednesday afternoons were adapted in response to expressed interests and recognised needs.
- Learners undertook an entry assessment to measure their cognitive ability and oral literacy. The results of these assessments were underutilised. It is recommended that this data be used to: establish a baseline of learner attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy; inform the identification of priority learning areas; and influence teaching approaches.
- There was high regard amongst staff for the key worker role, and there was a related belief in the potential of more formal, individualised target setting to support progress and achievement. However, this practice had been discontinued at the time of the evaluation. The reinstatement of the key worker process and the accompanying collaborative development of ILPs was recommended. In order to promote consistency, the possibility of

availing of relevant professional development should be explored. In due course, a mechanism to support ongoing sharing of staff experiences should be considered.

- Almost all staff consistently tracked learner progress in QQI accredited modules. However progress was not tracked for non-QQI subjects. The tracking of progress is important for both QQI and non-QQI subjects, therefore progress tracking should be extended to all subjects and modules. Some staff used an in-house developed tracking application to log both progression through components, and attendance. This application, which offered an easily understood summary of achievement and participation, was used to support learner self-reflection. A sharing of individual approaches to tracking could valuably inform the development of an agreed, whole-centre approach.
- Learner attendance was supported by a person-centred, sign-in process and an expectation that learners made contact if late or absent. Nevertheless, consistent attendance was a challenge. There was a transport issue that was impacting attendance but there may have been other factors. It is recommended that centre management and staff, as well as learners and parents, explore barriers to attendance. The resulting insights should inform a centre attendance strategy. It is also worth considering the impact that key working and ILPs could make to individual learner's levels of attendance, personal responsibility and motivation.

### ***Meeting learners needs and the promotion of learner wellbeing through teaching about and for wellbeing***

- The coordinators vision to create a safe place for learning was supported by a staff team that were equally convinced of this important foundation for engagement, participation and learning. Centre culture and climate, which was observed as positive, was positively impacted by this premise.
- One-to-one counselling, designed to offer empathy and foster empowerment, was available for learners. The allocation was inadequate in terms of meeting the learners' extensive needs; as resources permit, an increase in this allocation would be valuable.
- Staff had identified aspects for development under the banner of learners' holistic needs, and the recent timetabling of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) will provide a dedicated space and time where teaching and learning about wellbeing can be facilitated. Going forward, planning for this aspect of teaching and learning should be informed by the QQI Level 3 Personal and Interpersonal Skills (PIPS) and the Level 4 Personal and Interpersonal Development (PID). It is also important that programme content be informed by learner needs.
- Provision and programme planning for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) required improvement. External facilitators delivered aspects of the RSE programme and there was a need to rebalance the role of external facilitator and classroom teacher. Suitable training for those charged with the delivery of RSE should also be considered.
- Consideration should also be given to how the classroom experience could further support student wellbeing and, ultimately, student flourishing. To this end, staff should consider how they might further support teaching and learning for wellbeing by developing the following learner capacities: creativity; connectedness; empathy; teamwork; persistence; resilience; and positive self-concept. This is known as teaching and learning for wellbeing. The centres overall work to promote and support students' wellbeing should be informed by the department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*.

### ***Meeting learner needs through effective teaching and quality learner experiences***

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with practice in individual classrooms ranging from very good to fair.
- In a minority of lessons, where practice was noted as very good, lessons were well-structured, with learning intentions and key vocabulary shared at lesson outset. Lesson content was presented in a clear and engaging manner, using a variety of well-chosen resources. Technology was used effectively to scaffold learning and support engagement.

Learners had an opportunity to engage in individual and collaborative activities designed to consolidate learning. There was an opportunity for learners to reflect on learning at lesson end.

- Classroom atmosphere was generally very positive. Students responded well to classroom management strategies, which were founded on the values of respect and honesty.
- There was a need to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning in some classrooms. In some lessons there was an observed occasional need for the practitioner to give less in order to get more from the learners. It is recommended that learner practitioners consider the balance between teacher input and learner activity.
- Overall, it was noted that there was a need to provide the learners with greater opportunities to engage in co-operative learning. The need to increase the inclusion of related talk and discussion-based methodologies was also noted, with the specific purpose of supporting the development of learners' oral language skills. It is recommended that learning practitioners further included group or pair work, project work, and opportunities for learners to discuss their learning and to collaborate.
- The centre implemented a discreet programme designed to support the development of literacy skills, and plans were in place to reintroduce Mathematics in the near future. The suitability of the chosen literacy support programme, which was designed for adults as opposed to teenagers, merits further discussion.
- Staff recognised compromised literacy levels as a key barrier to learner progression. It is recommended that information from relevant assessment sources inform the development of a cross-curricular approach to supporting the development of literacy skills. Staff had also identified the need for ongoing professional learning development (PLD) to support this work and this should inform related inputs in the short to medium term.

### ***Meeting learner needs through planning for progression***

- A progression-focused, whole-centre outlook effectively supported young people to identify a plan for further education and training and, ultimately, a career. A key aspect of this outlook was the staff's recognition of the need to raise learners' ambitions, hopes and self-belief. This approach had the added benefits of supporting the development of a growth mind-set in learners and contributing to their wellbeing. This approach acknowledged a much wider, all-encompassing understanding of progression, for which all personnel are highly commended.
- All personnel made a valuable contribution to progression planning, and almost all learners agreed that they got good, relevant advice and support. However, there was a need to ensure that the guidance provision was centrally managed and informed by the valuable expertise within the centre. It is recommended that the newly appointed, highly experienced, career guidance counsellor lead this work. The work of learner practitioners charged with the delivery of relevant components, for example career planning, should be informed by the guidance plan.
- At the time of the evaluation it was not centre practice to develop individual learner education and career progression plans. The development of these plans should now be prioritised. This planning would further inform the well-established provision for work experience, guest speakers and visits to colleges of further education and training, promote a greater sense of learner ownership of their future hopes and dreams, and positively impact attendance and participation.
- It would also be valuable to review where past learners have progressed over a defined period of time. This could explore learners' achievements, based on their known needs and strengths, and the learners' sense of satisfaction with their chosen pathway. The outcomes of this review should inform and influence future programme content.

# The governance, leadership and management of the centre

## ***Centre organisation, management and governance***

- An extremely dedicated coordinator oversaw the appropriate day-to-day management of the centre. Deep-seated concern for the wellbeing of young people was at the heart of this approach.
- Two newly-appointed, part-time resource workers were responsive in their work to support the coordinator, with no clear delineation of roles and responsibilities. It is recommended that this working relationship be supported by the agreement of clearly defined roles and responsibilities and the establishment of structures designed to promote enhanced formal communication and support planning.
- While the effectiveness of informal communication amongst staff is acknowledged, the reinstatement of regular, formal, staff meetings should be prioritised.
- An effective working relationship existed between the committed coordinator and a dynamic AEO, as evidenced in a number of recent developments including the appointment of a guidance counsellor and funding for ongoing plant maintenance.
- The ETB, coordinator, and in particular the dedicated caretaker, were highly commended for the provision of a well-maintained building and grounds. The centre was appropriately resourced, with well-furnished and well-equipped classrooms.
- Cork ETB provided a range of PLD opportunities, with an openness to the design of needs-informed, additional opportunities. It is good practice that staff had engaged well with a range of valuable offerings.
- The centre benefited from the support of a board of management. The coordinator was very positive about the opportunities related meetings provided to share with and learn from other coordinators. However, meetings were infrequent in nature. It is recommended, especially in light of the board's child protection oversight role, that the chairperson seeks to ensure that a meeting is convened at least once every term.
- The approach to placing learners in class groups required improvement. It was practice to place students initially into classes on the basis of social needs and then to move learners once they had settled into the centre. This process made it difficult to plan for progression, as it was challenging for learning practitioners to plan for consistent teaching and learning. Lesson planning was more difficult as multiple programmes were being accommodated in lessons. It is recommended that consideration be given to alternative approaches to initial and ongoing class organisation.

## **Planning for centre development**

- The centre had recently engaged with CEIP. The majority of staff believed the process was disconnected from practice and limited in impact, as similar priorities were identified in successive CEIPs. It was evident that there was a lack of sufficient action to drive improvement. It is recommended that CEIP, along with key aspects for development identified in this report, become concrete drivers for centre improvement. Related priority areas should also benefit from stronger leadership, greater devolvement of responsibilities, and engagement with appropriate PLD.

## ***Relationships and Partnerships***

- All learners agreed that their views were sought and listened to. The recent establishment of a learner council will bolster centre efforts to harness learner voice.
- The coordinator valued communication with parents who, in turn, viewed centre staff as approachable, welcoming and supportive.



- The centre benefitted from firmly established relationships with many local, statutory and voluntary, organisations and businesses. The latter supported access to work experience and presented progression opportunities for learners.

## 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;