



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Evaluation of Youthreach Provision Report

## REPORT

Centre name	Youthreach - Ballinasloe
Centre address	Poolboy, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
Roll number	40030J
Date of evaluation	10-October-2023

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# 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 this 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 checks 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 of the child protection checks. It did not meet the requirements of check 2 and 5 of the child protection checks. However, the centre subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.



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# Evaluation of Youthreach provision

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	3 to 5 October 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 and learning practitioners</li></ul>

## Centre context

Youthreach Ballinasloe was established in 1990 and operates under the management of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB). It has capacity for 25 learners and at the time of the evaluation the enrolment stood at 19. The centre provided Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) courses at Level 3 and Level 4.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The centre was somewhat effective in identifying the strengths and needs of learners and using this information to inform provision, the centre created Individualised Learning Plans (ILPs) for its learners upon enrolment, though these needed to be further developed to ensure the needs of all learners were met.
- Learners' welfare and wellbeing were positively supported by breakfast and lunch clubs, a social activity room and having access to guidance and counselling sessions in the centre.
- The quality of teaching, learning and training was good overall.
- The courses available to learners in the centre were good, but there was scope to make further use of the expertise and skill sets of staff to create further curricular options.
- Very positive learner-practitioner interactions were evident in most instances, though behaviour management in a small number of instances required improvement.
- Attendance for some learners was good but less than satisfactory for others.
- The quality of centre organisation and leadership was good.
- Parents/guardians spoke very positively of the centre and good links with the community, the wider GRETB network and external agencies have been established.

### Recommendations

- GRETB should seek special educational needs (SEN) expertise to support learning practitioners use the ILPs process to set learning targets and to achieve goals.
- Centre management should access continual professional development (CPD) in effective methodologies to support engagement, assessment techniques, and differentiation for all learning practitioners.
- An electronic monitoring system should be used as it would be more efficient in helping the centre to identify patterns in attendance and behaviour throughout the week.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

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

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

There was good practice in relation to enrolment. The centre accommodated ongoing enrolment throughout the year. If a learner was enrolled late in the academic year they participated in a variety of QQI courses. This allowed the learners to receive some qualifications as well as prepare them for the LCA programme the following year.

The centre made valuable efforts to identify learner needs and strengths. When the learners were accepted into the centre, information was gathered on their capacity, ability, and needs, interviews and aptitude tests were also undertaken. Where possible, information from previous schools was also accessed. In some cases, often due to poor attendances in post-primary school, this information was not readily available and the centre should look to strategies that could obtain this information more effectively from the wider GRETB network, schools and parents/guardians.

In keeping with good practice, ILPs were created based on the information gathered. Although, during the evaluation it was evident that they were not as effective as they could be, due largely to centre staff not having adequate expertise in appropriate target setting to meet the needs of the learners. GRETB should provide the centre with access to qualified SEN personnel, similar to the approach that they took in providing the centre with a qualified guidance counsellor. This, in conjunction with CPD, would allow the centre to further develop the ILPs to include strategies and set goals and targets that address social and emotional needs of learners as well as literacy, numeracy, and academic needs.

ILPs once created were not sufficiently monitored or reviewed. To support learners in achieving the goals set out in their ILPs and ensuring that they are adapted as learner's progress, meetings should be held periodically with learners to help them reflect on their achievements based on set goals. All learning practitioners should report on the successes and challenges that learners have had in reaching goals so that future targets are realistic.

Learners reported that they were satisfied with the courses that were available to them. A skill audit of the staff was recently undertaken and this resulted in the centre identifying interests and hobbies that might be included in extracurricular activities. This is very good practice. The centre should extend this exercise to see if any skills, interests or hobbies of the staff could be used to create greater choice in modules, courses, and LCA electives that might match the current learners' interests.

At the time of the evaluation, some of the LCA modules were not allocated the required amount of class time during the week and QQI courses did not have any Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes and the centre needed to address these issues.

#### ***Meeting learner needs through effective teaching***

The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to satisfactory. A very positive learner-practitioner rapport and classroom environment was evident in most instances. The behaviour management of some learners in a small number of instances was in need of improvement. The setting of short and medium term targets that address the social and emotional needs of learners presenting with challenging behaviours should be considered to support the centre in dealing with any future behavioural issues.

The lessons were generally well planned and the intended learning was clear in most lessons. When the lessons included meaningful learning activities that were linked to the learning intentions and centred around learners' interests, the learners engaged well with the material, either independently or with the support of peers. Active learning should be included in all lessons as part of a variety of effective teaching methodologies. While internet connectivity was an issue in the centre, greater use of digital technology would contribute positively to lessons and should be used more regularly once the technical issues are resolved.

The majority of lessons were suitably differentiated and learning practitioners used learner's lived experiences to develop learning. The very good practice of using extension exercises was

observed in some cases. This approach should be used more frequently in lessons in order to challenge and set higher expectations of more-able learners. While learning practitioners provided individual support for all learners to help them progress, it was evident that some learners were struggling to access parts of the curriculum due to challenges with literacy and numeracy and this contributed to low expectations being set for completing work. Learning practitioners should ensure that lessons are pitched at the right level for all learners and teaching strategies are adapted to meet their needs.

### ***Use of assessment to support learning***

Learner's work was suitably maintained and stored in classrooms and learners were able, in most cases, to access their work and progress. Learning practitioners in some instances provided oral feedback to learners on how to improve the quality of their work, though the practice of providing written formative assessment was an area for further improvement. The learning practitioners should extend the practice of clearly explaining to learners what they will be learning during lessons. This will help set the expectations in lessons and provide a benchmark to check on learning. Time should be set aside in all lessons through questioning or other assessment strategies to gauge the level of understanding that has taken place. Similarly a revision of the main learning points at the end of a lesson would further support learning.

### ***Promoting learner wellbeing***

There were good opportunities for learners to engage with the local community and the learners reported that they enjoyed the work experience and social outings. These activities generally took place towards the end of the academic year. The centre should review the scheduling of these activities and see if they could occur at various times throughout the year, possibly to promote successful completion of projects, tasks, or improved attendance rates.

Attendance for some learners was good but it was less than satisfactory for a significant minority of learners. As attendance is essential to achievement and wellbeing it should be monitored more efficiently. As it was a key issue it would be worth investing in an electronic monitoring system to help the centre to identify patterns and behaviours throughout the week.

Learners' welfare and wellbeing were supported within the centre by breakfast and lunch clubs and a recreation room where learners had access to a variety of games and social activities. The learners reported positively on the programmes on offer within the centre and followed a timetable during the week similar to their experiences in post-primary school.

Insufficient information was provided on the timetable to ensure clarity. While the learning practitioner's name was included the subject was not and most practitioners teach multiple subjects. The centre should provide greater clarity on the timetable by including the subject as well as the learning practitioner's name.

A qualified guidance counsellor attended the centre one day per week and the learners were provided with timetabled Guidance lessons in LCA as well as having access to one-to-one counselling. The learners spoke very positively of this resource and many of them had begun to explore the options that could be available to them when they completed their studies in the centre. The guidance counsellor had good structures in place to track and support learners after they progressed from the centre.

### ***Working together to improve learning***

The staff worked well together to make sure that the centre did its best for the learners. They had regular meetings in relation to the operation of the centre and their own professional learning needs. The staff undertook the Centre Evaluation Improvement Planning (CEIP) process annually and maintained plans and schemes of work for their subjects and courses during the year. The LCA whole-centre plan was in place and it included formal evaluations from learners, parents/guardians, and staff. Some of the LCA schemes of work needed to be reviewed and modified to ensure that they included timeframes, learning outcomes, and specific teaching and learning methodologies that were linked to the learning outcomes, and a variety of assessment strategies to gauge learning.

The centre was well resourced, maintained and suitably furnished. The Hair and Beauty elective was introduced as part of the curriculum in recent times, and mostly dealt with the theoretical aspects. The centre should look to provide a small area where practical aspects of the Hair and Beauty elective could be delivered on site to complement the current practice that was in place.

Learners reported to the inspection team that they valued and appreciated the efforts that the staff made to ensure their needs were met and that they felt a sense of belonging in the centre. Parents spoke very positively about the centre and felt that the centre was well run and that their child was treated fairly and respectfully. They reported that they felt very welcome in the centre.

## **2. The governance, leadership and management of the centre**

### ***Creating and maintaining structures to support the centre***

Governance of the centre was good. GRET B provided the centre with specialised learning practitioners, administration supports, finances, training, and resources, and had established a board of management to provide oversight for all GRET B Youthreach Centres. The centre coordinators attended board meetings on rotation. All centre coordinators should provide their line manager with a Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) from their own centre which could then be delivered to this board.

Policies were in place to support the centre and these were reviewed periodically. A code of behaviour made references to restorative justice and for a need to positively affirm good behaviour in the centre which are good practices. The centre should now review this policy, if needed, in order to better manage the more challenging behaviour of some learners. Once the centre has upskilled in the area of SEN there will be a need to review the literacy and numeracy policies in line with best practice gained from the expertise in SEN.

### ***Effective communication channels***

The centre had developed good relationships with the local schools, external agencies and had a wide range of links in the local community for work experience. Parents spoke highly of communication with the centre. Currently parental involvement in the centre could be improved. To address this the centre could create a network group for parents and provide opportunities where they could meet with other parents of the centre as well as members of the staff to share advice and support structures.

### ***Specialised provision***

Learners appreciated the information provided in terms of progression to workplaces, apprenticeships and further education from the qualified Guidance Counsellor. The centre often supported learners after they had progressed from the centre. It would be useful for the centre to tap into the advocacy support within the GRET B system to further support their learners who progress into GRET B courses and apprenticeships.

The summer programme was good and varied, though a lot of the work experience occurred at this time. It would be useful for the centre to look at the possibility of providing work experiences at other times of the year, so that learners are given opportunities to reflect and consider improvements they could make in later placements. The centre should explore opportunities for more social outings and extra avenues of certification such as first aid courses, GAISCE awards, and the Safe Pass during the summer programme.

The coordinator has started to engage the centre in innovative projects with agencies such as Creative Schools and the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), and this is commendable.

### ***Listening to learners***

An atmosphere of mutual respect between the staff and learners was evident. The centre should look to formalise a learner council to further seek learner views. While the breakfast and lunch clubs were good, the food chosen by learners was not always conducive to a balanced diet. The centre and learners should try to agree to further promote healthy eating strategies during the week. The recreation room provided a space for learners to have a sense of belonging and connectedness to the centre. The learner council could be consulted in relation to changes to the resources in the recreation room to meet the interests of learners every year as well as considering further co-curricular activities such as Green and Amber Flags and any other initiatives learners might suggest.

***Staff wellbeing***

Staff met regularly and shared practices. The staff surveys reported that morale was good in the centre. The centre had a strategic plan that sought the views of staff and it was monitored regularly. An ongoing issue for the centre was trying to get access to short-term and part-time staff.

The centre had recently had success in using creative methods to bring in refugee learners and an important part of the centre's vision was to make strides in getting learners to take greater ownership of their learning. These were laudable goals and the centre was well placed to achieve them with the support of the GRETB.



## 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;