



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Evaluation of Youthreach Provision Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Ardee Youthreach Centre
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ardee Business Park, Broadlough, Ardee, Co Louth A92AN83
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	42717J
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	18-10-2023

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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 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; the minutes of the last three board meetings were reviewed and two of them did not include a child protection report. A child protection report must be included even if there are no cases to report.

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



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Evaluation of Youthreach provision

Date of inspection	18-10-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation and engagement in seven 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

Ardee Youthreach Centre operates under the management of Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB). At the time of the evaluation the centre had capacity for fifteen learners and an enrolment of fourteen. The curriculum comprised Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) courses at Level 3 and Level 4.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The centre was highly effective in identifying and meeting learners' needs. Students' outcomes and achievement in the QQI assessments were of a high standard.
- A highly suitable curricular programme had been put in place. Valuable additional learning opportunities were also a strong positive aspect of the centre's curriculum.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good. Students engaged very well with the learning tasks, paid very good attention and demonstrated enjoyment of learning.
- The centre was a caring and encouraging learning community, all staff members demonstrated a genuine commitment to supporting students to achieve their potential.
- The quality of governance, leadership and management in the centre was excellent. Day-to-day management was highly effective. The ethos, values and vision of centre were student-centred and there was excellent support provided by LMETB.
- There was very good collaboration amongst the teaching team and the curriculum plans were of a high quality.

Recommendations

- The minutes of the last three board meetings were reviewed and two of them did not include a child protection report. A child protection report must be included even if there are no cases to report.
- Support for literacy was good but there was additional potential for improvement in this area. Information from diagnostic testing and valuable learning practitioner professional judgement should be used to further develop the centre-wide literacy strategy.
- Planning for the lessons observed was effective but there was scope to further develop lesson planning through collaboration. This approach would facilitate the sharing of students' experiences, such as, lesson activities that work well with individual students, and would support learning practitioners in their planning work.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Identifying and meeting the needs of the young people

Getting to know the students' learning strengths and needs

The centre was highly effective in identifying and meeting learners' needs. Suitability for enrolment was assessed in conjunction with the parents/guardians and other relevant professionals involved in the life or education of the young people. The centre conducted a thorough assessment of students' strengths, needs and interests. A literacy and numeracy assessment, using the *Basic Key Skills Builder (BKSB)* programme, was carried out. This assessment tool was used in Youthreach centres across the ETB and provided detailed analysis of strengths and areas requiring support.

There was a highly effective induction programme for students when they first enrolled in the centre. In keeping with good practice, a student handbook was provided to each student. The students engaged in an interview process to establish how they got on in their previous school and to highlight any relevant educational experiences. Through diagnostic testing and establishing what previously worked or did not work for the students, the centre developed a plan to meet students' current needs. Very good use was made, by the centre, of outside support agencies to provide further support to students.

There was very good practice in relation to the development and ongoing monitoring of Individual Learner Plans (ILPs). The students were consulted in creation of the ILPs and this contributed to the plans being student-centred, goal focused, and action driven. The information within the ILPs came initially from the induction interview and assessments but was reviewed throughout the students' time in the centre. The Personal Effectiveness programme was also used effectively to progress and monitor the achievement of the targets in the ILPs.

Putting the right programme in place

The range of subjects, at QQI levels 3 and 4, was as broad as could be provided by the centre. LMETB provided significant support by facilitating the sharing of learning practitioners across the Youthreach centres in the ETB. This aspect of curriculum planning was very well organised and is a good example of the highly supportive nature of the relationship between LMETB and the centre.

There was no subject choice on the curriculum; all students studied the same subjects, but at varying levels to suit their abilities and needs. The range of subjects included Mathematics, Health Related Fitness, Art, Communications, Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE), Careers, Computer Studies, and Woodwork. The students, in their focus group meeting with the inspectors, were satisfied with the subjects offered and said they enjoyed their classes and felt there was something on the curriculum to suit everyone. At the time of the evaluation a further classroom was being planned and this is to be followed by the expansion of the curriculum.

Valuable additional learning opportunities were a strong positive aspect of the centre's curriculum. In addition to QQI courses, the students engaged in a range of non-QQI accredited courses, such as, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) food safety and Barista training. Additionally, there were non-accredited courses, for example, Relationships and Sexuality Education workshops, writing workshops, and Fast Track to Information Technology.

While Music was not formally on the curriculum it was a very important part of the centre's learning programme. A wide range of musical instruments was provided by LMETB. The centre coordinator, who was a qualified music teacher, provided lessons for any student who had an interest in Music. This aspect of the curriculum not only provided additional learning for students, but encouraged them to be creative and develop their musical talents and was an example of the centres' philosophy in relation to the holistic development of the student. Music

was a core feature of the centre's culture and acted as an agent for promoting social interaction and a sense of belonging.

High expectations and positive student outcomes

Students' achievement in the QQI assessments was of a high standard. The QQI External Assessor's report on the quality of the QQI course material submitted for accreditation was very positive and there were no recommendations for improvement. This is evidence of the centre's high expectations for student achievement and the efforts put in to ensuring that the course work presented was of the high standard. Additionally, the quality of student folders and the standard of their work noted in lessons provided further evidence of high expectations for achievement and positive assessment outcomes.

Numeracy was very well supported in the centre. There was a dedicated mathematics room which was very well resourced and designed to promote an interest in Mathematics. There was a numeracy wall with relevant formulae, diagrams, and mathematical key words. There were number lines and fraction walls to support more basic numeracy. It is particularly positive that these resources were used to very good effect in the relevant lessons observed.

Support for students' literacy was good. Key words were displayed on the classroom walls, and effective use was made of word banks to help students complete assessment tasks. However, there was scope to further develop this aspect of the centre's work. The centre completed comprehensive diagnostic testing in literacy and learning practitioners had an in-depth knowledge of students from day-to-day interactions in lessons. This deep understanding of the students and their individual needs should be used to further develop the centre-wide literacy strategy. Additionally, for students with very high levels of literacy, further opportunities to be stretched by completing extended writing pieces should be provided.

The centre was very proud of its students and their achievements. A graduation ceremony was held every year to honour and celebrate the awarding of QQI certificates. Graduation photographs were displayed on the walls of the foyer to encourage and inspire current students. Past students who had gone on to employment or further education were invited back to share their experience and success.

Supporting students' learning in the classroom

The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall. All lessons were well planned and included resources that supported learning. All learning practitioners' explanations and instructions were clear and accessible. Lessons were delivered in a dynamic way that held students' interest. Students engaged very well with the learning tasks, paid very good attention, and demonstrated enjoyment of learning.

The difficulty level in most lessons was well-pitched to students' strengths and needs. Learning practitioners used teaching techniques such as, repetition, real-life contexts, and incorporating academic learning in practical activities, effectively to enable students to achieve a deeper level of understanding. In a minority of lessons, the pitch and pace of teaching did not sufficiently match the needs of students. In these lessons, there was a need to adjust the pace of delivery and ensure deeper treatment of fewer lesson concepts to ensure that learning was thorough.

In most lessons, the students were interested in learning and showed high levels of participation in the learning tasks. These activities included opportunities for students to brainstorm, discuss lesson content and engage with each other to deeply consider the learning at hand. Most lessons were well prepared with activities that were student-centred and facilitated high levels of student engagement. These examples of good lesson practice should be extended to all lessons and shared amongst the teaching team.

Questioning was used effectively to include and assess students in most lessons. In Art for example, the questions enabled students to explore the concepts and skills needed for completing the task. Questioning was also used to keep students on task and to help them problem solve. Open questions were used effectively to encourage deeper reflection and engagement with the learning. In a minority of lessons, there was a need for the inclusion of extended wait-time to allow students sufficient time to think before answering and to enable all students within the class group to participate in answering questions and this should be addressed.

There was highly effective use of digital technology for learning. Some lessons included very well-designed PowerPoint presentations. Students demonstrated familiarity with using technology to collaborate and share their learning.

Encouraging respectful relationships and supporting wellbeing

The code of behaviour was based on respect for all members of the centre community. The coordinator outlined expectations for student behaviour when students enrolled first and the reasons for these expectations. An example of very good practice in this regard was the mobile phone use policy, which saw phones handed in in the morning and returned to students at the end of the day. The students were fully supportive of this policy. The absence of phones during the day supported students by reducing anxiety and distraction, encouraging engagement with the many alternative recreational activities provided, and enabling students to relate better to centre staff and other students.

The learning practitioners knew the students very well and were attuned to their current and emerging learning, emotional, and social needs. The centre was a caring and encouraging learning community, all staff members demonstrated a genuine commitment to supporting students to achieve their potential.

The students benefitted from access to guidance, counselling and psychological services provided by the centre, where necessary. Additional supports for students were sourced, by the centre, from local agencies.

Keeping parents involved in the life of the centre and managing attendance

There were highly effective measures for encouraging attendance. Attendance rates and punctuality were good; they were tracked weekly and this process involved the students in self-evaluating their attendance. The very high quality of teaching and support for learners, and their close alignment to students' individual needs contributed significantly to the high attendance figures.

It is excellent practice that the centre conducted regular formal meetings between parents/guardians and the learning practitioners. These meetings enabled parents/guardians to keep track of their child's progress. The centre was regularly in communication with parents/guardians also in relation to their children's progress and needs. The parents expressed much appreciation for the work of the centre in supporting their children. They were very positive about the level of engagement they have in the centre, their own sense of belonging and the very high level of communication between the centre and parents/guardians.

2. The governance, leadership and management of the centre

Highly committed leadership, staff, and students

The quality of governance, leadership and management in the centre was excellent. Day-to-day management was highly effective. The student-centred and holistic design and resourcing of the centre's physical environment demonstrated the ethos, values and vision of centre leadership and the support of LMETB. The centre was welcoming and safe, there was a very positive atmosphere, relationships were respectful, and centre staff members were mindful of students' needs, strengths and interests. All of the centre's policies were current, clear, practical, and reflected the work on the ground and were reviewed appropriately.

The centres commitment to encouraging students to engage in healthy life habits was exceptional. Health Related Fitness was included on the curriculum and was the preferred subject of most of the students who were interviewed. The centre was located a small distance outside Ardee town and had access to local outdoor amenities such as the *Green Way*. There was a full set of bicycles, one for each student, and the centre made very good use of the outdoor amenities to encourage students to be out in the fresh air walking and cycling. There was equipment to support a very wide range of physical activity within the centre. This year the centre established a five-a-side soccer team and students reported this being a very positive development.

The physical environment was highly suitable for all of the centre's learning and recreational activities. The building was fitted out with two classrooms upstairs and a very large common area downstairs. The downstairs areas included a kitchen and office space, as well as a games space, gym, and a fenced off area for the kiln. The heart of the centre was a large communal seating area that was warm, homely, and comfortable. This area was not only a space used for gatherings but also a learning space. It housed a collection of musical instruments, such as guitars, keyboards, a piano, violin, and drum machine and also supported literacy through the placing of newspapers on the tables at the centre of the room.

The students had access to valuable leadership opportunities. There was an active student council and students took great pride in in the centre and showed responsibility in how they maintained the centre's physical environment by keeping it clean and tidy.

Supporting learning through effective planning

There was very good collaboration amongst the teaching team and the curriculum plans were of a high quality. Almost all learning practitioners taught a number of subjects. The learning strengths and needs of all students were familiar to all learning practitioners. However, lesson planning was done on an individual basis. Since there was considerable crossover in the learning practitioners' work it would be highly beneficial if they could plan lessons together. This planning would facilitate the sharing of students' experiences, such as, lesson activities that work well with individual students, and would support learning practitioners in their planning work.

Ensuring that the centre continues to meet the students' needs

The centre was committed to self-evaluation and review. In addition to comprehensive engagement with the Centre Evaluation and Improvement Planning (CEIP) process, the centre reviewed a number of areas of its work. For example, a review of the work experience was carried out and changes were made to enable students to find placement more easily. In keeping with good practice the students were central to this review.

The students, in their focus group meeting, described the centre in very positive terms. They said that the learning practitioners were helpful and supportive, and that they felt safe in the centre and had fun. They reported feeling a strong sense of belonging and connection to the centre. They commended the centre on providing a broad curriculum that was in line with their interests. In addition, they were very appreciative of the centre for the flexibility shown to their learning needs and requests; for example, the driving theory test and Barista course were provided at the request of students. It was evident from the students' discussions with the inspectors that they felt seen, heard, and important in the centre.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

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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 Board of Management of Ardee Youthreach will ensure that a child protection report will be included in the minutes of each board of management meeting, even if there are no child protection cases to report.

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;