



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Evaluation of Youthreach Provision Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	College of Further Education and Training (FET), Watch House Cross
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Unit 11 Watch House Cross Moyross
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	42670J
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	24-10-2023

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 centre'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 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 met the requirements in relation to checks 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 of the child protection checks. It did not meet the requirements of check 5 of the child protection checks. However, the centre subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with this requirement. The centre met all the requirements in relation to the anti-bullying 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

Dates of inspection	18-10-2023, 19-10-2023 & 24-10-2023
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	<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

College of Further Education and Training (FET), Watch House Cross (formally Northside Youthreach Centre) was established in 2008 to serve the local communities of Ballynanty, Moyross, Killeeley, Caherdavin and Thomondgate in North Limerick City. The Centre operates under the management of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) and provides the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and a range of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) level 3 programmes. Currently, there are twenty-two learners attending the centre.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of the learners' experience was very good, supported by very good leadership from a committed centre co-ordinator and by good teamwork among staff.
- A learner mentoring initiative has been introduced by LCETB and the centre to support learner's wellbeing and in response to the challenges the young people are experiencing post-Covid.
- Throughout the evaluation learners displayed a very positive attitude towards learning; a very supportive, caring and mutually respectful atmosphere was evident in all interactions between teachers and learners.
- The overall quality of teaching and of learning was good, with improvement needed in assessment and differentiation.
- The centre's engagement with the self-evaluation process was of a very high standard and the centre demonstrated a very good capacity for continued improvement.

Recommendations

- There is scope to further advance approaches to assessment and to the development of individual learner profiles.
- The learners had positive attitudes to learning but found the ninety-minute and one-hour lessons very challenging. The centre should review the length of the lessons to reflect the educational needs of the learners.
- The centre, in conjunction with LCETB, should seek to access a suitably qualified teacher to support learners, particularly with regards to their specific literacy and numeracy needs.

- The centre should explore means of publicly promoting its good work, heightening its profile and maintaining contact with past learners.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Identifying and meeting the needs of young people

Promoting learner wellbeing

Interactions among and between young people and staff were consistently positive, mutually respectful and conducive to the young people's wellbeing. The quality of the learner's experience was good overall. Centre staff have created a caring, supportive and welcoming atmosphere in the centre. Learners and their parents were very positive about their experiences in the centre and about the provision of a learning experience in a supportive and less pressured environment.

The centre outlined that they are seeing the consequences of decreased socialisation with generalised anxiety and an over-reliance on phones and social media, and learners experiencing difficulties with self-regulation, monitoring their learning and planning ahead in term of life goals. A learner mentoring initiative (LMI) has been introduced by LCETB and the centre to support learner's wellbeing and in response to these challenges. The initiative provided each learner with the opportunity to meet a member of staff, who is their mentor, on a regular basis to support their social and emotional needs. It is suggested that a learner handbook be used to support the mentoring programme. This handbook should include information on learners' goals, progress, achievements and career paths and will support learners' attainment, attendance and progression.

In the Inspectorate survey, which was completed as part of this evaluation, all learners agreed that they were proud of the centre, that there was a good atmosphere and that they felt safe and cared for in the centre.

While learners reported they were listened to and felt they have a voice, there was no learners' council in place. This should be addressed to give a formal voice to the learners and to develop their leadership skills.

Identifying and meeting needs of learners with special educational needs (SEN)

While the learner's social and emotional needs were well catered for through the mentoring initiative, additional specialised supports should be provided for learners to address their specific literacy and numeracy needs. All learners were assessed prior to entry to establish their individual strengths and needs but optimal use is not being made of this information. The centre had no access to a qualified special educational needs staff member and this impacted the quality of supports that can be provided to learners. The centre, in conjunction with LCETB, should seek to access a suitably qualified teacher. This could be achieved by sharing staff working in another centre in the scheme, or by upskilling a current staff member. To provide a framework to address the SEN need, a literacy and numeracy policy/strategy should be developed to progress this recommendation.

Meeting learner needs through effective teaching

Teachers demonstrated very effective classroom management skills. Equally, their subject and pedagogical knowledge was very good and this generated high levels of enthusiasm for learning.

All teachers were very well prepared for lessons, with purposeful resources, designed to progress and consolidate learning, prepared in advance. Learning intentions were shared and displayed to learners in some lessons. In highly effective lessons, teachers revisited these planned learning intentions in order to assess learners' understanding and knowledge.

Effective differentiation strategies did not feature in the lessons visited. Differentiation was limited to teacher-directed questioning and teachers circulating to provide individual support to learners in class. Teachers should consider how differentiation could be used more effectively to support and challenge all learners. Such strategies should include the use of progressively challenging questions by the teacher, activation of prior learning and differentiated learning intentions.

In relation to assessment, a strength of many lessons was checking recall of all learners in a distributed way. In a small number of instances, teachers should have used a greater variety of questions that required learners to recall information and also to understand the content and to compare the content with content previously learnt.

The teachers created a relaxed atmosphere in their classes through the use of humour and encouragement as well as through their enthusiasm for their subject. This was effective in motivating learners and in fostering their interest in learning.

Meeting learner needs through effective learner experiences

The learners had positive attitudes to learning but found the ninety-minute and one-hour lessons very challenging. They found it difficult to focus and to concentrate on the subjects, particularly the non-practical subject, for long periods of time. It is recommended that the centre review the length of the lessons to reflect the needs of the learners.

A Level 3 QQI qualification in general learning and the LCA curriculum was offered to all learners. The QQI aspect, in most cases, was used as the first course the learner experiences when they join the centre to provide an opportunity to support their transition from post-primary school. The QQI modules included Communications, Mathematics, Personal and Interpersonal Skills and Internet Skills. Learners reported during the learner focus group, held as a part of this evaluation, that they found the QQI course effective in preparing them for LCA. This curricular arrangement was good and met the needs of the learners attending the centre.

Where the learner experience was most effective, concrete or digital resources were used to activate learners' interest in topics and well-planned collaborative learning tasks were integrated, leading to purposeful learner engagement and successful outcomes.

Learners in the centre have adequate access to a qualified guidance counsellor. Guidance provision was a blend of one-to-one meetings and group contact; this is good practice. It was positive that counselling was available once a week for learners, however, due to the complex needs of the learners in the centre, the ETB should investigate ways of increasing its counselling resource in the centre.

A good focus on the development of learners' subject-specific literacy was evident in some lessons where relevant vocabulary such as keywords, was explicitly taught. It is recommended that this good practice should be used more widely in order to reinforce subject literacy.

In most lessons, helpful formative feedback was delivered orally by teachers while learners engaged with tasks. There was scope to increase the frequency of formative approaches such as the provision of written formative feedback, and peer and self-assessment.

2. The governance, leadership and management of the centre

The overall quality of governance, leadership and management of the centre was very good.

Highly committed leadership and staff

The overall quality of centre leadership and management was very good. The coordinator was a hardworking and reflective practitioner who provided highly effective leadership. Responses to learner, parent and teacher surveys indicated that the coordinator enjoyed very high levels of support amongst the key stakeholders. The coordinator was ably supported by a committed and supportive staff who regarded positive relationships between staff and young people and between young people themselves, as central to provision.

The code of conduct set out clear expectations for the roles and responsibilities of learners. However, the code was an ETB document and should be reviewed at centre level to ensure it is relevant to all the learners, particularly those under eighteen years of age.

The quality of the building provided for the centre was good, but it restricted the curriculum that can be offered. LCETB have been very proactive in sourcing new accommodation, and it is planned that the centre will move to a new location in early 2024 with greater access to more specialist learning environments such as a kitchen and polytunnel.

Transitions, attendance and retention

The quality of support for learner transitions, attendance and retention was good overall.

Activities such as breakfast and lunch clubs facilitated social interaction and informal learning, as well as providing a motivation for attendance. It is suggested to include a healthy option for lunches more regularly.

Through the centre's self-evaluation process and the mentoring initiative, the centre identified key indicators to identify risk in terms of retention, completion, progression, attendance and certification. An action plan was developed to evaluate progress and includes information such as evidence, areas for improvement, actions, who is responsible and timeframe. The plan and its targets are of a high quality and show the centre's capacity and willingness for improvement.

For a number of reasons outside of the learner's control, such as local traffic, parents dropping other children to school and some learners travelling a long distance to the centre, some learners found it difficult to get the centre for the official start of the day which impacted on their attendance. The start time should be reviewed in consultation with learners and parents.

Retention of learners within the centre is very good. Most learners complete a Level 3 QQI qualification and LCA. The centre accepted learners throughout the year and this flexible approach is commended.

The structured approach to work placement and the continued efforts made by the centre to cultivate positive relationships with the local community and employers also enhanced progression opportunities for learners.

Links with the key stakeholders

The outcomes of a meeting with a focus group of parents, combined with an analysis of parental questionnaires, revealed very positive attitudes among parents towards the centre. Parents highlighted the centre's good quality of communication. Learners and staff were surveyed as a part of the Centre Evaluation and Planning (CEIP) process; it is suggested to include parents in this process. Some of the parents outlined that they did not know about the centre before their child started attending. The centre should explore means of publicly promoting its good work,

heightening its profile and maintaining contact with past learners. It would also act as a way to maintain contact with past learners and become a part of the mechanism to monitor progression after learners leave the centre.

The centre worked closely with local agencies such as the Limerick Youth Service, Community Development Programmes and the Limerick Mental Health Association to provide cohesive and well-informed support for those at risk of educational disadvantage. The interagency supports who also worked with the centre include Garda Youth Diversion Services, Barnardos, Family Support Workers, Jigsaw, An Garda Siochana and Tusla – Child and Family Agency.

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;