

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Brick Lane Balbriggan Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60010P

Date of Inspection: 25-01-2019



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agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Guidance under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	24-01-2019 & 25-01-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principals, guidance counsellors and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and guidance counsellors

School context

Loreto Balbriggan is a girls' Catholic voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust with a current enrolment of 1285 students. The programmes offered in the school are the Junior Cycle, the established Leaving Certificate and a compulsory Transition Year (TY).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good; the quality of assessment was good overall, with very good practice noted in relation to the TY career investigation tasks.
- All lessons observed were delivered at an appropriate pitch and at a measured pace, in a manner that was highly supportive of student self-reflection and student wellbeing.
- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good, although timetabled guidance provision in TY requires attention.
- There is an integrated, whole-school, and collaborative approach to supporting students, although there is scope to clarify and formalise the links between the Student Support Team and the student referral team.
- Planning, preparation and organisation in the guidance department are of a high quality, but the current guidance plan is only in draft form and requires further development.
- There is evidence of a strong collaborative ethos and a commendable capacity for reflection, self-evaluation and innovation in the guidance department.

Recommendations

- All class groups in TY should be timetabled for a module in Guidance.
- The links between the Student Support Team and the student referral team should be more clearly defined and formalised, in the interests of clarity and accountability.
- The whole-school guidance plan should be re-drafted, in consultation with students, parents and staff, before it is submitted to the board of management for ratification.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good. All of the lessons were well planned and well structured. The lessons were purposeful and had clear learning intentions. Learning was most effective when teachers made time at the end of the lesson to assess and consolidate the learning intentions.
- All lessons were delivered at an appropriate pitch and at a measured pace to allow students to process and reflect on their learning, in a manner that was highly supportive of student self-reflection and student wellbeing.
- Most lessons included strategies that were highly effective in promoting the active engagement of learners. These included high-quality pair and group work, peer teaching and student presentations. Students demonstrated confidence in expressing themselves and presenting their work, especially in the area of career investigations. The learning was most effective when students were encouraged to ask each other questions on their presentations, which helped to deepen students' knowledge and understanding.
- Student seating in some of the classrooms visited had been carefully arranged to facilitate collaborative work among students. This allowed for very effective face to face interaction. It is recommended that such collaborative seating arrangements be extended to more lessons.
- The relationships between students and their teachers were warm, encouraging and very supportive. Commendably the teachers moved around the room, assessing students' progress and supporting them individually in their learning.
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT) was integrated effectively into the majority of lessons. In one lesson observed some students struggled to access a guidance website on their own mobile phones, when the use of a readily-available class set of tablet devices might have proved more successful. In line with the school's current school self-evaluation (SSE) focus on digital learning, teachers should continue to build on their own expertise in this area and to explore new ways of using ICT in their lessons.
- The quality of assessment was good overall. Very good practice in the assessment of students' written work was observed in relation to the Transition Year careers investigation. The students' written assignments were observed to be of a very high quality. The assessment was particularly effective when it included constructive, written feedback from the teachers.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good. There is an integrated, whole-school, and collaborative approach to supporting students. The guidance team includes two full-time counsellors who work very closely with the school's chaplains.
- One guidance lesson a week is appropriately timetabled for students in fifth year and sixth year. A ten-week module in Guidance is timetabled for six of the eight TY class groups, while other guidance supports are offered to the two remaining class groups during the year. In the interests of equity and fairness, it is recommended that all class groups in TY be timetabled for Guidance.
- Commendably Guidance provision is being further extended to students at junior cycle. The guidance team provides a four-week module on successful transitions into secondary school for first-year students, as part of a very comprehensive orienteering and induction programme provided by the school. Staff have also been trained to facilitate other

Guidance-related learning for second-year students, such as the *Friends* programme and a HSE programme linking healthy sleep patterns and positive mental health.

- During the evaluation, very close collaboration and communication were evident between the guidance department and the special educational needs (SEN) department, the Student Support Team and a wide range of staff, including year heads.
- The Student Support Team meets weekly to discuss key student referrals and plan whole-school events to promote student wellbeing. A second care team, called the student referral team, meets weekly to discuss all student referrals and to make key referrals to the Student Support Team. During the evaluation there appeared to be a lack of clarity among some staff about the respective roles of each team. It is recommended that, in the interests of clarity and accountability, the links between the Student Support Team and the student referral team be more clearly defined and formalised.
- Strong links have been established by the school with external support agencies, including the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Jigsaw, Pieta House, Foróige, the Cúis project, the Health Service Executive, Tusla, and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Work experience is well integrated into the TY programme and is linked to students' career interests. During the evaluation, many senior students spoke highly about the benefits of the TY programme, although a minority of students suggested that the school should consider making it an optional programme as some would have preferred to transfer directly from third year into fifth year.
- Loreto Secondary School is one of forty-one schools collaborating with the NCCA on a review of the Senior Cycle Curriculum in Irish schools. Currently the school only offers the established Leaving Certificate. It is suggested that the school consider exploring the feasibility and desirability of providing additional programme options, such as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, at senior cycle to enhance programme options for students.
- It is commendable that students play key leadership roles as senior-prefects, mentors, captains, co-ordinators and members of the student council. They are actively involved in promoting positive mental health, peer support and student solidarity. The school community is commended on the very wide range of programmes it provides to promote student wellbeing. These include an Intercultural Week, a Mental Health Week and a Friendship Week, all of which add to the strong sense of community in the school.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning, preparation and organisation in the guidance department are of a high quality, but the current guidance plan is only in draft form and requires further development. It is recommended that the guidance plan be re-drafted in consultation with students, parents and staff before it is submitted to the board of management for ratification.
- All guidance-related policies, including those relating to critical incidents and data protection, are in place and up to date.
- Record keeping is of a very high standard in the department and shows due consideration for ethical issues, such as confidentiality and the security of test materials.
- There is evidence of a strong collaborative ethos and capacity for reflection, self-evaluation and innovation in the department. There is a clear student-centred commitment to on-going improvements and developments to the service. Overall the supports provided by the guidance department are of a very high quality.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals and guidance counsellors at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management is very pleased with such a positive and uplifting report.

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 senior management team has facilitated a guidance class for all transition year groups in next year's allocation.
- The whole-school guidance plan is under review, in consultation with all stakeholders, and will be presented to the board of management for ratification before the end of this academic year.
- It has been established that the links between the Student Support Team and the smaller referral team are very strong. The relationship between the two teams, and the functions of each team in relation to student referrals in the context of the NEPS guidelines, will be clarified and communicated to all relevant parties as recommended.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school 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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools 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	Good 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 school 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	Satisfactory 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	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school 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	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school 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;