

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Benildus College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Upper Kilmacud Rd Stillorgan Blackrock
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60261R

Date of Inspection: 17-05-2019



**An Roinn Oideachais
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; a response was not received from the board.

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	16-05-2019 and 17-05-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principals and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff• Meeting with members of the student support team

School context

St Benildus College is a voluntary secondary school with a student body of 776 boys under the trusteeship of Le Chéile, serving an urban catchment area in South Dublin. It provides the Junior Certificate, the new Junior Cycle, the Leaving Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall high quality teaching, learning and assessment were observed; students have a good understanding of education, training and career options.
- Guidance provision and whole-school support is very good; there is a strong guidance team in place.
- All senior cycle students are provided with a high quality curricular guidance modular programme; however, there is scope to further develop the junior cycle programme.
- It is praiseworthy that a large number of staff are trained academic mentors who volunteer to meet students individually and provide students with valuable support.
- Mental and physical health promotion is a significant aspect of the social personal guidance programme.
- Overall guidance planning is collaborative, developmental and highly effective.

Recommendations

- The guidance department should deliver an appropriate guidance-related learning module for second-year students, to complement the current guidance provision and the Wellbeing Framework.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall high quality teaching, learning and assessment were observed; students have a good understanding of education, training and career options.
- Students demonstrated a high level of motivation, interest and participation in learning and were observed working both independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner. During the lessons students successfully reported on, presented, and explained the outcome of their career investigations into Law, Science, and Business.
- The teacher created an inclusive, student-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust. Students contributed their opinions and experiences to class discussion with confidence on topics such as education progression routes, apprenticeships, college applications, and entry requirements.
- It is positive to note how the teacher modelled enthusiasm for lifelong learning and career development. Students indicated interest in a wide range of careers including Engineering, Science, Law, Fashion Design, Marketing, and the Arts.
- The learning intentions were competently expressed in terms of what students should know by the end of the lesson. The teacher effectively planned a sequence of suitable activities which were very well linked to the learning intentions. While the teacher encouraged whole-class reflection on learning, there was scope in one lesson, to introduce an activity or worksheet that would provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their own individual progress and identify any remaining gaps in understanding.
- Students keep a folder containing their guidance-related learning worksheets and assignments and complete both oral presentations and written assignments in TY and fifth-year; this is very good practice. Students are further supported in their learning by formative feedback, provided by the guidance counsellor on these guidance-related assignments.
- The guidance department utilises an appropriate range of psychometric tests to help students develop a good understanding of their strengths and interests. Standardised assessment takes place in first year and TY; the scores are sent home to parents and the guidance department effectively supports parents who may wish to discuss the scores in more detail.
- The school is developing a valuable whole-school approach to assessment as part of the school self-evaluation and improvement process. A member of the middle management team is leading initiatives to support academic tracking, monitoring and various methods of assessment.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Guidance provision and whole-school support is very good. There is a strong guidance team, one fully qualified guidance counsellor very effectively leading the programme supported by two other members of staff, who are currently training to be guidance counsellors.
- All senior cycle students are provided with a high quality curricular guidance modular programme. It is commendable that the guidance department keeps the programme under constant review and adapts it accordingly. The junior cycle students are provided with appropriate guidance inputs at important transition and decision-making stages. Nonetheless, the guidance team has identified a gap in provision at second year which they plan to address through a new guidance module. This should be progressed.

- Whole-school guidance activities include a comprehensive and well-planned College Awareness week with many useful activities including a new school initiative called '*Drop Everything and Talk College*'.
- There is very effective collaboration between the additional educational needs department and the guidance counsellor. Disability applications for college entry are effectively managed for students through very good teacher teamwork.
- It is praiseworthy that a large number of staff are trained academic mentors who volunteer to meet students individually and provide students with valuable support. It is positive to note the programme is reviewed and adapted annually. This is highly effective practice.
- A highly effective student support team meets weekly. The team discusses student individual cases but also wider school issues and proposes whole-school strategies to deal with these issues, such as student anxiety. It is commendable that the team engages in an annual review of its work.
- Very effective subject choices support is provided to parents and students. Subject teachers give talks to students to support them in their decision making. The guidance counsellor and other teachers also assist students during this decision-making process by meeting students on an individual basis.
- The school provides all parents with very good social personal, education and career guidance support through a series of appropriate talks for parents covering topics such as settling into secondary school and post-school education and training options.
- Work experience is very effectively managed and co-ordinated. Beneficial links are maintained with past students and parents who provide students with interesting and varied work placement opportunities. An innovative internship programme has been developed by the school and a local accounting firm, offering fifth-year students the opportunity to apply for a summer internship programme.
- There are very good links with external partners including companies offering apprenticeship opportunities. In addition, students can participate in the Look into Law programme, the TY Engineering programme, and mock interview training delivered by a Human Resources specialist.
- Students are provided with many opportunities to develop their leadership skills by taking a prominent role in a wide variety of school events such as the Rás Benildus, open night, and social justice activities. TY students participate in a very good peer mentoring programme. Following training, successful students are allocated to a first-year student group and begin their support role during the induction programme.
- Mental health promotion is a significant aspect of the social personal guidance programme. It is commendable that all students participate in whole-school mental and physical health promoting activities such as the Lasallian Wellness weeks. The second-year students participate in the PIETA house resilience building programme, while others can avail of the Rainbows, peer support group.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall guidance planning is collaborative, developmental and highly effective. A whole-school guidance planning team prepares the guidance plan and both the curricular and co-curricular guidance programme is of a high quality.
- The guidance department engages in some useful informal consultation and evaluation with students and parents. In particular, parents are requested to evaluate information evenings. To further improve collaborative guidance programme planning, the guidance team should expand the formal consultation and evaluation process.
- Very good planning for next school year includes an innovative guidance module for second-year students to complement the current Wellbeing Framework modules of Art Therapy,

Drama, and Nutrition. The school is reviewing the TY guidance programme and exploring if the guidance modules could run for an additional number of weeks. If this is possible, it would present a positive opportunity to expand the current content and include more guidance-related project work for students such as a more detailed career exploration.

- Communication with students and parents is effective; the guidance department uses social media, school applications (apps), school email, and a guidance newsletter to convey information. However, the guidance section of the school website is under-utilised and could be developed further.
- Record keeping practices are in line with best practice guidelines.
- Guidance-related policies and procedures are well-developed, reviewed regularly and up-to-date.

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

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;