

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Patrick's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Cullies Cavan County Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61060M

Date of Inspection: 31-01-2017



WHAT IS A 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. Learning, teaching 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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	30 and 31 January 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal, guidance counsellor and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and guidance counsellor

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Patrick's College is a Catholic secondary school for boys and operates under the patronage of the Diocese of Kilmore. Currently, there are 643 students enrolled. The programmes provided are the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate and an optional Transition Year (TY).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was consistently good; there is scope to develop practice in the use of learning intentions.
- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good, but there are opportunities for greater coordination with the teachers of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- A key strength of the guidance service is its ease of access for students.
- Parents, past pupils and the local community play a key role in supporting the school's career guidance programme.
- The guidance counsellor attends the weekly meeting of year heads and the school has identified the need to establish a student-support team.
- The quality of guidance planning and preparation is very good; aspects of record keeping need development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- More time should be devoted to clarifying and consolidating the learning intentions of lessons.
- The guidance department should engage in more collaborative planning with the teachers of SPHE in order to foster a more integrated approach to promoting student wellbeing.
- The school should prioritise the establishment of a student-support team.
- More detailed records should be maintained of the guidance counsellor's work with individual students.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was consistently good. All lessons were well prepared with a range of resources to engage students, including video clips, digital presentations and work sheets. This use of resources added variety to lessons and had a positive effect on student learning.
- A range of active methodologies was used in the lessons observed; these included pair work, group work and problem-solving exercises. Students worked both independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner and contributed their ideas, opinions and experiences clearly to class discussion. Interactions in the classroom were positive and respectful.
- While the topic of the lessons was clear, some of the lessons observed would have benefitted from greater clarity around the specific learning intentions at the outset and greater clarity around the purpose of some of the student tasks. In one particular lesson, students would have benefitted from being presented with a work sheet in advance of the video clip being shown, rather than afterwards.
- Insufficient time was devoted to consolidating the learning at the end of some of the lessons observed. It is recommended that more time be devoted to clarifying and consolidating the learning intentions of lessons.
- Appropriate attention was paid to digital literacy and numeracy. One of the student tasks observed involved the calculation of the cost of a weekly shopping list on line as part of a worthwhile exercise in budgeting as a college student.
- A study of students' work, which included the preparation of curriculum vitae (CV), career investigations and reports on work experience, demonstrated an appropriate level of monitoring by the guidance counsellor. It is positive that a comment on the students' progress in Guidance is included in TY reports; consideration should be given to extending this practice to other senior-cycle year groups.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good. School management is very supportive of the service and has allocated twenty-two hours a week for Guidance. Classroom guidance is timetabled for students in TY and sixth year. Guidance modules are provided on an informal basis to other year groups, including fifth year. In order to enhance the provision, consideration should be given to timetabling a specific guidance module for fifth-year students on a rotational basis.
- A notable strength of the service is the students' ease of access to the guidance department. The guidance service is available at key times during the school day to facilitate and maximise student access to Guidance, without causing undue disruption to lessons.
- The guidance counselling service is complemented by the work of the part-time school chaplain who offers bereavement counselling, while another member of staff provides individual support to a small number of students.
- It is commendable that a number of themed events to promote student wellbeing are held annually and include Walking in my Shoes, Anti-Bullying Week, Living Links and Beat the Blues. Valuable links have also been established with the Youth Advocacy Programme, the Cavan Network, Project 365 and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

- During the evaluation, close collaboration between the guidance counsellor, the chaplain and the special educational needs (SEN) team was evident. Close collaboration with the teachers of SPHE was less evident. It is recommended that the guidance department engage in more collaborative planning with the SPHE department in order to foster a more integrated approach to promoting student wellbeing.
- The guidance counsellor acts as the link person with primary schools and, as head of first year, helps to oversee the successful transition of new students into secondary school. There is a comprehensive induction programme in place that includes peer mentoring. It is laudable that the guidance counsellor plays a valuable role in developing student talent and promoting student leadership in the school.
- The school offers a very broad range of subjects. Subject sampling is provided for students in first year and TY to help inform their subject choices. In order to best meet the needs of all students, consideration should be given to the desirability and feasibility of offering the Leaving Certificate Applied or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme as additional options to senior-cycle students.
- The guidance counsellor attends the weekly meeting of year heads. The school recognises that there is a need to establish a student-support team. It is recommended that the school prioritises the establishment of such a team, in line with the National Educational Psychological Service's guidelines *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools* (2014).
- Parents, past pupils and the local community play a key role in supporting the guidance programme by volunteering as guest speakers at career talks and career evenings. Senior-cycle students are also invited to attend the careers fair organised by Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board. Local guidance counsellors assist at mock interviews for TY students. This level of cooperation and collaboration is highly commendable
- Facilities for Guidance are very good and include a fully equipped office and designated classroom. The guidance department makes effective use of social media to keep students and parents informed of upcoming events.
- The guidance counsellor coordinates counselling supervision in the region and regularly attends continuing professional development, in line with best practice.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of whole-school planning and preparation for Guidance is very good. The guidance plan contains detailed schemes of work and guidance-related policies that are systematically reviewed and updated.
- Record keeping is of a satisfactory standard overall but lacks sufficient detail. It is recommended that the guidance department maintain more detailed records of its work with individual students.
- It is positive that the guidance counsellor assists in the academic monitoring and mentoring of students and presents a report on the initial destinations of students after they have completed their Leaving Certificate.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal 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 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;