

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

**Subject Inspection in Guidance**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Loreto Secondary School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Granges Road Kilkenny
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	61580P

**Date of Inspection: 28-04-2017**



### **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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	27-04-2017 and 28-04-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and guidance counsellors</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Loreto Secondary School, Kilkenny is a voluntary secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 924 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The teaching and learning of Guidance was of a high standard with a good variety of methodologies being used in the delivery of the classroom guidance lessons and in the assessment of learning.
- A good, broad and well balanced guidance curriculum plan has been developed covering most year groups, except for second year.
- Provision for Guidance is very good with two full-time and pro-active guidance counsellors delivering the extensive programme which includes timetabled Guidance for all senior cycle students.
- A highly effective student support team meets regularly with a clear focus and a high priority placed on student welfare.
- Overall individual guidance planning is of a good standard, though whole-school guidance planning is an area for development as there is no whole-school guidance planning team and it is predominately the responsibility of the guidance department.
- Guidance-related policies and procedures are well developed and up-to-date with the exception of the critical incident plan which is in need of immediate attention.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The guidance department should review the guidance plan for junior cycle, to incorporate activities and learning outcomes for second years.
- Senior management should consider the formation of a whole-school guidance planning team to co-ordinate and plan the guidance activities across the school and to spread the responsibility for some initiatives and activities.
- Senior management needs to update the critical incident plan to include the members of the critical incident management team, in line with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) guidelines *Responding to Critical Incidents*, 2016.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- Teaching in all lessons observed was of a high standard with a variety of methodologies and activities chosen to engage students. Advance planning for lessons was evident in the quality of the worksheets, handouts, video clips, slide shows, and support materials for students.
- Students worked very purposefully in all lessons and were observed effectively collaborating and discussing their future career plans, college open days, CAO offers, acceptance and change of mind procedures.
- Through interactions with students and their responses to questions, it was clear that they have a good understanding of the education, training and career options available to them. In addition, they were observed using the online guidance research tools with a high level of proficiency and independence.
- Teachers created a very supportive learning environment evident in the very respectful relationship noted between teachers and students. Students were very comfortable asking questions and seeking support; while teachers provided good differentiated support both at a group and individual level, this is to be commended.
- The guidance counsellors supported student learning through the use of effective, challenging and thought-provoking questions which elicited deep responses from students.
- In all lessons, learning intentions were displayed on the board. Some good assessment of learning and revisiting of the learning intentions took place during parts of the lessons. However, in some lessons due to over-ambitious lesson plans with too many learning intentions, there was not enough time to complete all the intended learning activities. It is suggested that teachers dedicate time to revisiting the learning intentions during lessons to identify gaps in understanding, manage time and assess progress.
- Written assessment practices were good; guidance assignments such as the career investigation, curriculum vitae and letter of application are assessed by the guidance counsellors and individual feedback is given to students. It is positive that parents are kept informed of progress in guidance on some school reports and this communication of progress should be extended to include all senior cycle reports.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling for Guidance is very good with all TY students, fifth and sixth years receiving a weekly guidance lesson. Students have very good and frequent access to the guidance counsellors.
- Overall provision for Guidance is very good with a significant time allocation for one-to-one appointments and two full-time guidance counsellors working effectively to provide a comprehensive guidance service. It is commendable that the senior management team prioritises Guidance in order to meet the needs of students.
- A highly effective student support team meets weekly with very good referral pathways and communication systems, both internally and with external supports. The senior management team recognises the increasing pressures on young people and it is positive that a number of whole-school health-promoting initiatives such as mental health week, healthy eating week, active schools week and the cycle against suicide, are organised to support the wider student body.

### 3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Individual planning by the guidance department is of a high standard, it is detailed and provides a good outline of the activities and the overall guidance curriculum. However, the junior cycle plan merits further development as there were no learning outcomes identified for second year.
- A good range of whole-school guidance activities take place such as science week, maths week, study skills and a range of mental health initiatives. However, there is no whole-school guidance planning team in place. It is recommended that one be formed to lead, co-ordinate and review the guidance plan and guidance-related initiatives across the school. It is suggested that the plan should include college awareness week.
- Record keeping by the guidance counsellors is of a good standard; however, it was noted that the current recording templates have not been reviewed for some time. It is suggested that the guidance department should consider the type of data recorded to improve efficiency in recording meetings with students.
- Overall guidance-related policies and procedures are well developed and up-to-date with the exception of the critical incident plan which is in need of immediate attention. It is recommended that senior management update the plan to include the members of the critical incident management team, in line with the NEPS guidelines *Responding to Critical Incidents*, 2016.
- It is commendable that all TY, fifth and sixth-year students are surveyed annually for feedback regarding the guidance service, speakers and activities; this is very good practice.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the guidance counsellors 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;