

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

**Subject Inspection in Guidance**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St. Mary's C.B.S.
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Mill Park Road Enniscorthy Co Wexford
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	63560T

**Date of Inspection: 06-11-2018**



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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 of the school 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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	05-11-2018 and 06-11-2018
<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><li>• Meeting with members of the student support team</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 relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

St. Mary's C.B.S. is voluntary secondary school under the auspices of Edmund Rice Schools Trust with a current enrolment of 692 boys. The school provides Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was of a high standard with a good balance between teacher instruction and student participation; assessment of guidance assignments is not well developed.
- Students are very well supported by an innovative progression programme from first to second year, which includes a module on how to be an effective learner.
- A highly effective student support team meets weekly, decisions are documented on an excellent recording system developed by the school to track and monitor referrals and actions.
- The school provides very valuable whole-school activities to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) education and related careers.
- A motivated and enthusiastic guidance department, effectively supported by senior management, provides a high quality guidance service to students and their parents.
- While there is a good quality guidance plan currently under review, whole-school collaborative guidance planning and the curricular plan for junior cycle students are less effective.

#### Recommendations

- The guidance department should develop the curricular guidance plan for junior cycle students by documenting learning outcomes, assessment strategies, and areas of learning relevant to the Junior Cycle Wellbeing framework.
- A whole-school guidance team should be formed to plan and evaluate the guidance programme on an annual basis.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning was of a high standard with a good balance between teacher instruction and student participation.
- Teachers were well prepared for all lessons and lesson planning was very good; teachers used a variety of resources to support learning such as video clips, newspaper articles, worksheets, slide-shows and guidance-related websites.
- It was notable that teachers modelled enthusiasm for their subject in all lessons and were observed engaging effectively with students' opinions and questions. Students' answers were good and their contribution to lessons was significant.
- Good practice was evident in how teachers began lessons with a clear outline of the learning intentions. This was most effective when students reflected on their learning at the end of the lesson. To develop this strategy further, teachers should assess students' current level of understanding at the outset of lessons and then use the reflection exercise to measure improvement in learning.
- Both differentiation of learning intentions and a focus on literacy development were evident in lessons. All teachers made very good use of key words to support literacy development which is part of the whole-school teaching and learning improvement plan. It is notable that teachers are engaged in collaborate review of practice and a significant number of teachers visit each other's rooms. This is to be commended.
- Students were very purposefully engaged in valuable activities, they were able to work independently and in groups. Students generated valuable responses and were observed making very good progress.
- It is positive that students were provided with a useful opportunity to apply their knowledge of recruitment to real life scenarios through an activity whereby they analysed job advertisements from a newspaper. The application of school-based learning to real life highlights the relevance of the guidance curriculum.
- Students have effectively developed online guidance-related research skills; they have completed to a high standard a variety of self-assessment activities including beneficial, career, interest and values tests.
- Students expressed a strong motivation to succeed academically and cited a broad range of career ambitions which included the study of Engineering, Computer Science, and Mathematics. It was evident they were familiar with possible course options and have a clear sense of attainable academic and career goals. This is praiseworthy.
- While there is a good range of psychometric assessment used to support student career planning, assessment and reporting of guidance-related assignments is not part of current practices. It is recommended that the guidance department identifies a number of meaningful assignments for students to complete which should be graded and reported to parents on school reports. As part of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing framework, guidance areas of learning could be selected for inclusion.

## 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- A motivated and enthusiastic guidance department, effectively supported by senior management, provides a high quality guidance service to students and their parents.
- There is good timetable provision for Guidance, all senior cycle students have access to Guidance through weekly lessons or modules. It was noted that there are two computer rooms and it is not always possible to gain access for guidance lessons. It is recommended that senior management review current timetabling, consider the advantages of senior cycle students having access to a weekly guidance lesson rather than a module, and consider other ways to access digital technology.
- There is a very good induction programme for first year students and notably an innovative 'Moving Up' programme for students progressing from first to second year. It is commendable the programme includes a module on how to become an effective learner. To build on this good practice, it is suggested that the senior management team considers developing a transfer programme from TY and junior cycle into senior cycle.
- A highly effective student support team meets weekly. Very effective capacity building is evident as members of the team develop skills in chairing a meeting through a rotating chair practice. The senior management team has devised an excellent monitoring and recording system to track student referrals and actions.
- Very effective support is provided for students through a number of helpful social and emotional support programmes such as the Friends for Life, Check and Connect, and social skills development activities.
- The school provides very valuable whole-school activities to promote STEM education and careers, including science and maths weeks, college awareness week, coding, computer and sports science, and Sci-Fest.
- There is a good balance between personal, educational and career guidance. Students have very good access to the guidance team and many students reported meeting the guidance counsellors to discuss their academic and career goals.
- An effective whole-school approach is evident, teachers are involved in academic monitoring and the promotion of useful study skills. A very good academic tracking and monitoring system is led by one of the middle management team, using standardised test scores and school and state exams. At present the system is focused on the senior cycle students with a view to extending it to the junior cycle students. This is very good practice.
- Senior management is very supportive of both guidance counsellors attending continuing professional development and guidance counselling supervision. The guidance counsellors have attended valuable training in restorative practice, suicide prevention, and mindfulness.
- The guidance department provides a number of useful presentations for parents on topics such as subject choices, course options, access routes into higher education and financial support for college.
- TY work experience is very well managed, the guidance counsellors are involved in the preparation of students and in the review and reflection process following the work placement.
- The guidance department has maintained very effective links with past students and employers who speak to students about courses and careers.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- While there is a good quality guidance plan which is currently under review, whole-school collaborative guidance planning and the curricular plan for junior cycle students are less effective.
- The guidance department effectively collaborates, plans and shares resources using an online sharing platform but there is no whole-school guidance planning team. It is recommended that senior management form a whole-school guidance team to plan and evaluate the guidance programme on an annual basis.
- The guidance plan is lacking detail regarding the curricular plan especially for junior cycle students. The guidance department should develop the curricular guidance plan for junior cycle students by documenting learning outcomes, assessment strategies, and guidance areas of learning relevant to the Junior Cycle Wellbeing framework.
- Appropriate change of level and subject choice policy and school procedures are in place.
- It is commendable that the guidance department has identified guidance areas in need of attention, targeted for review or working well. Students have been surveyed following initiatives such as a study skills and motivation seminar.
- Policy development is good overall but some policies need to be reviewed annually such as the anti-bullying policy.
- Best practice was noted in the management, storage and destruction of student guidance files.

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

# **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 that the inspection saw a motivated and enthusiastic guidance department, effectively supported by senior management, who provide a high quality guidance service to students and their parents.

The board is also very pleased that the inspection recognised that the quality of teaching and learning was of a high standard, that lessons were well prepared and that the teachers model enthusiasm for their subject.

The board is also very encouraged by the comments on the learning taking place. Students answers were observed to be good and that their contribution to lessons was significant. Students were seen to be very purposefully engaged in valuable activities and have effectively developed online guidance-related research skills.

The board is also very pleased that the transition programmes developed by teachers in the school over the past number of years was given recognition. The work of the student support team is also recognised and the board is appreciative of the comments made in regards to the excellent monitoring and recording system used by the team.

## **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 board of management welcomes the recommendations set out in the inspection report as a means of developing and expanding on the existing good practice of the guidance team.

The senior management of the school have set up a whole-school guidance planning team. The team will incorporate a board of management member, the senior management team, the guidance teachers and two other teachers. The team will advise on the further development of the guidance plan and evaluate the plan on an annual basis.

The guidance department is appreciative of the advice given in relation to planning. The department will develop a curricular guidance plan for junior cycle students by documenting learning outcomes, assessment strategies, and areas of learning relevant to the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Framework.

The senior management team will look at the timetabling possibilities for guidance in senior cycle.