

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Patrick's Classical School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Moatlands Navan County Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64350N

Date of Inspection: 15-11-2016



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 OF GUIDANCE

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	14 and 15 November 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal 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 principal and guidance team

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Patrick's Classical School is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Meath. Current enrolment is 896 boys. The programmes provided are the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning evident in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- School management is very supportive of the provision of guidance counselling.
- There is an integrated and collaborative approach to providing Guidance at whole-school level.
- The lay chaplain and a guidance counsellor are members of a very effective student-support team.
- The school has been awarded an amber flag as a *Health Promoting School* for its promotion of positive mental health.
- First-year students have been offered more freedom of choice recently in relation to subject options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The very good practice of active and collaborative learning methodologies observed in some lessons should be shared and extended to all lessons.
- Consideration should be given to exploring the desirability and feasibility of offering alternative programmes, such as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), as options to senior-cycle students.
- The guidance plan should be revised to include the roles and responsibilities of all personnel involved in delivering specific aspects of the TY guidance programme.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning evident in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good. The lessons were well planned, structured and sequenced. The topics chosen, which included exploring healthy lifestyles, preparation for a career investigation and applying to the Central Applications Office, were timely and relevant.
- In many of the lessons observed, high-quality digital presentations were used to guide and structure teaching and learning. Supplementary resources such as handouts, work sheets and video clips were used effectively. There was an appropriate focus on supporting relevant numeracy and literacy skills, especially in the area of digital literacy.
- Teaching and learning were particularly effective when the right balance was achieved between teacher-led and student-led activities, which was not always the case in the lessons visited. In the majority of lessons observed, students were given opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner. This included *think, pair and share* activities and poster debates which were used very effectively to enhance students' learning. It is recommended that the use of active and collaborative learning methodologies be extended to all lessons.
- Interactions among students, and between students and teachers, were respectful, affirming and conducive to wellbeing. The teacher moved easily around the classroom; this afforded further opportunities for ongoing assessment of individual students' progress and for providing formative verbal feedback on their work.
- In the lessons observed, learning was assessed primarily through the effective use of questioning strategies, which promoted student reflection and the development of their critical thinking skills. Students asked questions and contributed their opinions with confidence, demonstrating a high level of engagement and motivation.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good. Management and staff work to create and maintain a climate of care and wellbeing. The core guidance team consists currently of two guidance counsellors and a lay chaplain who have their own individual, fully equipped offices. Members of the guidance team are facilitated to attend continuing professional development and counselling supervision.
- School management places a high priority on maintaining a very good level of provision for Guidance. There is a strong emphasis on providing personal counselling supports across all year groups. Timetabled classes of Guidance are provided to students in fifth and sixth year. Short modules in Guidance are also provided to other year groups.
- Guidance is not timetabled for TY students but aspects of the TY guidance programme, including preparation for work experience, are delivered in a cross-curricular manner by a range of staff. In the interests of greater clarity and accountability, it is recommended that the guidance plan be revised to include the roles and responsibilities of all personnel involved in the TY guidance programme.
- There is a commendable integrated and collaborative approach to providing guidance supports at whole-school level. The chaplain and one of the guidance counsellors are members of a very effective student-support team and they work very closely with year heads,

class tutors, teachers of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and the special educational needs (SEN) coordinator.

- It is positive that the student-support team meets twice a week and progresses collaboratively and professionally with referrals and the resolution of issues regarding individual students. The team works very closely with staff and outside agencies, including the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Health Service Executive (HSE), Jigsaw and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- It is noteworthy that the school has been awarded an amber flag for its promotion of positive mental health as a *Health Promoting School*. Students also benefit from a very successful *Rainbows* programme. The school supports students in taking leadership roles and it is positive that sixth-year prefects assist in the mentoring of first-year students and that TY students provide a peer-mentoring module during SPHE lessons.
- It is commendable that first-year students are now offered more freedom of choice in relation to subject options. It is recommended that consideration should now be given to exploring the feasibility and desirability of offering alternative programmes such as LCVP or LCA as options to senior-cycle students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation in the guidance department is very good. A collaborative, collegial approach to planning is evident. A guidance planning committee has been established and the guidance plan is well structured. It is commendable that, as part of its self-evaluation process, the guidance department has identified in its plan a need to enhance the guidance provision for second-year students.
- It is positive that guidance staff have played a collaborative role in the development of a number of school policies, including those relating to anti-bullying, healthy eating and critical incidents.
- Record keeping in the department is of a very high quality, but there is scope for further development in the tracking of the initial destinations of students who have completed their Leaving Certificate. The school's closer tracking of students' progress in ability and achievement tests is a welcome development.
- Student surveys on wellbeing have helped to inform a whole-school approach to promoting healthy lifestyles. Similarly, the guidance department should seek student feedback on the guidance service provided to inform future improvements to policy and practice.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and members of the guidance team 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 very good 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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;