

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

School name	City Vocational School
School address	New Street, Kilkenny
Roll number	70610W

Date of Inspection: 15-10-2019



**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 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

Dates of inspection	14-10-2019 and 15-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students• Meetings with members of the student support teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, members of the student support team and guidance counsellor

School context

City Vocational School, Kilkenny is a co-educational, post-primary school with a current enrolment of 237 students and operates under the auspices of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB). A wide range of curricular programmes is provided for students and includes the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school has a specialised unit for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was of a very high standard with a commendable level of embedded literacy, numeracy and highly effective teaching and learning practices.
- Overall provision and whole-school support is highly commendable; students have exceptionally good access to the guidance counsellor.
- Student support structures and systems are exemplary.
- Year heads are effectively leading the academic monitoring system; students self-assess their academic progress and set targets at frequent intervals.
- Overall guidance planning is of a very high standard, both individual planning by the guidance counsellor and collaborative planning by the whole-school guidance planning team.
- The culture in the school is one of improvement and innovation through self- evaluation and teamwork, and is highly commendable.

Recommendations

The quality of guidance provision and planning in the school is of such a high standard that there are no key recommendations.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was of a very high standard with a commendable level of embedded literacy, numeracy and highly effective teaching and learning practices.
- Teacher questioning was very effective, appropriately probing, clearly differentiated, and enabled students to contribute ideas with confidence. The atmosphere in all lessons was very supportive and encouraging, leading to high levels of student participation.
- It is evident that the school self-evaluation (SSE) process has had a significant impact as many teaching and learning strategies have become embedded in classroom practice. Students' literacy and numeracy were developed throughout the course of all lessons, learning intentions were co-created with students, success criteria were used effectively and students reflected on their learning at key transition points. This is very good practice.
- As part of the current school improvement plan, the focus is on developing students' ability to 'manage myself', an important key skill. During lessons students were observed taking responsibility for their learning and engaging in effective self-directed career research.
- The teacher was very well prepared for lessons and students were supported in their learning through purposeful collaborative activities which led to rich discussions in pairs and groups. Learning was active and productive, aided by teacher-prepared slide shows, information sheets, visual organisers, reflection questionnaires, worksheets, and video clips.
- Students were well informed about the education and career options and pathways and reported very positive attitudes to the value of guidance lessons. They expressed a wide range of career interests which included Sports Science, Medicine, Nursing, Teaching, Law, Drama, and Construction Engineering.
- The standard of assessment, both in-class individual assessment of learning and summative assessment by the teacher of student work, is very high. Students assess their learning in all lessons, identify gaps in understanding and areas to further develop. Student work is presented for formative assessment in a variety of innovative ways including career and life vision boards, slide-show presentations, and valuable project work. It is positive that progress in Guidance is reported on school reports.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall provision and whole-school support is highly commendable; all teachers are exceptionally committed to providing students with a high level of guidance.
- Students have exceptionally good access to the guidance counsellor. It is commendable that every student has weekly contact with the guidance counsellor. Students are provided with two guidance lessons per week in fourth, fifth and sixth year. Junior cycle students have weekly contact with the guidance counsellor through the Wellbeing programme while the LCA students receive very good support through the Vocational Preparation and Guidance module.
- For many years students had only very limited access to a qualified guidance counsellor who was shared with the local further education college. The principal recognised the need to improve the guidance support and was proactive in identifying a member of staff interested in training. A qualified guidance counsellor is now very effectively leading the guidance programme. It is commendable that the steps taken by the principal have resulted in a very

significant increase in the level of guidance provision and support for students at an individual and at a whole-school level.

- Student support structures and systems are exemplary. Many innovative practices were noted such as the DEIS plan targeting of students for supports using a school-designed criteria which prioritises students based on the DEIS themes, and links identified needs to available supports and interventions. Six-week plans are implemented and systematically monitored.
- Individual student concerns are very successfully managed through weekly student support team meetings, clear referral forms, detailed minutes recording, collaborative case analysis and constant monitoring of actions and interventions. This is commendable.
- At a whole school level, there is a very high level of integrated student support achieved through very effective communication between the many staff involved in specialised roles including the behaviour for learning teacher, home-school-community liaison co-ordinator, school completion officer, ASD unit co-ordinator, special education needs co-ordinator, and year heads.
- There is a very good balance between classroom guidance, one-to-one support meetings for students and collaboration with other staff, parents and external agencies. Beneficial links have been developed with local colleges and access programmes. It is commendable that the access scheme, in conjunction with Waterford Institute of Technology, begins in first year with a campus visit whereby students are encouraged to consider education and training opportunities.
- Students are supported by a large number of very effective social-personal guidance programmes including *Alert* -emotional management training, *Belonging Plus* - a first year induction programme, *Lockers* an online-safety programme, anti-bullying measures, and support for ASD students with additional emotional or social needs.
- All teachers are very committed to supporting student progression. Subject departments are actively involved in co-curricular guidance activities which promote subject-related education and careers. This is particularly evident from the planned list of activities during college awareness week.
- Educational guidance is very good. The guidance department is effectively leading a whole-school study skills approach reinforced by a newly designed study skills resource pack for students which is currently under review by staff and students to further improve it and add subject specific tips. This is very good practice.
- Year heads are effectively leading the academic monitoring system. Self-reflection is a key aspect of the whole-school guidance programme; students self-assess their academic progress and set academic targets at frequent intervals leading to a reported improvement in attainment.
- The guidance counsellor is highly committed to upskilling and has attended a very extensive amount of valuable continuing professional development training.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall guidance planning is of a very high standard, both individual planning by the guidance counsellor and collaborative planning by the larger team.
- A whole-school guidance planning team meets regularly. Very good minutes are kept outlining actions and progress. The culture in the school is one of improvement and innovation through self- evaluation and teamwork, and is highly commendable.

- The guidance plan is of a very high quality and provides a comprehensive account of all the guidance-related activities, interventions and actions including a clear outline of whole-school responsibilities and the procedures for review and evaluation of the plan.
- The co-curricular guidance programme is very effectively planned and incorporates a valuable combination of activities, both visits out to colleges, training centres, and careers fairs, complemented by a series of speakers from colleges, apprenticeships, and the world of work.
- Curricular guidance is in development; a classroom guidance programme was introduced at the beginning of the last academic year. The current curricular plan is learner centred and suitably designed to meet students' needs. The guidance department should involve students in the future development of this curriculum to support student engagement and motivation while also consulting parents to keep them involved.
- Guidance-related policies, plans and procedures are up-to-date including the critical incident management plan, student support team policy, change of subject, anti-bullying, referral, and confidentiality policies.
- File management is very good; files are retained in line with best practice. Record keeping practices include the effective use of templates for recording actions at student support team meetings, and individual appointments with the guidance counsellor.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, members of the student support team and guidance counsellor at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

(Blank)

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 of Kilkenny City Vocational School welcomes the exceptionally positive Guidance Inspection Report by the Inspectorate. It noted the very wide range of aspects of school life which were commended in the report.

The Board is particularly appreciative that the school culture was described as “one of improvement and innovation through self-evaluation and teamwork, and is highly commendable”

Kilkenny City Vocational School is committed to consolidating and building upon the very positive findings outlined in the Guidance Inspection Report.

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;