

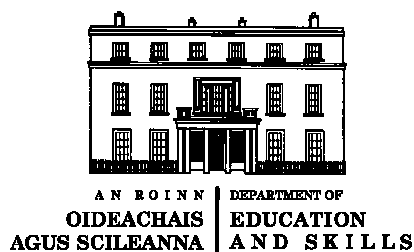
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of GUIDANCE
REPORT**

**Santa Sabina Dominican College
Sutton, Dublin 13
Roll number: 60380C**

Date of inspection: 11 May 2016



REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GUIDANCE

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	10 & 11 May 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal, guidance counsellor and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and guidance counsellor

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of the teaching and learning evident in the lessons observed was good, with some very good practice noted in regard to group work.
- The guidance programme demonstrates a good balance between personal, educational and career guidance counselling, with a particular focus on senior-cycle students.
- School management is very supportive of guidance provision in the school.
- There are effective care teams in place for each year group.
- There is scope to enhance the supports available to students and parents in regard to subject options.
- An annual review of the guidance programme at senior cycle is informed by student reflection and responses to student questionnaires.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The good practice of sharing learning intentions with students should be extended to all lessons.
 - The guidance counsellor should liaise more closely with the teachers of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) at junior cycle.
 - Additional themed days and events relating to student well-being and positive mental health should be organised at whole-school level on a more collaborative and co-ordinated basis.
 - The supports available to students and parents to assist them to make informed choices in regard to subject options should be reviewed in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders.
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INTRODUCTION

Santa Sabina Dominican College is a voluntary secondary school for girls under the trusteeship of Le Chéile, with a current enrolment of 670 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, as well as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of the teaching and learning evident in lessons observed was good, with some very good practice noted in regard to group work.
- The lessons observed were well planned, structured and sequenced. The topics chosen were timely and relevant.
- The learning intentions were shared with students in one lesson. It is recommended that this good practice be extended to all lessons so that the knowledge, understanding and skills to be achieved by the end of the lesson are clearly articulated.
- In all of the lessons observed, there was a commendable focus on engaging the students and seeking out their opinions. Active learning methodologies, such as pair work and group work, were used effectively to enable students to reflect on and engage with the topic, share their ideas and provide valuable feedback to the class. These activities concluded with well-processed plenary sessions that assessed and consolidated learning.
- Relationships in the classroom were positive and respectful and facilitated an easy interaction between the students and the teacher. The teacher moved easily around the classroom and this provided opportunities for ongoing assessment of individual students' progress. Effective questioning techniques were used to encourage students to develop their answers and deepen their learning. The high quality of student responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the topics under discussion.
- During the evaluation, it was noted that students saved their work into on-line folders which were monitored by the guidance counsellor. It is commendable that school reports include the subject Career Guidance at senior cycle.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- School management is very supportive of guidance provision in the school. Twenty-two hours are allocated to the full-time guidance counsellor, eight hours of which is timetabled for classroom Guidance to students in TY, fifth and sixth year; and eleven hours for guidance counselling with individual students from all year groups.
- The guidance programme demonstrates a good balance between personal, educational and career guidance counselling. Classroom Guidance is provided to senior-cycle students only, although the guidance counsellor meets with individual students at junior cycle. There is scope to collaborate with the teachers of SPHE to develop cross-curricular links in areas such as student well-being and positive mental health. It is recommended that the guidance department liaise more closely with the SPHE department at junior cycle.
- There is good liaison between the guidance department and the special educational needs department. There are effective care teams in place for each year group. The guidance counsellor attends weekly meetings of the care teams.

- It is commendable that individual teachers and subject departments organise events, such as the Active School Week, to promote student well-being. However, there is scope for greater collaboration at whole-school level in the planning and organisation of such activities. It is recommended that additional themed days and events relating to student well-being be organised at whole-school level on a more collaborative and co-ordinated basis.
- Student leadership is promoted and the student council is consulted regularly for their views on school matters. Student prefects have been trained to offer some supports to incoming first-year students but there is scope to develop their mentoring role. It is commendable that care committees of students have been established in first and second year and that they liaise closely with their year heads.
- The guidance counsellor works very closely with parents. However, there is scope at whole-school level to enhance the supports available to assist students and their parents to make informed choices in regard to subject options. An information evening on subject choices for parents and incoming first-year students is held annually, but there is no opportunity offered to students currently to sample subjects in advance. Students going into fifth year receive information on subject options but the school does not host an information night for their parents. The senior-cycle curriculum also includes the compulsory study of a modern European language and this practice should be reviewed. It is recommended that the supports available to parents and students in relation to subject options be reviewed.
- The facilities for Guidance are very good and include a fully equipped office. Most guidance lessons are held in the computer room.
- The school guidance counsellor is also a registered educational psychologist and attends continuing professional development and counselling supervision.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation for Guidance are very good. The whole-school guidance plan is comprehensive and includes a list of topics to be covered with each year group. However, the schemes of work should be developed for each of these topics to include learning intentions, methodologies, resources and methods of assessment.
- It is commendable that the school has established a cycle of systematic review of key policies, including those relating to critical incidents and anti-bullying.
- Record keeping in the guidance department is of a high standard and shows due consideration for ethical issues such as confidentiality and the security of test materials.
- All senior-cycle students are surveyed annually for their views and suggestions on the guidance programme; this is very good practice. An analysis of their responses demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the service provided.
- It is positive that an annual report on the initial destinations of Leaving Certificate students is compiled by the guidance counsellor and presented to the school community.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and guidance counsellor. The board of management 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.

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 acknowledges the excellent report on the learning and teaching of Guidance at Santa Sabina Dominican College.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

It notes the recommendations and will make every effort to ensure the main recommendations are implemented.