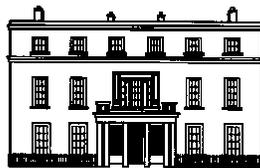


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of GUIDANCE
REPORT

Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair
Na Doirí Beaga, County Donegal
Roll Number: 91409A

Date of inspection: 11 March 2016



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GUIDANCE**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	10, 11 March 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 quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- Guidance and pastoral care in the school are well supported by school management and the pastoral care team works effectively.
- It is evident that there is a respectful and very positive interaction between teachers and students.
- The school has created valuable links with the support agencies in the area.
- The members of the teaching staff are to be commended for providing a range of activities that promotes the development of all kinds of talent among the students.
- The whole-school plan for Guidance is of a very high quality.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that school management timetable at least one Guidance lesson per week for Leaving Certificate students from the 2016/17 academic year onwards.
- Using cognitive ability tests to identify the strengths of each new student would be very worthwhile.
- It is recommended that senior students be given opportunities to act as mentors for first year students.

INTRODUCTION

Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair is a co-educational all-Irish school situated in the Donegal Gaeltacht. At present the programmes available in the school are the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (optional), the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. 379 students are enrolled for the current academic year 2015/16.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- There had been very good preparation for the lessons; worksheets and very good notes had been prepared beforehand. The subjects chosen were timely, interesting and related to the lives and experiences of the students themselves. It was obvious that the teacher was very familiar with information and communications technology (ICT) and effective use was made of video clips and slides that were both attractive and stimulating.
- Each lesson was very well structured and the learning objectives were clearly presented to the students. The learning objectives were revisited at the end of each lesson to ensure that they had been achieved.
- It was noticed that there was a very positive relationship between the teacher and the students which resulted in a positive learning environment in the lessons observed. The teacher demonstrated a good knowledge of all the students and the careers and courses they were interested in.
- The teacher used effective active methodologies, such as tasks, pair work and individual work. These activities work gave students an opportunity to participate in and be responsible for their own learning. However, there was scope to create more opportunities for fuller and more open discussion in class.
- The teacher moved about the class from person to person to assess the students and to give them helpful feedback. It was observed that a strong emphasis was being placed on digital literacy and on the specific terminology relating to course levels, for example.
- The quality of questioning was very good, students were given the opportunity to reflect deeply on the subject matter and they were knowledgeable when questioned.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of Guidance provision is good and Guidance and pastoral care in the school are well supported by management.
- Eleven hours and twenty minutes has been timetabled for Guidance, two hours for lessons in Guidance and the rest for career guidance with individual students.
- Guidance lessons are timetabled for Transition Year students and for Leaving Certificate Applied students but at present Guidance lessons are not timetabled for established Leaving Certificate students. From time to time, the guidance counsellor borrows classes from other teachers as necessary.
- It is recommended that school management should timetable at least one Guidance lesson per week for established Leaving Certificate students from the 2016/17 academic year onwards.
- It is also recommended that the school should avail of the extra allocation outlined in Department circular 01/2016 in order to give the guidance counsellor more hours to provide these extra classes.
- The students' pastoral care is very well provided for. The guidance counsellor is a member of the pastoral care team. This team works effectively and holds regular meetings.

- The guidance department works in collaboration with the teachers of Social, Personal and Health Education and the school community to organise events for the benefit of the students, events such as *Health and Wellbeing Week*, *Beat the Blues* and *Fun Day*, for example. It would now be worthwhile for the school to initiate a project with the aim of achieving a flag as a member of the *Network of Health Promoting Schools*.
- The school has created valuable links with the appropriate support agencies in the area, for example The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Donegal Youth Service (DYS) and Jigsaw. The school intends to strengthen the beneficial contact it has with Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- The community school has established close links with the local primary schools. The Education Passport is being availed of to gain a better understanding of the strengths of students who are transferring from the primary schools. Diagnostic assessments are held for them but it is recommended that cognitive ability tests be used also to identify each new student's strength and to analyse their progress afterwards.
- The school is to be commended on the comprehensive programme and the wide range of subjects it provides. At present, the first year students do not have an opportunity to sample the optional subjects before deciding on them.
- An important aspect that complements learning and the personal development of students is the opportunity to take part in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The staff of the community school are to be commended for providing a range of activities that promote the development of all kinds of talent.
- Students are given opportunities to develop their leadership skills through the Student Council, for example. Now that student numbers are increasing, it is recommended that senior students be given opportunities to act as mentors for first year students.
- The appropriate facilities are available in the guidance office. The guidance counsellor, who is a registered member of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, regularly attends in-service courses and counselling supervision.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The whole-school plan for Guidance is of a very high quality. The plan is comprehensive and it is commendable that it includes work schemes and teaching and assessment methods as well as a list of the necessary resources.
- It is clear from the plan that the guidance service is subject to regular review and reflection; this is good practice. There are draft questionnaires that are to be distributed to parents and students this year in order to elicit helpful feedback from them. There is evidence that co-curricular and extra-curricular planning is very good.
- The department is to be commended for keeping very comprehensive records of the third level colleges attended by former students and their career choices in recent years. The information is submitted to the board of management and the staff each year.

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

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

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 Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair welcomes the recognition in the report of the quality of the Guidance provision in the school.

We agree that this provision is having a positive influence on the pastoral care of our students and that the service is fully integrated into all aspects of school life.

We accept the recommendations in the report and we will ensure that they are implemented as soon as possible.

This is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management