

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Guidance
REPORT**

**Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach
Easca, Carlow
Roll number: 70440A**

Date of inspection: 2 May 2012



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN GUIDANCE**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	2 May 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal 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 and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The standard of teaching and learning in the guidance lessons observed was very good.
- The ex-quota allocation for Guidance is fully used for that purpose.
- The facilities for Guidance are of a high standard.
- Personal, educational and vocational guidance are provided as appropriate.
- Two guidance counsellors work collaboratively with teachers in the provision of a well-balanced, whole-school programme of Guidance.
- Communication among staff and with external agencies is appropriately structured and documented.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the assessment of general ability, use should be made of a standardised psychometric instrument with current Irish norms.
 - The school timetable should be based on 28 hours of tuition time in accordance with Circular M29/95.
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INTRODUCTION

Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach is a co-educational school providing post-primary education through the medium of Irish. The school was founded in 1990 within the scheme of Carlow Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Increasing enrolment necessitated the construction of a new school building, which was officially opened in 2009. The school continues to grow and 334 students are currently enrolled. In addition to the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate programmes, the curriculum offered to students includes the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Transition Year (TY), which is optional.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching and learning observed was very good. Lessons were well structured and planned. In each case, a clear statement of the objectives of the lesson was made at the outset, attendance was noted and reference was made to material learned in previous lessons. Homework was assigned before the conclusion of each lesson.
- Appropriate use was made of information and communication technology (ICT), facilitated by the installation of fixed data-projectors in each classroom. Presentations were clear, relevant and informative. Additional information and comments noted on whiteboards provided supplementary support to material presented electronically. In the course of one lesson, for example, literacy issues were addressed by the recording of unfamiliar words on the whiteboard.
- Students were well-behaved and co-operative. Good rapport had been established with students and was characterised by the identification of students by name, the appropriate use of humour and teacher movement through classrooms. Small groups were formed in the course of one lesson, providing opportunities for student expression that may not have been possible in larger groups. Irish was the language of communication in all encounters with students.
- Responses to questions and to prompts showed clear evidence of students' learning. Similarly, reports from small groups showed that the discussions among students were fruitful and to the point. The levels of questions used were well-balanced and the questions were pitched appropriately to the abilities and interests of students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- At the time of the evaluation, a good balance had been achieved in the use of the ex-quota allocation for Guidance. All class groups had been timetabled for one guidance lesson per week. Guidance was spread appropriately between the curricular and service elements of the programme and between personal, educational and vocational guidance. It was noted that, although the ex-quota allocation of 15.2 hours per week was being used fully for Guidance, the time devoted by staff to the delivery of the guidance programme was well in excess of this..
- The teaching hours of one member of the guidance team include some hours in teaching Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). This facilitates ongoing collaboration with other members of the SPHE department in the provision of curricular elements of the guidance programme common to SPHE.

- The facilities for Guidance are of a high standard. Two guidance counsellors are employed. The guidance office is equipped with the requisite office and electronic technology and is suited to good counselling practice.
- Links between the school and external agencies, such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) have been well-established. Adherence to good practice is demonstrated by the arrangement of a planning meeting with the designated NEPS psychologist at the commencement of the school year. Referrals within the school are managed by means of a standard referral system which ensures confidentiality while accounting for students' attendance.
- Student involvement in school procedures is significant. Communication between the student council and staff is effective and includes some formal contacts with senior management. The council has also been active in the school's regular reviews of policies, such as the anti-bullying policy, as appropriate, and in providing a mentoring programme for newly enrolled students in keeping with the school's mission.
- Some assessment is carried out collaboratively by the guidance department and the additional educational needs department in addition to the regular assessments carried out by staff in other curricular departments. The test currently used in the assessment of the general ability of newly enrolled students has been under review. The results of the test, in combination with the results of other diagnostic assessments, have been used to identify students' additional educational needs and in monitoring students' academic progress. It is recommended that a suitable instrument with contemporary Irish norms be identified as a replacement for that in current use.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) is encouraged and facilitated by senior management. Currently, one member of the guidance team attends CPD arranged by the local branch of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC)
- It was also noted that the weekly school timetable fell short of the twenty-eight hours of tuition time required by the Department of Education and Skills. This should be addressed

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The student-support team comprises the guidance counsellors, the additional educational needs co-ordinator, senior management and other staff as appropriate. In addition to its role in managing the school's responses to the immediate needs of students, this team has also engaged with the process of whole-school guidance planning. The team has been effective in the development of the whole-school guidance plan and in its preparation for approval by the board of management.
- The size of the school has enabled the formation of effective channels of communication through on-going informal contacts among staff members and through regular, structured meetings. The guidance department plan includes references to such communication, and documentation that is clear and comprehensive. The inclusion of evaluative comment observed in some documents is very good practice, particularly in the context of the current national focus on school self-evaluation.
- The whole-school guidance plan has been well integrated into the school plan. In achieving this, the plan has succeeded in bringing consistency to a unified system of whole-school guidance that includes inputs from staff that are balanced across the

personal, educational and vocational components of guidance provision. The outcomes of such good practice were observed, not only in the integration of the guidance department plan into the whole-school guidance plan, but also in the effective use of the student journal and the staff diary to note policies and procedures with implications for guidance provision.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and guidance counsellors 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; a response was not received from the board.

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