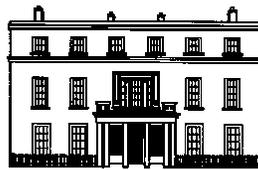


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Guidance**  
**REPORT**

**Coláiste na Carraige**  
**Carrick, County Donegal**  
**Roll number: 71150T**

**Date of inspection: 13 January 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**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	<b>13 January 2016</b>
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning during one class period</li> <li>• Examination of students' work</li> <li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and guidance counsellor</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of relevant documents</li> <li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal, guidance counsellor and teachers</li> <li>• Interaction with students</li> </ul>	

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- School management and staff are very supportive of the provision of Guidance.
- There is a strong focus by the guidance department on educational and career guidance, but there is scope to provide more personal counselling within the guidance counselling context.
- The guidance department, in conjunction with other members of staff, has spearheaded a successful programme to promote student attainment and student progression.
- A focused and personalised mentoring programme for students in fifth and sixth year has been successful in assisting them to achieve their full potential.
- The guidance department and the student support team fulfil complementary roles in providing effective supports for students, but there is scope for a more collaborative and integrated approach.
- The student support team organises many worthwhile activities and themed events to provide for students' wellbeing in the school community.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In order to review, assess and consolidate learning, questioning strategies should be expanded and more opportunities provided for student discussion and interaction in lessons.
- The guidance counsellor, the student support team and the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) team should adopt a more integrated, co-ordinated and collaborative approach to providing student supports, particularly at junior-cycle level.
- The student support team should meet more frequently, in accordance with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) guidelines, *Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools* (2014), and these meetings should be attended by the guidance counsellor.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste na Carraige is a co-educational post-primary school operating under the auspices of the Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB). The school serves a largely rural catchment area with enrolment currently standing at 232 students. The programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lesson observed was good.
- The lesson observed was well planned. The topic chosen, relating to making an online application to the Central Applications Office, was timely, appropriate and relevant. The lesson was well structured and sequenced in a manner that facilitated learning. The students engaged actively and independently in the practical task set for them.
- Relationships in the classroom were positive. The teacher demonstrated a clear knowledge of students' personal and career interests. There was an appropriate focus on supporting digital literacy in the lesson.
- While the teacher occasionally used focused questioning in the lesson observed, there was clearly more scope for higher-order questioning, student interaction and discussion of the task at hand. In order to review, assess and consolidate learning, it is recommended that questioning strategies should be expanded and more opportunities provided for student discussion and interaction in the classroom setting.

## **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good. Senior management and staff are very supportive of the provision of Guidance in the school. The board of management has allocated twelve hours to Guidance which includes timetabled guidance lessons to all senior-cycle students.
- There is a strong focus by the guidance department on educational and career guidance, but there is scope to provide more personal counselling. Students regularly approach members of staff for advice and support, but it is important that any student who needs counselling is referred to the guidance counsellor.
- The guidance department, in conjunction with other members of staff, has spearheaded a successful programme to promote student attainment and progression. A focused and personalised mentoring programme for students in fifth and sixth year has been successful in assisting them to achieve their full potential.
- It is highly commendable that a calendar of themed events such as those on study skills, bullying awareness and wellbeing are organised collaboratively by students and members of the student support team. During the evaluation many students praised events such as the *Colour Walk* and fun quizzes in helping them to develop friendships across different year groups. Peer support is provided through a buddy system for first-year students.
- During the evaluation, it was evident that a rich variety of effective supports was provided to the students by the guidance counsellor, the student support team and the SPHE teaching staff, sometimes acting independently of each other. It is recommended that these three teams adopt a more integrated, co-ordinated and collaborative approach to providing student supports, particularly at junior-cycle level.

- The student support team meets formally only a few times a year and usually at the same time as the teaching and learning team, of which the guidance counsellor is also a member. It is recommended that the student support team meet more frequently, in accordance with the NEPS guidelines, *Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools* (2014), and that these meetings be attended by the guidance counsellor.
- Strong links with the parents' association, the Donegal ETB's psychological service and the external community, business and voluntary agencies have facilitated a variety of learning experiences for students. During the evaluation Garda vetting procedures were in place for staff. It is important that adults who offer their services to the school are vetted in a timely manner in accordance with Circulars 0063/2010 and 0026/2015.
- The facilities for Guidance are very good and include a fully-equipped office, as well as priority access to the computer room. The guidance counsellor is an active member of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and attends regular counselling supervision and continuing professional development.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Planning and preparation in the guidance department are of a good standard. The Guidance plan is well structured and contains schemes of work for many year groups, but the section on TY should be developed further. There is a commendable focus in the schemes of work on student motivation, goal setting, study skills, choosing the right subjects and students achieving their full potential.
- Procedures are in place to track on an annual basis the initial destinations of students who have completed their Leaving Certificate. An improvement in student attainment and in progression in recent years has been noted.
- The guidance department has played a leading and collaborative role in the development of many school policies, including plans relating to whole-school Guidance, critical incident response, pastoral care, homework and study. It is recommended that all school policies include the date when they were approved and ratified by the board of management as well as a review date.
- Record-keeping in the guidance department is of a good standard and shows due consideration for ethical issues, such as confidentiality and the security of test materials.

---

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.