

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

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

**Castletroy College**  
**Castletroy, County Limerick**  
**Roll number: 76073G**

**Date of inspection: 9 November 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	8 and 9 November 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching practice seen in the course of the lessons observed was good.
- The quality of those aspects of the guidance programme being delivered is high.
- The senior management team has dealt effectively with the consequences of the withdrawal of the ex-quota allocation for Guidance which are being experienced at many levels in the school.
- Effective collaboration among staff is facilitated by well-functioning channels of formal and informal communication and by an environment of positive relationships among staff and management.
- The facilities provided for the delivery of the guidance programme are of a high quality and include widely available broadband internet access.
- Whole-school guidance planning is well advanced and incorporates provision for reflection, self-evaluation and continuing professional development (CPD).

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The guidance roles and responsibilities of all staff should be outlined in the whole-school guidance plan.
  - Protocols and policies, such as those associated with referrals and confidentiality, that may have relevance to all staff should be reviewed in that context.
  - The programme calendar of the guidance department should be enhanced by the inclusion of the estimated time taken to complete each of the proposed activities.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Castletroy College was established in 2000 by County Limerick Vocational Education Committee (VEC). The school, which is co-educational, has grown rapidly since its establishment and it is anticipated by senior management that this trend will continue. Currently, 1158 students are enrolled. Transition Year is optional and while all students participate in the first year of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), completion of the programme is optional for eligible students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching practice seen in the course of the lessons observed was good. The lesson objectives were clear from the outset. Both lessons had been well planned. Their structure and content were in keeping with students' levels of maturity and ability. Teachers' knowledge of the topics presented was comprehensive and accurate.
- The lessons were well presented. It was clear that teachers and students were at ease, facilitating styles of presentation that were student-centred and based on positive relationships. Students' responses to teachers' individual styles of instruction and direction were cooperative and students remained engaged throughout.
- Good use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) in the course of one lesson. The resolution of a minor technological impediment was achieved with a skill that demonstrated high competency and presence of mind.
- Students' comprehension was monitored effectively and continually using prompts and questions that displayed knowledge of students' interests. It was clear that classroom guidance is well integrated with work at an individual level with students.

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

- It is clear that a whole-school approach is taken to Guidance, that the guidance department has a central role in its provision and that effective collaborative practices are in place. The guidance programme is being delivered in the context of facilities of a high quality. Two guidance counsellors comprise the core guidance department. Each is provided with an office that is equipped appropriately and, in common with the school in general, includes broadband internet access.
- Well-functioning channels of formal and informal communication, both within the school and with external agencies facilitate effective collaboration. This is enhanced by the environment of positive relationships that exist between staff and senior management. The effectiveness of such an environment was clearly demonstrated during a meeting of the weekly student-support team, attended by both guidance counsellors, at which the team strove sensitively and professionally with the resolution of issues regarding individual students.
- Similarly, effective collaborative practices have been established between the guidance department and other departments, such as the chaplaincy, and with other staff with responsibility for dealing with the additional needs of students. A well-balanced approach has been developed between personal, educational and vocational guidance and across the student cohort.

- Although the quality of those aspects of the guidance programme being delivered is high, the range of the programme has been reduced due to the effects of the withdrawal of the ex-quota allocation for Guidance. The effects in question are being experienced at many levels in the school. In particular, the availability of the guidance counsellors for meetings with individual students has been reduced due to their increased timetabled commitments in Guidance and in other subjects. In consequence, the role of senior management has increased in dealing with instances of crisis that would have had guidance department inputs.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Whole-school guidance planning is well advanced and incorporates provision for reflection, self-evaluation and CPD, which is encouraged and facilitated. To enhance such good practice, it is recommended that existing elements of the plan that have a school-wide bearing be developed with a view to their inclusion in the whole-school plan. These include policies on referrals, both within the school and to external agencies, and on confidentiality.
- Because of the reduction in time allocated to the guidance department, and in order to cater appropriately for the guidance needs of students, the guidance roles and responsibilities of all staff, including those of senior management, should be outlined in the whole-school guidance plan. In collaboration with the guidance department and the student-support team, and in keeping with Department of Education and Skills policy, this should facilitate the identification of core roles and responsibilities with a view to the prioritisation of tasks in support of students. Similarly, the role of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) department in catering for the curricular component of the guidance programme, especially in the junior cycle, should be identified in the plan.
- The range of the guidance programme is very well outlined in the calendar of the guidance department. The inclusion of the estimated time taken to complete each of the proposed activities should facilitate the prioritisation and distribution of guidance-related tasks already recommended.
- The formalities associated with good planning practices are well established. These include the minuting of meetings, the recording of contacts with students, and the tracking of student progress. It is clear that evaluation of the guidance programme is ongoing. Current good practice has been informed by that process and provides an effective environment for engagement with school self evaluation.

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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 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.

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