

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Guidance
REPORT**

**Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine
Kenmare, County Kerry
Roll number: 91503P**

Date of inspection: 7 May 2013



**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	7 May 2013
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 guidance counsellor

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teaching and learning observed was of a high quality.
- The priority given to the support of students is exemplified by high quality in the provision of Guidance.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the administration and delivery of Guidance is very effective.
- Collaboration among staff in support of students is extensive and is based on the positive relationships that have been established throughout the school.
- Guidance planning is ongoing and the school website is used effectively in its dissemination.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Additional opportunities for engagement with the content of optional subjects should be created for students prior to choice.
 - Meetings of the student-support team should be formalised.
-

INTRODUCTION

Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine is a co-educational community school situated close to the centre of Kenmare. The enrolment is relatively stable at its current level of 471 students. In addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, the available programmes include the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Transition Year (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the two lessons observed was high. The lessons were well planned. The topics chosen for the lessons showed an appreciation for the needs of students and were appropriate to the time of year. Prepared materials, such as worksheets and questionnaires, were relevant to the topics of the lessons and were well presented.
- Significant collaboration with other members of staff facilitated the highly effective use of ICT in seeking student feedback in the course of one lesson. Students seated at individual workstations completed an online questionnaire, the results for which had been electronically processed prior to the end of the lesson.
- In both lessons, students' engagement was maintained by the relevance of the topics and by a variety of activities. The management of students was unobtrusive and was facilitated by clear instructions and clarifications, and by the positive atmosphere that had been created.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Guidance and the support of students is a priority for the school. In both the documents observed, including the school website, and in the practice of staff, there was a clear focus on the personal and learning needs of students. Processes, such as the transition from primary to post-primary education, from the junior cycle to the senior cycle and the transition to further and higher education are well managed with significant inputs from the guidance department.
- The school's focus on the needs of students is evident both in the supports provided and in the opportunities given to students to participate in the life of the school. The guidance department, the chaplaincy, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) department and staff involved as class tutors in the pastoral structure have collaborated in the development of supports for students that involve students themselves. These include a mentoring system of newly-enrolled students by senior students, an induction programme for students and the promotion of an active student council. It is noted that, as a courtesy to visitors, a member of the student council is nominated to welcome and direct visitors as appropriate.
- The range of optional subjects, particularly in the junior cycle, has been among the issues that have been reviewed by staff in recent years. Although the current reform of the junior cycle may have an effect on such choice, consideration should be given to the creation of opportunities for engagement with the content of optional subjects prior to choice.
- Although the withdrawal of the ex-quota allocation for Guidance has necessitated some alterations to the guidance programme, such as the additional timetabling of class contact,

the effects have been mitigated by a supportive staff and senior management. It is clear that guidance inputs are valued and are very well balanced across personal, educational and vocational guidance. An appropriate balance has also been achieved between classroom guidance and one-to-one work with students. Similarly, and in collaboration with subject teachers, guidance provision across the cohort of students is extensive.

- The facilities for Guidance are very good. An office is provided with the requisite furnishings and digital equipment. The use of ICT in the administration and delivery of Guidance is very effective. Access to the school's administrative system, for example, enables the easy identification of students and adds value to career interviews with students. Similarly, broadband access throughout the school facilitates the use of online information in the course of guidance lessons.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Collaboration between the guidance department and the chaplaincy and learning support departments is ongoing, significant and largely informally based. Communication with the senior management team is, similarly, ongoing, positive and largely informal. It is recommended, particularly in light of the recent *Well-being in post-primary schools: Guidelines for mental health promotion and suicide prevention* (2013), that some formality be applied to the student-support process. A regular, preferably weekly, meeting of a small student-support team is recommended. The team should comprise a representative of the senior management team, the guidance department, chaplaincy and learning support department. Other staff with supportive roles, such as the SPHE co-ordinator and a staff member with a role in the pastoral care structure should be included where appropriate.
- The functions of the team should be clearly defined and, in particular, its remit in referring students to external agencies and its adherence to principles of confidentiality. Similarly, the roles and responsibilities of the team members should be documented both in the documentation related to the operation of the student-support team and in the relevant departmental plans. A simple meeting record form, such as that already in use in school development planning, should be used to record actions to be taken following discussion of students' needs.
- Review and self-evaluation are significant features of the work of the guidance department. It is clear that students are involved in the process through their regular completion of questionnaires and informal surveys of the guidance programme. This is very good practice and is in keeping with the current national emphasis on school self-evaluation. Some of the results of this process were observed in the documentation of the guidance department and in its links to the school website. As an additional enhancement of current good practice, it is suggested that the work of the student-support team, recommended above, and the roles and responsibilities of its members be outlined in the guidance plan.

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

Published November 2013