

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Cavan County Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61070P

Date of Inspection: 23-01-2018



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Guidance under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	22-01-2018 and 23-01-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and guidance counsellor

Context

Loreto College Cavan is a voluntary Catholic secondary school for girls, under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall; it was particularly effective in smaller classroom settings.
- Whole-school support for student wellbeing is good, but subject provision and the timetabling of Guidance lessons are not satisfactory.
- A comprehensive induction programme for incoming first-year students is in place.
- Parents, students and staff work collaboratively on health-promoting initiatives.
- A care team is in place for each year group, but meetings are too infrequent.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation in the guidance department is good.

Recommendations

- To provide for highly effective learner outcomes, topics relating to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) should be explored in smaller classroom settings.
- Teachers should dedicate time to revisiting the learning intentions during lessons to identify gaps in understanding and assess progress.
- Classroom guidance should be formally timetabled as a lesson period in sixth year, and as a module in fifth year and TY.
- The system of care teams in the school should be reviewed, in line with the NEPS guidelines on *Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools* (2014), in order to ensure that meetings are held more frequently and that they are attended by key support personnel.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall; it was particularly effective in smaller classroom settings. Lessons were characterised by very respectful relationships between the teacher and the students.
- Advance planning for lessons was evident in the high quality of the worksheets, handouts, slide shows, online resources and support materials which had been prepared for the students.
- Commendably, lessons began with a review of prior learning. Lesson intentions were shared at the beginning of each lesson, but were not always revisited during the lesson to assess and consolidate the learning. It is recommended that teachers dedicate time to revisiting the learning intentions during lessons to identify gaps in understanding and assess progress.
- In the majority of the lessons observed a commendable range of methodologies and activities was chosen to engage students. These included *think, pair and share* activities, group work and discussion. Best practice was observed in one lesson where students worked collaboratively on a problem-solving task related to the Central Applications Office (CAO) points system. Student responses on completing the challenging task demonstrated a very good understanding of how the CAO system worked.
- There was scope for development in one of the lessons observed which took the format of a presentation to the entire fifth-year group on the issue of consent. Although some opportunities were provided for paired discussion, there was insufficient time provided for feedback or a plenary session. The layout of the room and the large numbers of students present were not conducive to personal self-reflection or optimal learning. It is recommended that topics relating to RSE be explored in smaller group settings that facilitate experiential learning, self-reflection and deeper inter-active student discussion.
- The teacher supported student learning through the use of effective questioning in all of the lessons visited. Written assessment practices were good. There was evidence that guidance assignments, such as career investigation and career profiles, were being assessed by the guidance counsellor and that helpful, formative feedback was being given to students.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for student wellbeing is good, but subject provision and timetabling of guidance lessons are not satisfactory. The school has been allocated over seventeen hours for Guidance, with a significant allocation dedicated to one-to-one guidance counselling appointments.
- Classroom guidance is not timetabled in the current academic year, although it had been in previous years. School management reported that this was due to the recent changeover to forty-minute lesson periods and the subsequent loss of three periods a week on the timetable.
- The guidance counsellor arranges with subject teachers to borrow classes, including entire year groups of students, for guidance lessons. While there is considerable goodwill among staff to facilitate these lessons, the current arrangements do not appear to be working satisfactorily. During the evaluation, sixth-year students expressed their dissatisfaction with the current arrangements and requested that classroom guidance be timetabled in future years. All agreed that the guidance department was doing its very best in the circumstances.

- It is recommended that school management reviews its decision in relation to the formal timetabling of guidance lessons in order to ensure that students receive an appropriate programme of Guidance in smaller classroom settings. As an initial step, it is recommended that classroom guidance be timetabled for a lesson period in sixth year, and as a module in fifth year and TY.
- There is an effective induction programme in place to ensure the smooth transition for students into the secondary school. This includes subject sampling, an induction day and a prefect system. It is positive that the school makes effective use of the education passport and the results of cognitive ability tests and other school tests to track student progress. The school is commended on its promotion of student leadership and student prefects.
- Care and support for the wellbeing of students is intrinsic to the school's ethos. It is positive that the school community organises a wide range of health-promoting initiatives, such as Rainbows Colours Day, and themed weeks focusing on friendship, anti-bullying, substance awareness, cool schools, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community. The school is commended on establishing a Wellbeing Committee and a *Health Promoting School* committee on which students, parents and staff are represented.
- A care team for each year group meets intermittently during the year; issues are discussed and appropriate referrals are made. The meetings are not always attended by the SEN co-ordinator or the school guidance counsellor. It is recommended that the system of care teams be reviewed, in line with the NEPS guidelines on *Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools* (2014), in order to ensure meetings are held more frequently and that they are attended by key support personnel, including the SEN co-ordinator and the school guidance counsellor.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation in the guidance department is good. Almost all guidance-related policies are up to date, with the exception of the anti-bullying policy which was being reviewed at the time of the evaluation.
- The guidance plan is of a good quality, but it is recommended that it be reviewed to include more detailed references to the roles and responsibilities of all staff members who are involved in student supports.
- Records of meetings with students are well maintained in digital format, along with records of various assessments and standardised tests.
- It is commendable that an annual report on the initial destinations of Leaving Certificate students is prepared by the school guidance counsellor.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.

1. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the school's reception area.

2. The school has a child protection policy in place.
3. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management wishes to clarify that the non-timetabling of Careers Guidance classes in the current academic year is intended as an interim measure for 2017/18 only. This is the first year senior classes have not been timetabled for Careers Guidance. Following the move from a forty-five to a forty-two period week, the additional Mathematics and English class at Leaving Certificate was continued.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

1. From September 2018, sixth year students will have timetabled Careers Guidance.
2. The senior leadership team and Careers Guidance Counsellor met with the NEPS Psychologist and are reviewing the care team system and referral system, in line with “student support teams in post primary schools” (2014).

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;