

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Our Lady's School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Templeogue Rd Terenure Dublin 6W
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60860Q

Date of Inspection: 06-03-2017



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. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	06-03-2017 and 07-03-2017
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 guidance facilities• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and guidance counsellors

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Our Lady's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school with 760 female students. It offers the Junior Cycle, Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate programmes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning in Guidance is good with some scope to include more opportunities for discussion in lessons.
- An effective and integrated whole-school approach to tracking and monitoring of students' progress is in place, with year heads working closely with the guidance department.
- Overall provision for Guidance is very good with two fully-qualified guidance counsellors delivering the programme; however there are deficits in the timetabling of guidance.
- The school provides a very good induction programme for first-year students and an innovative study skills programme which is only implemented for senior cycle students at present.
- A very effective student support team meets regularly with clear communication and referral pathways.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should extend the time allowed for activities that generate more student discussions about their education and career plans.
- Senior management needs to review the current timetabling arrangements for Guidance in TY and fifth year with a view to formalising the input of guidance counsellors to ensure more regular contact with students.
- When planning whole-school guidance activities such as study skills training, it is recommended that the programme be extended to junior cycle students.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good. The lessons were well planned and structured to include opportunities for students to engage in some group and pair work. Further opportunities for students to engage in discussions about their career and education plans should be included in guidance lessons.
- In all lessons, the teachers delivered good quality instruction and used a wide variety of approaches including role-play, video clips, questioning techniques and online questionnaires to elicit student responses. The choice of video clips should be reviewed to ensure students are challenged and to reflect their stage of maturity.
- In all lessons observed, the guidance counsellors demonstrated competence and proficiency in the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver an effective guidance programme. Students have attained a proficiency in online research and the use of career-related online tools. It is recommended that more opportunities for discussion be created in lessons, with less reliance on the use of the online tools during class time.
- Interactions among students and teachers were very respectful, positive and conducive to well-being. Students were very comfortable asking questions and teachers were aware of students' individual learning needs as they circulated the room. This is commendable.
- In all lessons observed, the learning intentions were shared with students. This approach should be extended to include a review and consolidation of the learning both during and at the end of the lesson.
- There is clear evidence of collaborative assessment practices in the school including tracking and monitoring of students' progress. The year heads currently analyse and track progress and work in close co-operation with subject departments and the guidance department. This is a highly effective whole-school guidance practice to identify students in need of support and referral.
- Standardised assessment practices are well developed and reviewed regularly to ensure they meet the needs of the students. Students are assessed using a wide range of career, interest and values questionnaires and an online file to store their guidance information. This broad and comprehensive approach is highly commendable.
- Some formal assessment of guidance assignments occurs in TY. Assessment is more informal in other years. The inclusion of additional opportunities for students to submit guidance-related pieces of work for assessment should be encouraged.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good. The guidance programme is of a very high standard and demonstrates a very good balance between personal, educational and career guidance counselling.
- School management places a high priority on maintaining a very good level of provision for Guidance. Thirty hours per week are allocated to the delivery of the guidance programme. The school is commended for maintaining this level of provision which reflects the supportive ethos of the school.
- Classroom guidance is timetabled for sixth years. Other senior cycle groups receive modules in guidance of varying duration. Senior management should undertake a review of this practice with a view to formalising the modules delivered in TY and fifth year.
- The facilities for Guidance are excellent, with two spacious fully-equipped offices and access to two computer rooms and classrooms. The close proximity of the offices allows for greater

collaboration and communication between the guidance counsellors. This partnership is working very effectively with clear division of roles and responsibilities.

- There is a well-integrated student-support team in place. This team meets weekly and has developed highly effective referral pathways both internally and externally to agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Health Service Executive, Jigsaw, The Child and Family Agency, TUSLA, Pieta House, and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. It is suggested that an annual review of the work of this team be conducted to evaluate its effectiveness and to plan for the future development of the team.
- The guidance counsellors recognise continuing professional development (CPD) and collaboration as intrinsic to their work. They both attend regular CPD, branch meetings, training and counselling supervision. School management supports their attendance. This is to be commended and recognised as an acknowledgement of the importance of CPD and participation in professional networks for guidance counsellors.
- It is commendable that teachers, parents, students and past students have developed a strong culture of collaborative planning for events such as health promotion week, care week and a careers night for senior cycle students. This fosters a very positive school culture, builds very productive relationships and facilitates the holistic development of young people.
- First-year students are very well supported by a comprehensive induction programme entitled 'New Beginnings' developed by the school. Close co-operation with the primary feeder schools is evident.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers collectively agree and implement whole-school approaches to guidance which is evident in some of the initiatives running in the school. These include 'Work Smarter Not Harder', a study skills training programme, developed in the school for senior cycle students. It is recommended that this programme be extended to the junior cycle students.
- It is noteworthy that Guidance is viewed as a whole-school activity. Close collaboration exists between the guidance department and all the support structures in the school. All three areas of guidance: personal, educational and career, are planned for and appropriate initiatives are organised to support each area.
- Communication with parents is ongoing using a variety of methods including the new school mobile app, the guidance section of the school website, evening meetings, talks and a variety of guidance publications.
- The Guidance plan is well-developed and is currently under review. This practice of regularly updating plans leads to a highly effective service delivery. To enhance this process it is recommended that students and parents are consulted on an ongoing basis and that the service is evaluated annually.
- Record keeping is of a very high standard; filing, security and maintenance of test materials and data management are all exemplary. It is suggested that the development of additional policies such as a confidentiality policy be considered to enhance the existing good practice.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and guidance counsellors at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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.

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 of Our Lady's School welcomes the very positive findings of the inspection report.

The Board is pleased that so many features of the Guidance Programme were found to be commendable. It is particularly pleasing to see that the quality of interactions between students and staff was recognised as being "very respectful, positive and conducive to well being".

The Board is pleased that Guidance was recognised as being whole school, including the monitoring and tracking of student progress and the work done by the student support team.

It is also pleased that the collaborative planning involving parents, students, teachers and past pupils throughout the year was commended.

The Board congratulates the staff on the Guidance Programme which was found to be of a very high standard, a good balance between personal, educational and career guidance counselling, including the highly commended standardised assessment practices. The Board recognises the importance of CPD and values the engagement of staff in this.

The Board is pleased that the very good overall provision for Guidance, the excellent facilities and the innovative induction and study programmes were highlighted in the report.

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

Our Lady's School strives to achieve the highest possible standards in all areas of our work. By engaging in self-evaluation, our aim as a school is to build on the areas of strength and respond appropriately to any identified areas for improvement.

The Guidance Department will seek to build on their current practice of using a variety of approaches to generate student discussions about their education and career plans in lessons. They will continue to use individual guidance appointments, guidance trips, careers night and visiting speakers as further opportunities to do so.

Senior management will strive to ensure that the very good provision and support for Guidance continues.

A plan is in place to improve the timetabling arrangements in Transition Year and we will review the current modular approach used to provide guidance lessons 5th Year.

Arising from evaluations undertaken, the study skills programme has been improved in recent years to reflect the needs of our students. In the light of this year's pilot, a plan is in place to adapt the innovative study skills programme for the junior cycle next year, and we welcome the endorsement of this.

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 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;