

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Carndonagh Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Carndonagh Lifford County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91406R

Date of Inspection: 07-03-2017



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.

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 DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	6 March 2017 — 7 March 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principals, guidance counsellors 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 and guidance counsellors

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Carndonagh Community School operates under the joint trusteeship of Donegal Education and Training Board and the Diocese of Derry. Currently, there are 527 girls and 521 boys enrolled. The school offers the full range of curricular programmes, including an optional Transition Year (TY). It participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was consistently good; there was scope for more active methodologies and student discussion in some lessons.
- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good; the current imbalance at junior cycle is being addressed by the school.
- A whole-school collaborative and integrated approach to promoting student wellbeing is evident.
- The Student Support Team works as an effective multi-disciplinary team and its system of record keeping is exemplary.
- At the time of the evaluation, guidance classes had limited access to internet facilities due to high demand from other subject groups.
- Planning, preparation and organisation in the guidance department are of a very high quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater opportunities for student discussion and engagement in active methodologies should be developed in lessons to enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes.
- The school should explore ways to enhance student access to guidance resources on line under the provisions outlined in Department Circular 0001/2017 on grant aid for ICT.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was consistently good. The teaching and learning were particularly effective when the right balance was achieved between teacher-led and student-led activities.
- All lessons were well prepared with a range of resources that included well-designed work sheets, digital presentations and short video clips. Teachers' presentations were very clear, comprehensive and informative. Teacher-student questioning was used effectively to assess and consolidate learning, but there was scope at times to extend opportunities for student discussion in order to deepen the learning.
- Some good examples of pair work, group work and individual self-reflection exercises were observed, but were not always fully exploited. In one lesson students worked solely on individual exercises, where a follow-up *think, pair and share* activity might have enriched the students' learning experience. It is recommended that greater opportunities for student discussion and engagement in active methodologies be developed to enhance the quality of students' learning outcomes.
- A commendable focus on literacy was observed in some lessons with an appropriate emphasis on understanding subject-specific terminology.
- Interactions between teachers and students in all of the lessons observed were positive, respectful and affirming.
- A review of students' work, which included curriculum vitae (CV), course and career investigations, demonstrated an appropriate level of monitoring and constructive feedback by teachers. The very good practice observed in one lesson of encouraging students to store their work in folders should be extended to other class groups.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is very good. An evident imbalance between provision of Guidance at junior cycle and senior cycle is currently being addressed. As an initial step, the school plans to include a guidance module in the Wellbeing programme in first year from the start of the next academic year 2017/18.
- The core guidance team comprises three guidance counsellors, while the chaplain also provides individual support to students.
- School management has allocated fifty-one hours a week for Guidance, ten hours of which is timetabled classroom guidance for students in fifth and sixth year. The remaining hours are allocated to a wide range of guidance activities which include one-to-one guidance counselling with students from all year groups.
- A whole-school integrated approach to providing student support is evident. During the evaluation, there was evidence of very close collaboration between staff, including the guidance team, the chaplain, the coordinator for special educational needs and the coordinator for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The school also benefits from the services of a home-school-community liaison co-ordinator, a family support worker and a school completion officer, all of whom are members of the Student Support Team.

- The Student Support Team meets weekly, works as an effective multi-disciplinary team and its system of record keeping is exemplary. Fruitful links have been established with outside agencies and local support services to which referrals are made.
- It is commendable that themed events to promote student wellbeing are held annually. The school participates in the *Health Promoting Schools* and *Stand-Up* programmes, *Cycle Against Suicide* and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Safe and Supportive Schools Project. Staff have trained in the *Friends for Youth* programme, while Donegal Youth Services have provided seminars for students and parents on cyber safety.
- It is laudable that the school has fostered close links with the feeder primary schools. Very good systems are in place for the exchange of information and the transfer of primary students to the school.
- The school offers a very broad range of subject and programme options. Incoming students are provided with an opportunity to visit specialist rooms and sample subject options for a day. It is commendable that TY students are given an opportunity to sample subject-option modules for senior cycle.
- The guidance team is to be commended for facilitating trips for students to a wide range of colleges and career fairs on both sides of the border. Hosting career and college talks and an annual College Awareness Week in the school has also helped to inform and raise awareness.
- The facilities for Guidance are very good and include three fully equipped offices and a careers library. Access to tablet devices or computer rooms for classroom guidance is limited due to high demand. It is recommended that the school endeavours to enhance student access to guidance resources online under the provisions for grant aid outlined in Department Circular 0001/2017.
- All three guidance counsellors attend regular CPD and counselling supervision in line with best practice.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning, preparation, organisation and record-keeping in the guidance department are of a very high quality. All guidance-related policies are up to date.
- The guidance plan is very comprehensive. Consideration should be given to surveying students and parents annually for their views as part of a regular view of the plan.
- It is commendable that the guidance department has a strong presence on line and makes good use of print and social media to inform students and their parents of upcoming events.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and guidance counsellors 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 acknowledges the overwhelmingly positive nature of the Report and commends the Guidance Department on their work and particularly the quality of teaching and learning. The Guidance Counsellors wish to record that the three lessons chosen by the inspector to observe were all information-giving sessions and covered topics such as *Applying to PLC College*, *Attending Your First Career Exhibition Open Day* and *The Differences between School and College*. Given that there is so much information to impart in one class per week, it is inevitable that guidance classes will feature a lot of information-giving with less time for student discussion than in a Geography class. All material is devised and designed by the guidance counsellors. Not all information is relevant to every pupil. However, in the light of this feedback, the guidance counsellors will redesign the class content for 2017/18 with more discussion time as suggested.

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

The Guidance Department has designed four additional pages for inclusion in the Pupil Journal to allow for notes.

Further student access to guidance resources, particularly at Junior Cycle, have been provided for 2017/18.

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 very good 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;