



**An Roinn Oideachais**  
Department of Education

# Subject Inspection: Guidance Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Loreto Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Pembroke Hill Ballynagee Wexford.
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	63660A
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	27-04-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	07/09/2023

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# 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(s) 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.

## Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li><li>2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.</li><li>3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils/students.</li></ol>

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

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# Subject inspection

<b>Date of inspection</b>	24 & 27-04-2023
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students, including focus groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 3 lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, guidance counsellors and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

Loreto Secondary School, Wexford is a voluntary secondary school with 894 female students. It is under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate (Established) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- Teaching, learning and assessment in Guidance were highly effective; in all lessons students were provided with opportunities for collaborative learning and independent self-directed research.
- Students have been developing an e-portfolio from a collection of work they created during the course of their guidance programme; this is commendable and a very significant strength of the guidance programme.
- The overall quality of guidance provision was of a very high standard, with a very collaborative guidance department and a very high level of whole-school support.
- Whole school guidance has been very successfully promoted in the school and has become a shared responsibility; TY students have led initiatives such as 'professions week' showcasing over twenty different careers.
- The school has successfully developed very good student care and support structures; students in the focus group reported feeling very supported and knew who to go to for assistance.
- The overall quality of guidance planning was very good with few areas for improvement.

### Recommendations

- To further improve the guidance curricular plan, at both junior and senior cycle, the guidance team should consider key skills development and plan in terms of units of learning, with clear learning outcomes.

# Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Teaching, learning and assessment in Guidance were highly effective.
- Lessons were characterised by very high quality teaching and very high levels of student engagement.
- In all lessons planning and preparation were very effective. Useful resources were provided to students to enhance their learning experiences. A good variety of paper and online resources were used effectively to support the development of key skills such as communicating, managing information and working with others.
- The guidance counsellors shared learning intentions at the beginning of lessons and facilitated good reflection on learning during the lesson. It was noted that some intentions could have been more explicit in terms of what students would know or be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- The three guidance counsellors demonstrated very good subject knowledge and evident enthusiasm for Guidance, which supported positive classroom atmospheres and high levels of student engagement.
- In all lessons students were provided with valuable opportunities for collaborative learning and independent self-directed research. Mini white boards and group work were used very effectively to facilitate students to work together and generate ideas. Students were active participants in all lessons.
- Students have developed very good independent research and digital skills. They were observed competently using online guidance-related search engines, the school sharing platform and an online guidance programme. Students have been developing an e-portfolio from a collection of work they created during the course of their guidance programme. This is commendable and a very significant strength of the guidance programme. Students demonstrated self-confidence and contributed meaningfully to lessons. They asked interesting questions and illustrated a deep understanding of the topics.
- Teacher questioning was used very effectively to assess students' understanding. Students' responses demonstrated they had a clear understanding of the post-school education and career options and were aware of a variety of different pathways.
- Teacher circulation was very good and all observed interactions were very respectful between students and teachers, and between peers.
- It was very positive that students were challenged to think about gender stereotyping in relation to careers and consider a wide variety of career options.
- When asked about their education and career interests, students identified a diverse range of careers including: physiotherapy, law, marine science, teaching and photography.
- Samples of student work were reviewed and it was evident that the guidance counsellors have been providing very high quality formative feedback to students on their guidance-related assignments.
- Commendably students have been self-reflecting on their guidance-related learning, their psychometric self-assessment and career interest test outcomes, and linking these results to potential education and career directions.

## 2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The overall quality of guidance provision was of a very high standard, with very significant strengths and a very high level of whole-school support.

- The school places a significant value on promoting high quality Guidance; the senior management team has deployed the full guidance allocation to three appropriately qualified guidance counsellors.
- The principal has demonstrated his ongoing support for the guidance department by attending the guidance team meeting every second week. In addition, the three guidance counsellors have been released by senior management to attend all five sessions of guidance counselling supervision.
- A very cohesive and highly collaborative guidance department team was working very effectively with identified individual and shared responsibilities. It is commendable that the team members has rotated the role of guidance department co-ordinator and has begun to engage in peer lesson observations. This is very good practice and indicative of the trust and collaboration between team members and their consistent drive for excellence.
- As part of the division of roles and responsibilities it is very good to note that each guidance counsellor has been assigned to a particular group of students from first-year to sixth-year. All students in the focus group knew their guidance counsellor and were very familiar with how to access support. All students, that the inspector interacted with, spoke very positively about the guidance counsellors, the guidance programme and range of whole school supports available to them.
- All students in senior cycle groups have been provided with a weekly guidance lesson. Students reported they found the guidance lessons very useful and said this regular contact with the guidance counsellor supported them to make well-informed social personal, educational and career decisions and reduced their levels of anxiety about the future.
- Junior cycle students have been provided with regular high quality inputs from the guidance team as part of whole-school guidance and wellbeing initiatives. Notwithstanding these good interventions, it is positive to see that the junior cycle guidance programme is an area the guidance team has identified for further development.
- It was evident that student care and support were given a high priority by all the teachers. A dedicated and effective student support team has met weekly, while other valuable care teams also operated to support students. Teachers reported access to very good online systems for sharing relevant information about concerns, noting close links with the year heads, guidance department, and special education needs (SEN) department.
- Whole school guidance has been successfully promoted in the school following a presentation by the guidance department to the staff at the beginning of the school year. it is very good that a guidance planning team was established. Commendably, whole-school guidance has become a shared responsibility.
- There were a number of very good examples of whole school guidance including leadership of a number of guidance-related activities by the TY co-ordinator and students. TY students organised and led a 'professions week' with over twenty different careers represented. This event was an excellent opportunity for the TY students to develop a variety of leadership and key skills, and contribute to whole-school guidance.
- Other very good examples of whole-school guidance included teacher and student support for subject choice information sessions, parents involved in mock interviews and teachers and students leading valuable whole-school wellbeing committees.
- Whole-school guidance collaboration was very effective; the guidance department and the SEN department work together to allocate responsibility for completion of the disability access forms. This is very good practice and enables the teacher with the most knowledge of the student to complete the form.
- It was evident, from the wide-ranging list of continuing professional development attended, that the guidance counsellors demonstrated a high level of commitment to keeping abreast of developments in their profession and frequently engaged with a number of professional networks.
- As part of a post of responsibility one of the guidance counsellors leads a student academic tracking system. This was reported to be very useful by teachers as it has

assisted the guidance team and others to identify students who may require additional support.

### 3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning was very good with few areas for improvement; there was evidence of extensive and high quality planning by the guidance team.
- A new whole-school guidance planning team has reviewed and developed the guidance plan. It is commendable that the whole-school guidance planning team includes members from other subject departments.
- The guidance plan was very detailed and reflected a wide range of whole-school initiatives and guidance supports planned for the year. To strengthen collaborative planning the whole-school guidance team could widen participation by including students and parents in co-creating the next guidance plan.
- The school-designed guidance curricular and co-curricular plan includes very appropriate topics, speakers, guidance-related trips, valuable teaching and learning resources, and good opportunities for students to present assignments and receive feedback. To further improve the guidance curricular plan, at both junior and senior cycle, the guidance team should consider key skills development and plan in terms of units of learning, with clear learning outcomes.
- It is very good practice that students' views have been sought following guidance-related activities such as open day trips, study skills week, mock interviews, and subject choice information sessions.
- Very good guidance-related policies and procedures were in place, such as change of subject and levels, referrals for support, and recording appointments.
- The guidance counsellors maintained their records appropriately and in line with best practice.

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

## 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 of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**



## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The school welcomes this Inspection report. In particular, we are pleased to note the following points:

- Teaching learning and assessment in Guidance were highly effective.
- The overall quality of guidance provision was of a very high standard, with a very collaborative guidance department and a very high level of whole-school support.
- Whole-school guidance has been very successfully promoted in the school and has become a shared responsibility.
- Student care and support were given a high priority by all the teachers.
- The overall quality of planning was very good with few areas for Improvement; there was evidence of extensive and high-quality planning by the guidance team.
- Teaching was of a very high quality with very high levels of student engagement.

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

Since the inspection, the Guidance Department have held a focus group of outgoing 6th year students and another focus group of parents to collaboratively plan for the next academic year.

Work on changing curriculum plans to include clear learning outcomes has commenced and will be developed over time.