

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Guidance

REPORT

School name	Bush Post Primary School
School address	Riverstown Dundalk County Louth
Roll number	71750U

Date of Inspection: 07-11-2017



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. 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	06-11-2017 and 07-11-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, guidance team and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and guidance team

School context

Bush Post-Primary is a co-educational school that operates under the auspices of Louth and Meath Education and Training Board. There are 594 students enrolled currently. The school offers the full range of curricular programmes, including an optional Transition Year (TY). It also participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings.

- The quality of the teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good; students would have benefited from more opportunities to interact in lessons, as well as greater clarity of instruction around student tasks.
- The overall quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is good; there is scope to increase the number of guidance counselling hours, to include enhanced guidance provision for TY students.
- Facilities for Guidance are satisfactory; students would benefit from more timetabled access to on-line resources.
- The school is a very close knit and caring community that demonstrates a well-integrated, co-ordinated approach to promoting student wellbeing.
- The Student Support Team meets weekly and is an effective forum for discussing students' issues and appropriate referral pathways.
- The quality of planning and preparation in the guidance department is good.

Recommendations

- Teachers should ensure that their instructions in regard to student tasks are very clear, specific and well understood, and that more opportunities are provided for student discussion and interaction in lessons.
- A short module in Guidance should be provided for all TY students to include career interests and course investigations to enhance their learning.
- School management should review the arrangements for access by students to online resources and information and communication technology (ICT) during guidance lessons to provide an enriched learner experience for all.
- School management should ensure that the full allocation of guidance hours is applied to the operation of the school's guidance counselling service from the start of the next academic year 2018/19.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of the teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good; there was scope at times for teachers to give clearer guidelines and instructions when setting tasks and to facilitate more opportunities for student interaction.
- The lessons visited were generally well planned, structured and sequenced. One of the lessons was observed to be overly ambitious in its aims to cover too much material; a closer focus on a smaller number of learning intentions would have proved more effective.
- A rich variety of resources, including work sheets and hand-outs, was used effectively to support student learning. Digital presentations by teachers were used to good effect to explain and to re-enforce concepts. Best practice was evident when the students themselves had an opportunity to use ICT and on-line tools for guided research in their own areas of interest, as a means of consolidating and applying their learning.
- Lessons were most effective when the right balance was achieved between teacher-led instruction and student activities. There was scope at times to encourage more inter-student discussion and interaction in lessons. Some good examples of effective pair work were observed. In some lessons, *think, pair and share* activities, show-me boards and on-line assessment tools were used effectively to enhance, assess and consolidate learning. It is recommended that these very good practices be extended across more lessons.
- It was noted in a number of lessons visited that there was a lack of clarity at times in teachers' instructions regarding setting student tasks for classwork and homework. Sometimes, the instructions were rather vague and too general. This left some of the students confused, prompting them to seek further clarification. It is recommended that teachers plan more carefully for student tasks and ensure that their instructions in this regard are very clear, specific and well understood by all.
- Lessons were characterised by a very positive and respectful rapport between teachers and students, and between the students themselves. During the lessons observed, teachers moved around the classroom assessing, supporting and affirming students' progress.
- A review of students' work, which included career plans, course and career investigations, demonstrated a high level of monitoring and constructive feedback by the teachers. Students' responses to questioning demonstrated a good knowledge of the career paths and educational options open to them.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of provision and whole-school support for Guidance is good; there is scope to increase the number of hours allocated to guidance counselling and to provide enhanced access by students to on-line resources.
- The school benefits from the services of a full-time guidance counsellor and another member of staff who is training as a guidance counsellor and to whom a small number of guidance hours have been allocated. Not all of the guidance hours allocated to the school have been assigned to Guidance. School management reported that this was due to ongoing difficulties in recruiting a second qualified guidance counsellor, but that they intended to rectify the matter. It is recommended that school management ensure that the full allocation of guidance hours is applied to the operation of the school's guidance counselling service as soon as practicable, but certainly by the start of the next academic year 2018/19.

- Guidance is timetabled appropriately for students in both fifth and sixth year. While the subject is not timetabled for TY there is a commendable cross-curricular approach taken to preparing TY students for work experience. The guidance counsellor also provides short inputs on subject choice. In order to enhance the provision of Guidance to TY, it is recommended that a short module in Guidance be provided to all TY students.
- The school is a very close knit and caring community that demonstrates a well-integrated, co-ordinated approach to promoting student wellbeing. There is significant collaboration between the guidance team, the special educational needs department, the home-school-community-liaison co-ordinator, and the teachers of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and of Physical Education. All staff have attended in-service in Wellbeing for junior cycle, while a number of teachers have trained as facilitators of the *Rainbows* and *Jigsaw* programmes. Worthwhile school activities that promote positive health include a Friendship week, a Mental Health week and a Citizenship Day.
- Guidance counselling is provided to students on an individual and small-group basis. The Student Support Team meets weekly and is an effective forum for addressing individual students' issues and the appropriate referral pathways in a confidential manner.
- There are very good supports in place to support the smooth transition of students from primary schools. It is highly commendable that the school journal highlights the range of supports available to students both within the school and in the wider community.
- Facilities for Guidance are satisfactory and would benefit from a second office for guidance counselling. It was noted during the evaluation that while one member of the guidance team had timetabled access to the computer room on occasions, the other member did not. It is recommended that the school review the arrangements for access by students to online resources and ICT during guidance lessons to ensure an enhanced learner experience for all.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation in the guidance department is good. All guidance-related policies, including anti-bullying and critical incidents, are up to date.
- The current guidance plan is of a good quality, but it remains in draft form. The plan includes comprehensive schemes of work for all year groups, as well as very good-quality templates for the recording of meetings with students. The plan should be reviewed in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders as soon as a second qualified guidance counsellor has been appointed. The plan should then be presented to the board of management for ratification.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and guidance team 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

{Blank}

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 Board accepts the recommendations of the inspection report and acknowledges the fact that school management has already set in train measures to address the recommendations contained in the report. The Board also appreciates the acknowledgement by the Inspectorate of the highly caring and inclusive ethos that is the hallmark of Bush Port Primary School and the warm interpersonal relationships that exist between students and teachers.

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;