Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Airm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Central Model Infants’ School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Marlborough Street Dublin 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 22-10-2019
WHAT IS AN EVALUATION OF PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS?
The Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is a focused evaluation of provision for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools. As this inspection model places a particular emphasis on the quality of learner outcomes for pupils with special educational needs, most of the time spent in the school by inspectors is given to visits to mainstream classes and support settings.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT
During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated provision for pupils with special educational needs under the following headings or areas of enquiry:
1. The quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs
2. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs
3. The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs

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.

CHILD PROTECTION
During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:
1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
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<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Analysis of parent questionnaires</td>
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<td>• Meeting with SEN team</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>• Meeting with SNAs</td>
<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>• Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Central Model Infants’ School is a co-educational infant primary school in Dublin 1 under the patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills. There were 162 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation. School staff comprises an administrative principal, nine mainstream class teachers and nine special education teachers (SET), this includes one shared SET teacher and one shared Support Teacher. There are three special needs assistants (SNAs) in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning is very good with evidence of meaningful inclusion in all settings.
- The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good with teachers demonstrating an in-depth knowledge and understanding of pedagogy appropriate to infant education.
- Teachers have developed very high quality collaborative planning approaches for mainstream, withdrawal and team teaching settings.
- A comprehensive range of whole-school screening assessment approaches is in use and data gathered is very effectively analysed to inform planning; however diagnostic and assessment approaches during team teaching require further attention.
- The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs is very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- To further enhance assessment practices, greater alignment between expected learning outcomes and the focus of teachers’ observations during team teaching as well as the use of diagnostic assessment tests for pupils with more complex SEN are needed.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The quality of pupils’ learning outcomes and learning experiences is very good. Meaningful inclusion is evident in all settings and this results in very positive interactions among pupils and between adults and pupils. Pupils engage in a very wide range of valuable learning activities; they are motivated to learn and they enjoy their learning. Relevant and appropriate thematic approaches are used to very good effect resulting in interesting and stimulating lessons. Pupils engage in appropriately challenging experiences where the focus is at all times on oral language development. This is highly appropriate given the school’s context which includes a substantial number of pupils with needs in English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils have very regular opportunities to engage in high quality play-based activities and these promote discovery learning and independent learning skills. Learning targets are set for groups within each class and for individual pupils; these targets are also reflected in pupils’ individual profiles.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of pedagogy appropriate to infant education. This is enriched through professional development in literacy programmes such as Reading Recovery and numeracy programmes such as Maths Recovery, Ready Set Go Maths and Numicon. Additionally, staff engage external supports such as the support service of the National Council for Special Education as required. The knowledge and expertise acquired from this continuous professional development has been very effectively disseminated, resulting in high quality collective teaching practices in the school. Teachers have developed very high quality collaborative planning approaches for mainstream, withdrawal and team teaching settings. They engage in comprehensive whole-school screening assessment approaches using standardised tests and school-designed tests in literacy and numeracy and those appropriate to assessing pupils with needs in EAL. Analysis of data gathered from current assessment approaches enables teachers to strategically target support for pupils in literacy, numeracy and language acquisition and to very effectively respond to pupils’ differing needs. However, diagnostic assessment tests for pupils with more complex SEN is limited; a wider range of diagnostic assessment tools is needed to ensure optimal target setting in pupils’ support plans. Support for pupils with SEN is mainly provided using team-teaching approaches; this is a very effective approach in this school context. While teachers’ observations during team-teaching sessions are focused on tracking pupils’ progress, observations are not always aligned in a consistent manner to expected learning outcomes. Greater alignment between expected learning outcomes for pupils and the focus of teachers’ observations is needed to ensure more effective monitoring of the pupils’ overall achievements.

3. THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF RESOURCES RECEIVED TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs is very good. Staff members demonstrate a very high level of commitment to the inclusion of pupils with SEN. The school leadership team strategically deploys its resources resulting in very effective and inclusive practices; pupils receive the majority of their support alongside their peers. This further facilitates the provision of more intensive support for some pupils in programmes such as Reading Recovery. The school very effectively applies the continuum of support to identify pupils’
needs on a whole-school basis and this contributes to the principle that pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support. The school currently has access to a shared Support Teacher and targets this support to its first class pupils. While the role of the Support Teacher is understood by the school and is currently identified as supporting team teaching approaches in literacy and numeracy and the transition of pupils to the adjacent senior national school; there is potential to further optimise this resource in consultation with the base school. The board of management applies the concession for pupils in first class to have a shorter school day, as is provided for in Circular letter 11/95. It should review whether the continued application of this concession is in the educational interest of pupils at first class level in this school.

Learning environments are optimised throughout the school and are visually stimulating and attractive to learners. The comprehensive range of whole-school approaches for pupils with special educational needs is based on well-researched programmes further adapted, in some instances, to accommodate the needs of pupils in the school. Ongoing, meaningful engagement with parents and external agencies is another commendable feature of the school’s practice. In parent questionnaires distributed as part of the evaluation, all parents agreed that the school is helping their child to progress with reading and writing. As the school employs a wide range of approaches to SEN provision regular and on-going communication with parents is required. Systematic structures are in place to ensure that relevant information is transferred from early years settings and to the adjoining senior primary school.
Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management found the evaluation of SEN provision in our school to be highly worthwhile. Everyone was delighted with the very positive verbal feedback that we received following the inspection. It was validating to hear that our efforts to create a truly inclusive environment for all our pupils were “tangible, palpable and meaningful” to the inspectors.

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 recommendations are being considered and acted upon.

Two SEN teachers have since attended Middletown Centre for Autism to complete training in the PEP-3 (Psychoeducational Profile-Third Edition), and are implementing this with children with complex SEN in our school.

Teachers’ observations are now closely aligned to pupils’ learner outcomes in the Team Teaching setting.
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.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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