Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>S N Bhiorainn</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Berrings Co Cork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>04186N</td>
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Date of inspection: 05-04-2019
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 inspector 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 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.

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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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Analysis of parent questionnaires
• Observation of teaching and learning
• Examination of pupils’ work
• Interaction with pupils
• Pupil group discussion
• Feedback to principal and teachers |

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scóil Náisiúnta Bhiorainn is a co-educational mainstream primary school located in the village of Berrings in County Cork. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne and there are currently 210 pupils enrolled. School staffing comprises of an administrative principal, eight mainstream class teachers, four special education teachers (SETs), three teachers of classes for autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), one teacher of an early intervention ASD class and twelve special-needs assistants (SNAs). At the time of the evaluation, the principal was on leave and his post was being filled by the deputy principal who is also the SEN coordinator. Two special education teachers were also on leave and were replaced by substitute teachers.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good throughout the school
• The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good with teaching observed ranging from good to excellent: there is scope to review current assessment practices and the teaching of Irish in ASD settings and for teachers to engage in further continuing professional development (CPD).
• The school is highly committed to creating a caring inclusive learning environment for the school population.
• The management and use of resources to support pupils with SEN is of a very high quality.
• The school has very good communication with parents and external agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Pupils in ASD classes who have not been granted an exemption from the Irish language should be provided with a programme in Irish appropriate to their learning needs.
• The school should adopt and implement a whole-school approach to assessment to further enhance the monitoring and tracking of pupil progress.
• The school should further develop its expertise in SEN through further whole-staff CPD provided by external speakers and agencies.
1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of the learning of pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school has succeeded in cultivating an inclusive environment where all pupils are welcomed and provided with a wide range of learning experiences. It is evident from observations and interactions with pupils that they enjoy their lessons and their experience of organised learning activities. Respectful teacher-pupil interactions support pupils’ confidence and their engagement in lessons.

In the focus group interview undertaken during the evaluation, pupils communicated positive attitudes towards their learning. They stated that they receive high levels of support and that they are presented with appropriate and challenging activities. Parents, in their response to the questionnaires issued, reported high levels of satisfaction with the support teaching provided by the school for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils were observed to participate enthusiastically in the lessons observed and to derive benefit from their learning. Learning activities were well-structured, well-paced and appropriate to individual learning needs. Good arrangements are in place to support the inclusion and active participation of pupils with SEN in mainstream classroom and ASD settings. Regular and constructive daily links have been put in place between the classes for pupils with ASD and mainstream settings. There is a holistic approach to meeting the needs of pupils’ social and emotional wellbeing across the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good with observed practice ranging from good to excellent. Attractive learning environments have been created in classrooms and support settings to optimise engagement in learning. The organisation of individual workstations in ASD settings, a sensory room, soft play area, school garden and an occupational therapy room all contribute to positive provision. Aspects of very good practice observed in teaching included the effective use of station teaching and targeted learning activities for both individuals and small groups in support settings.

Classroom and special education teachers work collaboratively and communicate on an ongoing basis in relation to pupils’ needs and their progress in learning. Teachers are aware of the need to differentiate tasks to accommodate individual needs and they use a range of appropriate approaches to achieve this. Resources employed include personalised visual aids, visual schedules, concrete materials and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) where appropriate. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils with SEN. However, pupils in ASD classes who have not been granted an exemption from the Irish language should be provided with a programme in Irish that is appropriate to their learning needs.

Teachers use a variety of assessment practices and other data to establish specific and measurable targets. In most instances, individual education plans (IEPs) are of a high quality with scope to extend this practice to all settings. Teachers employ a variety of approaches to tracking and recording the ongoing progress of individual pupils. Current practices would benefit from review and the school should adopt and implement a whole-school approach to assessment.
3. THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF RESOURCES RECEIVED TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall management and use of resources to support pupils with special educational needs is very good. The SEN coordinator, currently acting as principal, has played a key role in the establishment of high quality provision. Staff have engaged meaningfully with the continuum of support model when planning to meet pupils’ learning needs. A good balance is employed in relation to the use of a wide range of support and early intervention initiatives and interventions including *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. This current approach ensures that resources are prioritised for pupils with the greatest level of need.

A wide range of policies is in place to guide the organisation of SEN throughout the school. In light of the Department of Education and Skills’ Circular 0013/2017, the board should review and revise its enrolment policy and its policy regarding admission to ASD classes to reflect the current inclusive nature of the school. There is a significant range of expertise in SEN amongst the staff and this has been further enhanced by regular formal meetings and continuing professional development (CPD). The school has the capacity to further develop this expertise through further whole-staff CPD provided by external speakers and agencies. The school engages meaningfully with external agencies to access support and advice and has established transition programmes for pupils with SEN advancing to post-primary education. The special-needs assistants play a significant role in meeting the care needs of pupils and assisting them to access the curriculum.
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>
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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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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 and staff of Scoil Náisiúnta Bhiorainn welcome and acknowledge the inspection report and are extremely pleased with the positive findings of the evaluation. The report affirms the good practice undertaken by all the staff in our school with regard to the provision of education for pupils with SEN. The board is appreciative of the very positive affirmation received from parents and pupils and acknowledges the high quality of teaching and the effective management and use of resources. The board is also pleased to acknowledge that the school has succeeded in cultivating a caring and inclusive environment where all pupils are welcomed and provided with a wide range of learning experiences and that the school has very good communication with parents and external agencies.

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 of management is fully committed to the ongoing development of the education of all pupils in Scoil Náisiúnta Bhiorainn and welcomes the recommendations of the evaluation. Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which were noted as being of a high quality have now been extended to all settings. Work has also commenced to review and develop our assessment policy to include a whole school approach to assessment.