Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Tarmon National School</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
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<td>Castlerea</td>
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<td>County Roscommon</td>
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Date of inspection: 14-03-2019
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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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 deputy principal |

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Tarmon National School is a co-educational mainstream primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. It has an administrative principal, five mainstream classes, three special education teachers (SETs), two classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) and an early intervention class for pre-school pupils with ASDs. The school also has two part-time SETs. There were 152 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The principal, deputy principal and staff are highly commended for the creation of an attractive and inclusive learning environment.
• Good-quality learner outcomes are in evidence for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
• The overall quality of teaching of pupils with SEN is good, with some very good practice also observed.
• The management and use of resources are of a very high quality; aspects of professional development could be improved.
• All teachers prepare written plans for their work; short-term planning for pupils with SEN could be improved at whole-school level.
• The school implements the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Continuum of Support approach; however, there is scope for the further development of classroom support plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Short-term planning in classes for pupils with ASDs should be completed on a fortnightly basis.
• Mainstream teachers are advised to use the classroom support level of the NEPs continuum of support and to ensure that their short-term planning identifies specific differentiation approaches for pupils with SEN.
• An audit of the professional needs of teachers in the area of special education should be conducted and further professional development should be offered to staff where it is a priority.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of learning of pupils with SEN is commendable. During the evaluation, lessons were observed in mainstream classrooms, special classes and support settings. Overall, pupils displayed a high level of engagement in the lessons and in some lessons pupils’ learning was of a very high standard. A good range of approaches to support learning is implemented conscientiously across the school. Pupils benefit from structured lessons and are facilitated to work in pairs and groups in all settings.

The school has created a positive and inclusive learning environment. Pupils with SEN benefit from long-established links with special education organisations and schools within the local community. An attractive school environment has been created that supports and celebrates pupils’ achievements. Throughout the school, multi-sensory materials, assistive technology and information and communications technology (ICT) are used to support pupils in accessing the curriculum. Pupils participate actively in a good range of learner experiences, including in-class literacy interventions. Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is implemented in the infant classes. While these interventions are well planned and progress is monitored, there is scope to improve the focus on language and on structured play during the Aistear lessons.

All pupils who participated in the focus group agreed that pupils are treated fairly and respectfully in the school. They spoke very positively about the supports that they receive and indicated a very high level of enjoyment in school activities including school tours and inter-school sporting events. Pupils also expressed an interest in forming a student council. Responding to the Inspectorate survey, all parents of pupils with SEN agreed that their children feel safe and well looked-after in the school and almost all agreed that their children are fully included in school and in classroom life.

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

The overall quality of teaching of pupils with SEN is good, with very good practice also observed in some settings. In the Inspectorate survey, almost all parents agreed that they are aware of their child’s learning plan and that they are satisfied with the opportunities to discuss their child’s progress with teachers. The NEPS continuum of support has been introduced by the school and is strongly evident in all support settings. Mainstream teachers are recommended to access the materials regarding student support files and to further embed the classroom-support level of the NEPs continuum of support.

All teachers plan for their work. SETs use various forms of documents for short-term planning; an agreed format for planning and recording progress is recommended. Teachers in the special classes prepare monthly written plans currently for their work; they are reminded that they should prepare short-term plans on a fortnightly basis.

Teachers use active-learning methodologies and multi-sensory approaches frequently to foster understanding and participation. Almost all lessons observed were well structured and purposeful. Effective differentiation of lesson content was observed in some mainstream classrooms, with very commendable practice evident where classroom support plans had been devised. Mainstream teachers are advised to use information available from observations and standardised tests to
inform classroom planning for meaningful differentiation and to identify the next steps in pupils’ learning.

A variety of practices is in evidence in the recording of assessment data in mainstream and support settings. A commendable range of assessment data for pupils with SEN is gathered by some teachers and used to inform planning and teaching; this was evident in the special classes in particular. A detailed assessment policy provides adequate guidance on the school’s approach to assessment but policy and practice in relation to assessment for learning (AfL) and diagnostic assessment require further development.

3. THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF RESOURCES RECEIVED TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The management and use of resources are of a very high quality. The principal and staff display a strong commitment to including pupils with SEN in school life and they are highly commended for creating a welcoming school environment. Teachers and special-needs assistants work well together in responding to pupils’ needs and in supporting their integration.

The school recognises that continuing professional development (CPD) is intrinsic to fostering a culture of inclusion in the school. Commendably, CPD in relevant areas of special education is organised regularly for staff. The school is now advised to conduct an audit of the CPD needs of teachers in the area of special education. Further professional development to support pupils with SEN should be offered to teachers where it is a priority.

SETs are deployed through a combination of in-class interventions, co-teaching, station teaching and the withdrawal of pupils. In most cases, one SET is deployed to support one classroom. The collaborative practice of SETs is of a very high quality and a strong spirit of collaboration is evident during in-class intervention sessions. There is a highly commendable commitment to the integration and reverse integration of students with SEN between mainstream classes and special classes.

There is evidence that transitions for pupils with SEN are very well supported. The school liaises very effectively with a variety of external agencies. Transition support plans are put in place and parents are consulted as part of this process. Very effective working relationships have been created with the on-site early intervention class and also with local post primary schools.
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.

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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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