Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Patrick’s National School</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Castletara  
Ballyhaise  
County Cavan |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 14073G |

Date of inspection: 03-04-2019
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 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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Date of inspection: 03-04-2019

Inspection activities undertaken:
- Discussion with principal and teachers
- Meeting with SEN team
- Review of relevant documents
- 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
Saint Patrick’s National School, Castletara, County Cavan is a rural school, with seven mainstream classrooms teachers, under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. There are three special classes for pupils with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in the school. In addition the school has two special education teaching posts to provide support teaching to pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and a third teacher based in another school also provides support teaching. 187 pupils were enrolled overall at the time of this evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The overall quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good.
- The overall quality of the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The quality of teachers’ practical preparation for teaching pupils with SEN is very high.
- Comprehensive assessment is taking place; the augmentation of diagnostic assessment practice in a small number of areas will contribute to developing practice in baseline assessment.
- There is very strong leadership of learning in the school in respect of pupils with special educational needs.
- The focus on promoting the wellbeing of all learners and the inclusion of pupils with SEN in all aspects of the life of the school are highly commendable.

RECOMMENDATION
- There is need for augmentation of assessment through obtaining and using more ASD-specific assessment tools and a more comprehensive approach to the diagnostic assessment of learning needs in Mathematics.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The overall quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. Pupils demonstrate very high levels of interest and participation in learning. Some learner experiences and observable outcomes were at an excellent level. There is a very clear commitment to high-quality inclusion within the school community. During the evaluation it was very evident that pupils with additional learning needs are motivated to learn through having a clear sense of attainable and challenging learning outcomes that align with their priority needs. The individualised planning
process is enabling clear monitoring of progression in learning and learners are making commendable progress. The pupils enjoy their learning in language and communication and are motivated to learn. Across the special education settings, pupils have developed appropriate functional reading skills to a high level and can read different types of text at a level appropriate to their needs and abilities.

In their questionnaire responses, all parents of pupils with additional needs reported that they were satisfied with the opportunities received to discuss their child’s learning and the school was enabling their child to progress in reading and writing. In numeracy, pupils demonstrate that they understand and can use appropriate mathematical language, both written and verbal, accurately and can communicate their learning. A very high percentage of parents, in their responses, reported that the school was helping their child to progress in learning in Mathematics and in social interaction with others. There was no indication of any active disagreement in parental responses in respect of the quality of learning. All parents of pupils with additional needs reported that their child felt safe and well looked after in school.

Pupils demonstrated very high levels of interest and participation in the learning activities which the teachers had reflectively prepared for them. Excellent learning environments have been prepared. The interactions observed among the pupils and between pupils and teachers were very respectful and positive at all times, and conducive to well-being. The atmospheres in classrooms and special education settings create and sustain a co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment that is enabling of pupils with special educational needs. The pupils experience an abundance of high-quality oral language activities which are used effectively as the starting points for the development of literacy skills. Pupils have opportunities to engage in a broad range of relevant mathematics activities and games and have access to and evidently utilise relevant mathematics resources, which are age-appropriate. In a focus-group discussion convened as part of the evaluation, pupils spoke very positively about their learning and about learning collaboratively, learning through the use of information and communications technology (ICT), and the supports their teachers provide for them.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The overall quality of the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. A range of child-centred approaches is strongly fostering inclusive practice. Talk and discussion, collaborative and active learning and very good use of ICT featured strongly in teaching. Visual prompts are used very effectively in classrooms to support pupils’ learning needs. All teachers visited were successful in creating inclusive, orderly, pupil-centred learning environments based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust, in which pupils regulate and monitor their own behaviour highly successfully. In all settings visited, it was evident that there are high expectations of pupils’ work and behaviour in line with ability and learning need; teachers communicate these expectations effectively to pupils, and facilitate pupils in internalising them.

Teachers design and prepare in advance a sequence of learning tasks and activities suitable for the specific learning objectives of the lesson or series of lessons on an individualised, or at times, small-group basis. Stimulating and well-resourced learning environments in all setting provide for the development of pupils’ language and communication skills directly and through cross-curricular activity. In their lessons observed all teachers checked on pupils’ understanding and application of language and communication concepts at regular intervals. On a small number of occasions in Mathematics, lessons focussed overly on attending to the content objectives of lessons in the
mainstream classes. This could now be lessened and lessons linked more to active diagnostic assessment of individual pupils in Mathematics. Teachers have collectively agreed a whole-school approach to assessment and have agreed that all teachers will utilise these to monitor pupils’ progress and to plan for their future learning. Further development of assessment through obtaining and using more ASD-specific assessment tools and a more comprehensive approach to the diagnostic assessment of learning needs in Mathematics are advocated.

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 are of a very high quality. Resources are being deployed appropriately in accordance with the guidance within Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools. The principal and leadership team provide very substantial and valuable guidance for provision for SEN and there is very strong leadership of learning in the school. The leadership of the principal in ensuring that systems and structures are in place to meet the priority needs of the school in respect of pupils with SEN is worthy of particular commendation. There is a very strong and commendable commitment to ensuring the ongoing professional development of staff in respect of SEN. Significant learning for teachers had been facilitated. Pupils are integrated with their mainstream peers actively and very fruitfully; inclusion of pupils with SEN in the life of the school is a strength of its practice.
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 St Patrick’s N.S., Castletara welcome and acknowledge the Inspection Report and are very pleased with the positive findings of this evaluation. The report affirms the very good practice undertaken by all the staff in our school with regard to the provision of education for pupils with Special Educational Needs. The Board of Management is particularly pleased that the overall quality of the learning and the teaching of pupils with Special Educational Needs is very good.

The report acknowledges the very high quality of teachers’ practical preparation, the very high quality of the management and use of resources received to support pupils with SEN and the very strong leadership of learning in our school. We are extremely pleased that the Inspectorate has highly commended the focus on promoting the well-being of all learners and the inclusion of pupils with SEN and acknowledged this as a strength of our practice.

The Board is also appreciative of the very positive affirmation received from the children and the Parents/Guardians in their responses to the questionnaires.

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 acknowledges and welcomes the practical advice of the DES Inspectorate and we look forward to using that advice to build on the quality of the educational experience we provide for all the children in our school.

The Report recommends a more comprehensive approach to the diagnostic assessment of learning needs in Mathematics and the staff are currently reviewing our practice in this area and researching a variety of assessment tools which can best meet the needs of the pupils in our school. Following staff collaboration, agreement will be reached on the implementation of the most suitable assessment tools and these will be implemented this year as part of our School Assessment Plan.

We have now acquired the following ASD specific tests ABLLS, VB-MAPP, FAST, Social Skills Rubrics and Assessment of Self Awareness and Self Esteem. One of our S.E.T. Team is booked to attend the following NSCE courses in the coming months ABLLS and VB MAPP, Supporting Students with Autism through the use of APPS, and Understanding Behaviour and Social Skills.
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>
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<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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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