An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with
Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál,</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Kilsaran</td>
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<td>Castlebellingham</td>
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<td>County Louth</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 03-05-2019
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.
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

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Inspection activities undertaken
- Discussion with principal and teachers
- Meeting with SEN team
- Meeting with SNAs
- 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
Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál is located in Kilsaran, Castlebellingham, County Louth and is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. The school has seven mainstream classes, a special class for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability and three classes for pupils with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). There are seven special education support teachers and eleven special needs assistants (SNAs) on the school staff. There are 196 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The overall quality of learning outcomes of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good.
- Learning experiences across SEN settings are of a very high standard.
- The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Target setting is not consistently specific in planning documents across SEN settings.
- The very effective preparation, planning and assessment team-teaching practices evident in some team-teaching models are not fully implemented in all team-teaching intervention models.
- The school demonstrates a very high level of commitment to the admission and inclusion of pupils with SEN.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The development of specific learning targets in all individual and group education plans and in plans for all team-teaching interventions is needed to optimise learner outcomes.
- The most effective preparation, planning and assessment team-teaching practices should be agreed and fully implemented in all team-teaching intervention models.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The overall quality of learning outcomes and experiences of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils engage in a very wide range of relevant and meaningful activities. The pupils are very highly motivated to learn and are developing the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding of the curriculum. Learning targets are established for all pupils through the learning plan process. Where targets are specific the attainment of these targets is very effectively tracked and monitored using a comprehensive range of assessment data. The identification of the most
relevant learning objectives in station teaching in literacy is resulting in very positive outcomes for pupils. A similar strategic approach is needed to optimise the learning outcomes in all station teaching and team-teaching lessons.

Learning experiences across SEN settings are of a very high standard. Stimulating and very well-resourced learning environments are provided for pupils in classrooms and in the sensory room. The outdoor learning environment is used very effectively to promote physical activity, sensory experiences and to develop pupils’ communication skills. Meaningful inclusion is evident in the creative approaches to whole-class links between mainstream and SEN settings and to playground arrangements. The integration of pupils with SEN in mainstream classes and reverse integration are features of provision for some pupils with SEN. This should be further extended on a phased basis for these and other pupils, as appropriate. There is a very strong emphasis on visual learning approaches to enhance pupils’ communication skills in all the special classes. Where the use of Lámh), a manual sign system used by children and adults with intellectual disability and communication needs, was observed in SEN settings, it enhanced communication with pupils. Extending the use of Lámh in the school should be considered in order to further develop communication across SEN and mainstream settings. Very respectful interactions were observed throughout the evaluation and pupils engaged confidently during the focus group meeting. The very positive approach to the management of pupils’ behaviour results in highly effective learning experiences for pupils. Appropriate attention to the development of pupils’ social skills and skills for lifelong learning is evident in all settings.

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 have developed their pedagogical knowledge appropriate to their particular SEN setting by sharing their expertise and by engaging in regular continuous professional development (CPD). They are very committed to achieving positive learning experiences and outcomes for pupils. Teachers use a range of appropriate methodologies very effectively and are consistently developing their collective practice. Short-term planning for SEN provision is highly effective. While long-term planning in the special classes for pupils with an ASD covers the full curriculum, further detail on the identified content and skills would enhance these plans. Individual education plans (IEPs) are developed for all pupils with priority learning needs identified following the analysis of appropriate baseline data and informed by external educational professionals. Target setting is not consistently specific in planning documents across SEN settings. Consequently, further emphasis should be placed on developing specific targets on a consistent basis in pupils’ individual and group education plans. A streamlined format for IEPs and for the recording of monthly progress should be considered. Reading Recovery approaches very effectively inform class-based interventions, the re-introduction of Reading Recovery as an individual pupil intervention approach should be considered, as appropriate. The planning, preparation and assessment practices associated with team teaching for literacy, based on Reading Recovery are highly effective. Similar effective practices should inform approaches in other team-teaching models such as those focused on Mathematics and play-based learning.

The systematic approach developed by the school to identify pupils not fully achieving their potential and the recording of actions planned to support these pupils are highly commendable. A comprehensive range of whole-school screening and individual pupil assessment practices in literacy and numeracy was observed. However, there is potential to further analyse pupils’ progress in Mathematics using the school’s standardised test data and in their acquisition of English as an additional language using the Primary School Assessment Kit. Teachers collaborate very effectively
with each other and with the special needs assistants and this results in the creation of a very positive learning environment for pupils with SEN.

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. The school demonstrates a very high level of commitment to the admission and inclusion of pupils with SEN. The principal and SEN co-ordinator, together with the staff, promote and practise meaningful inclusion. Provision for pupils with SEN is constantly developing and improving as a result of engagement with relevant agencies, regular CPD and the school’s own determination to provide creative learning experiences and positive outcomes for pupils. The school very effectively deploys its resources in line with the principles and actions outlined in Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools. The continuum of support is managed very effectively and results in the deployment of resources based on the principle that pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support. While there is evidence of the implementation of suitable whole-school approaches for pupils with special educational needs in literacy similar attention to developing whole-school approaches in numeracy are needed. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used judiciously in lessons as a teaching tool and as a learning resource. Learning environments are of a very high standard and are very well-resourced.

The school engages and communicates regularly with parents and external agencies. Effective systems are in place to ensure that relevant information is transferred from Early Years settings and on to post-primary schools and to special schools. While a comprehensive suite of relevant policies has been developed by the school and policies are regularly reviewed, aspects of the enrolment policy require review. It must be revised in respect of pupils with special educational needs to ensure it is in accordance with relevant legislation. Additionally, the granting of exemptions from Irish in respect of pupils in special class settings should be considered on an individual pupil basis. In questionnaires, all parents agreed that their child feels safe and well looked after in the school.
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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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td><strong>Very Good</strong></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><strong>Good</strong></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><strong>Satisfactory</strong></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><strong>Fair</strong></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><strong>Weak</strong></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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