

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with
Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | St Mary's Mixed N S |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Drumlish, Longford, Co. Longford. |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 16665S |

Date of Evaluation: 07-06-2017



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 the model places a particular emphasis on the quality of learning outcomes for pupils with special educational needs, most of the time inspectors spend in a school during this evaluation is spent in 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:

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

EVALUATION OF PROVISION PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

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| Date of inspection | 07-06-2017 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Meeting with SEN team• Meeting with SNAs• Review of relevant documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

St Mary's N S is a mainstream primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. At the time of the evaluation there were eight mainstream classes in the school and additional teaching was provided for pupils by two fulltime and four part-time support teachers.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The principal and staff are commended for the creation of a caring and inclusive atmosphere in the school.
- Particularly effective interventions are evident to support and include pupils with specific social, life skills and sensory needs.
- The over quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special needs is good; however there is scope to change the model of support teaching to incorporate more team-teaching and in-class supports.
- The Continuum of Support is embedded effectively in school practice; there is scope to express learning targets for some pupils in more specific and measurable language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support teaching approaches should be reviewed with the aim of increasing focused team teaching and in-class provision especially in the early identification and prevention of learning difficulties.
- Targets in all student support files should be expressed in specific and measurable language to enable progress to be monitored regularly and accurately.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The overall quality of learning for special educational needs is good. While pupils are meaningfully included in school and classroom life, additional teaching supports are provided almost exclusively through the withdrawal of small groups for literacy, numeracy and social and life skills. There is scope to re-organise aspects of this model of provision to ensure more in-class support teaching and to increase pupils' participation in mainstream classroom life. In the lessons observed in mainstream classrooms and withdrawal settings, learning experiences and outcomes were good for most pupils with special educational needs and the learning tasks were generally meaningful and related to pupils' priority learning needs. In a small number of cases the level of difficulty of lesson material needed to be matched more carefully to pupils' ability levels. There is evidence from observational and other assessment data that most pupils with special educational needs are making good progress on their learning programmes and that their standards in literacy and numeracy are improving appropriately. During the discussion group interview, pupils spoke very positively about their inclusion in school life and their experiences of special programmes, film making, participation in the school's radio programme (DNS News) and their use of the sensory room. Responding to the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents reported satisfaction with the school's provision for their children in literacy, numeracy and inclusion.

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

The overall quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. All teachers related well with their pupils and in some cases there was remarkable appreciation and support of pupils' sensory and life skills needs through environmental adaptations and use of specialised programmes. In the withdrawal settings teachers frequently used active-learning methodologies and multi-sensory approaches to foster understanding and participation. Some good examples of classroom differentiation were noted in mainstream classrooms and it was evident that effective communication between classroom and support teachers is beneficial in co-ordinating provision. As support teaching is provided almost exclusively through the withdrawal model, it is recommended that opportunities for in-class support and team teaching be increased, particularly in junior classes to assist with early intervention and prevention of learning difficulties. Teachers make effective use of the Continuum of Support process to identify and document pupil's priority needs. While Student Support files are prepared for all pupils receiving additional support, there is scope in some cases to outline the learning targets in more specific and measurable language to enable more effective monitoring and recording of progress particularly in relation to needs identified in professional reports. The accurate identification of learning targets will assist with successfully matching learning programmes to learning needs, particularly for pupils with more complex or persistent needs. While good assessment records are maintained in most settings, there is scope in a small number of cases to detail pupils' incremental progress more precisely through use of criterion-referenced assessment.

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 needs is satisfactory. The principal and staff display a commitment to including pupils with special educational needs meaningfully into school life and several adaptations are in place to accommodate this approach. The Continuum of Support is used effectively throughout the school to identify needs and to guide decision-making. There are good systems in place to share information among teachers and to liaise with external agencies. There is evidence that pupils' transitions into and out of the school are well supported. While additional teaching resources are mostly deployed to meet specific needs, almost all of the support teaching is provided through a withdrawal model of intervention. Through a more unified whole-school approach there is scope to use more in-class supports and team-teaching approaches in the junior classes for early intervention and for the prevention of learning difficulties.

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 the school's provision of each area.

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