An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with
Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>St Joseph’s NS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Highfield Park, Kilcock, County Kildare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>16706G</td>
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Date of inspection: 11-04-2019
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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 2 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Date of inspection  11-04-2019

| 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 |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
• Discussion with principal and teachers  
• Meeting with SEN team  
• Meeting with SNAs  
• Review of relevant documents |

SCHOOL CONTEXT
St Joseph’s National School is a co-educational primary school located in the town of Kilcock, County Kildare. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The teaching staff consists of the administrative principal, fourteen mainstream class teachers, two special class teachers and seven special education teachers (SETs). The school has two special classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). At the time of the evaluation there were 377 pupils attending the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• The overall quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good; pupils are engaged in very worthwhile learning tasks.
• Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high quality, overall; target - setting for some pupils could be improved.
• An inclusive and welcoming learning environment is evident throughout the school; the enrolment policy does not fully reflect the school’s inclusive practices.
• The school self-evaluation (SSE) process is used very effectively to implement Circular 13/17.
• The school manages and deploys its resources for special educational needs (SEN) very effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• The school should review its enrolment policy to ensure that its language fully reflects the inclusive practices observed in the school.
• Teachers should outline the learning targets in support plans in more specific and measurable language related to pupils’ priority learning needs based on diagnostic evidence and analysis of assessment.
1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Learning takes place in an attractive and supportive environment characterised by respectful interactions. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy their learning in an inclusive atmosphere. Pupils were actively engaged in very worthwhile learning tasks during the lessons observed. Pupils are very eager to share their learning in classroom discussions. Their learning achievements are affirmed through developmental oral and written feedback. Most pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in relation to their abilities and particular learning needs. In some cases, more accurate monitoring and tracking of progress was advised.

Pupils are provided with a good range of learner experiences including curricular provision and social and life skills support. Responding to the Inspectorate focus group discussion, most pupils said they liked school and enjoyed their support lessons, particularly during the small group interventions. They articulated a very clear understanding of their own learning styles and achievements and reflected on their progress as learners.

In the special classes very high quality learning is fostered. Pupils are provided with a suitably structured learning environment. Individualised programmes identify pupils’ priority learning needs and the next steps in their learning. Most pupils in the special classes are making good progress in relation to their personal targets.

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

The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good, overall. All teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. They create stimulating classroom environments through use of appropriate resources and digital technologies. All teachers prepare effective short-term plans, although in some mainstream classes, approaches to differentiation could be specified more clearly. Supports are provided to pupils through a combination of in-class teaching and small-group or individual withdrawal approaches. There is good collaboration between class teachers and special education teachers in planning for in-class teaching supports. During the lessons observed, teachers successfully engaged pupils through well-paced and accurately pitched lessons. Interventions such as Literacy Lift-off, Ready, Set, Go Maths, Mata sa Rang, guided reading and station teaching are implemented very effectively. In some cases, teachers evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions through pre-assessment and post-assessment. This is very good practice and could be further extended. Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is implemented very effectively in the infant classrooms.

While teachers devise support plans for all pupils receiving additional support, there is scope to articulate the learning targets in some of these plans in more specific and measurable language related to pupils’ priority learning needs. To improve the accuracy of the learning targets, teachers should place more emphasis on analysing assessment evidence, particularly diagnostic testing, to identify the learning needs and to outline the next steps in pupils’ learning. Such an approach will further assist with the accurate monitoring and tracking of progress and celebration of pupils’ efforts.
Teaching in the special classes is of a very high quality. Teachers are very aware of the needs of pupils with ASD, particularly in relation to communication, self-regulation, structure and social skills. They use a range of ASD-specific teaching approaches to acknowledge the visual modality of autism and to promote structured independent learning. Instruction is guided by individualised support plans together with access to the wider curriculum, differentiated appropriately. Teachers use a range of ASD-specific assessments very effectively to identify learning strengths and needs. Teaching approaches include a range of individualised instruction and group teaching. Some pupils from the special classes are successfully integrated for particular lessons in mainstream classes and there are also some opportunities for reverse integration.

3. THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF RESOURCES RECEIVED TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school manages and uses the resources it receives to support pupils with special educational needs very effectively. It provides an inclusive environment for pupils with a range of special educational needs. Most of the school’s policies articulate an inclusive vision for the school. However, the enrolment policy should now be reviewed to ensure that its language, in relation to enrolment procedures and behaviour, fully reflects the inclusive practices observed during the evaluation.

Educational resources are deployed very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs. Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) collaborate very effectively with the teaching staff to ensure that pupils’ care needs are addressed. The school is addressing the requirements of Circular 13/17 very effectively in relation to the allocation of its special education teachers. Commendably, teachers have used the school self-evaluation (SSE) process to guide provision to ensure that pupils with the greatest needs receive the highest levels of support. The continuum of support has been implemented in the school for a number of years. Support plans are devised for pupils at each level of the continuum. Classroom support plans are well-developed and they assist teachers in ensuring pupils with enduring needs can be identified promptly and supported appropriately.

The school engages effectively with a range of external agencies to access advice and support for its pupils. Plans are devised to prepare for pupils’ transition into the school and also for their transition to post-primary education. The school also consults with parents of pupils with special educational needs, particularly in relation to plans for additional teaching supports. Responding to the Inspectorate survey, all parents who responded stated that their children are fully included in classroom life. While most parents expressed satisfaction with how they were consulted about their child’s learning plan and the opportunities they have to discuss their child’s learning, a small number of parents would like further discussion of these aspects.

Currently, the school is participating in the In-school and Pre-school Therapy Support Demonstration Project and has direct access to specialised supports for Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy. This project was developed by the Departments of Education and Skills, Children and Youth Affairs and Health and is managed and co-ordinated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). There is evidence that classroom practice and support teaching have been positively influenced by the school’s participation in the project.
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 <em>outstanding</em> 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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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM of St. Joseph’s N.S. welcome the findings of provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) following the recent SEN Evaluation.

The overall quality of learning for pupils with SEN was rated as being very good. Pupils were observed engaging in very worthwhile learning tasks. In the special classes, very high quality learning is fostered and pupils are provided with a suitably structured learning environment.

Teaching for pupils with SEN was found to be of a very high quality and takes place in an inclusive and welcoming learning environment. All teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge and pedagogical skills.

The school was found to manage and deploy its resources for SEN (teachers and SNAs) very effectively. The school leadership team were commended for using the school self-evaluation process effectively to implement Circular 13/17.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The BOM wishes to state in relation to Child Protection, the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment were in place at the time of Inspection since 11 March 2018. The Annual Review was due to be completed on 8 April, 2019 BOM Meeting. This meeting moved to 12 April, 2019 where the Annual Review Checklist was completed and the BOM are now fully compliant with Child Protection.

The BOM subsequently met on 29-04-2019 to consider the two recommendations made in relation to the Enrolment Policy. Both recommendations were adopted and the language of the Policy now fully reflects the school’s inclusive practices.

The BOM and In-School Leadership Team have taken the recommendations on board with regard to ‘teachers setting the learning targets in support plans in more specific and measurable language related to pupils’ priority learning needs based on diagnostic evidence and analysis of assessment.’

Our current cycle of SSE is focused on SEN and the effective implementation of the new Resource Allocation Model. As a result of a recent teacher survey administered by the SSE team leader on 13/2/2019, more specific target setting for children with SEN had been identified as our area for improvement. This finding has been corroborated by the Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs.

In St. Joseph’s NS we will place an increased emphasis on the use of diagnostic testing and analysing assessment evidence to identify the priority learning needs for children. On 20/5/19 a working group, comprised of members of the SEN Team, used the SSE process to further support teachers in implementing ‘SMART’ learning targets (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound). An improvement in setting SMART targets will assist with monitoring and tracking pupil progress. In this way we feel we are meeting the recommendations of the SEN Evaluation.