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>Eochaille Ara National School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Newtown</td>
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<td>Nenagh</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Tipperary</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 11-10-2019
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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

**Date of inspection**: 11-10-2019

| 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 |

**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Eochaille Ara National School (Youghalarra) is a rural co-educational primary school located in the village of Newtown, approximately seven kilometres from Nenagh, County Tipperary. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. There are four mainstream class teachers and two special education posts; one of whom is shared with two other schools in the locality. One of the special education posts is a job-share arrangement. In addition, there is one special-needs assistant (SNA). Currently, there are 112 pupils enrolled.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**
- The overall quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs is commendable.
- It is praiseworthy that the school has implemented student support files; however, this process has yet to be embedded fully.
- The overall quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is effective.
- Current models of support provision for pupils with special educational needs have scope for development.
- The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs are good.
- A special education teacher is deployed to a whole-class group to teach Mathematics, which is contrary to the requirements of Department of Education and Skills (DES) Circular 0013/17.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- The school should develop a systematic, whole-school approach to the tracking, monitoring and recording of pupils’ progress.
- The school should further extend in-class supports and team teaching to enhance inclusion and to provide for evidence-based interventions.
- The organisation of support teaching should ensure that the deployment of resources is in compliance with DES Circular 0013/17.

**DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**
   The overall quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. The outcomes from the lessons observed were commendable overall. During the evaluation, pupils displayed high levels
of engagement and motivation. The use of visual and concrete resources and digital learning technologies (DLT) effectively assisted pupils’ learning. Analysis of the range of assessment data indicates that the majority of pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in line with their abilities. While there is evidence of progression in learning, there is scope to develop a systematic, whole-school approach to the tracking, monitoring and accurate recording of pupils’ progress in relation to identified targets. This should inform the ongoing process of target setting for improved learning outcomes and ensure that pupils’ progress is regularly reviewed and recorded.

Effective learner experiences are provided. During the evaluation, most pupils were actively engaged in worthwhile learning tasks, and purposeful pair work and collaborative group work were observed. In all settings, pupils are supported and challenged through respectful and positive interactions. They participate actively in a good range of learner experiences, including well organised in-class literacy interventions. Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is implemented very effectively in the infant classes. In the support settings, the Zones of Regulation framework is utilised in the promotion of pupils’ self-regulation skills and their awareness of their own emotions.

In the focus-group discussion, pupils agreed that they are treated fairly and respectfully in the school. They spoke very positively about the supports they receive and indicated a very high level of enjoyment in school activities such as swimming and external trips. Pupils also expressed an interest in forming a student council; the school is advised to explore this further. Responding to the Inspectorate survey, almost all parents of pupils with special educational needs indicated that their child feels safe and well looked after in school and is fully included in school and classroom life.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The overall quality of teaching in mainstream and support settings is effective; across the lessons observed the quality of teaching ranged from very good to fair. Features of highly effective practice in mainstream settings included well-structured and resourced lessons exemplified by appropriate differentiation. These highly effective practices should be extended to all settings. Talk and discussion was a feature of provision in all lessons.

The teaching, as observed, in the support settings was very positive and supportive. Learning activities were aligned with pupils’ identified learning needs. Special education teachers (SETs) should further investigate the formation of collaborative small groups where possible, in line with pupils’ identified learning needs. Classroom and SETs communicate on an ongoing basis in relation to pupils’ needs and their progress in learning. It is highly commendable that the SETs work collaboratively with mainstream class teachers to implement a range of literacy initiatives.

The school has adopted The National Educational Psychological Service’s (NEPS) Continuum of Support documentation. It is praiseworthy that the classroom teachers have embedded the classroom support stage. Teachers prepare student support files, which provide the basis for target setting for each instructional term. There is scope in some support plans to reduce the number of targets, and to express targets more clearly in specific and measurable terms related to the intended learning outcomes for pupils. Most parents agreed in the Inspectorate questionnaires that they were aware of their child’s learning plan, but a few were not. The school should ensure that learning plans are shared with all parents.

Good-quality assessment records are available. These records include standardised test information, diagnostic assessments, class-based tests and teachers’ individual records. In addition, pupils self-
assess their own work. Commendably, a literacy intervention programme incorporates a pre-testing and a post-testing phase to monitor and evaluate the impact of the initiative on pupil learning outcomes. Where in-class support is provided, the teachers should ensure that individual progress is recorded. Such an approach will assist with the monitoring of progress and help to identify the next steps in learning.

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 good. The school demonstrates a high level of commitment to the admission and inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. The board of management has invested significantly in resources to support whole-school approaches such as graded reading materials and mobile technology. The teachers are committed to engaging in continuing professional development (CPD). The SNA plays a significant role in supporting inclusion and enabling pupils to access a wide range of curricular experiences.

Additional teaching supports are provided through in-class support, team-teaching initiatives and withdrawal of pupils. There is scope to re-organise aspects of this support model of provision. A special education teacher is deployed to teach Mathematics to a whole-class group. This is contrary to the requirements of DES Circular 0013/2017 and should be discontinued. There is scope to further extend in-class supports and team teaching to enhance inclusion, to support early intervention strategies and to provide for evidence-based interventions in literacy, numeracy and social and emotional skills.

Responses to the Inspectorate’s parent survey indicate that the majority of parents are very positive about the quality of provision. The school should now consider further the pattern of response which indicates that a small number of parents would like more opportunities to discuss their child’s learning with teachers. Commendable links have been established with external agencies including the Visiting Teacher Service, to support pupils’ priority learning needs and wellbeing. Transition arrangements are good; teachers receive information from the local early-years setting regarding children beginning in the school, and the school itself ensures that post-primary schools receive all relevant information in respect of pupils with special educational needs.
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 Eochaille Ara National School welcome and acknowledge this report and are pleased with the positive findings of the inspection. The overall quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs was rated as being good. Features of highly effective practice in mainstream settings included well-structured and resourced lessons exemplified by appropriate differentiation. The Board of Management are particularly pleased that the inspector acknowledged the existence of a positive and supportive learning environment. The inspector also highly praised the mainstream class teachers and SETs for working collaboratively to implement a range of literacy initiatives.

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 of Management of Eochaille Ara National School welcome the recommendations in this report and are fully committed to their effective implementation. The school is in the process of developing a systematic, whole-school approach to tracking, monitoring and recording of pupil's progress. The school has further extended in-class supports and team teaching to enhance inclusion and to provide for evidence-based interventions. The deployment of resources is now in compliance with DES Circular 0013-17. A Special Educational Needs Teacher is no longer teaching Maths to a whole-class group.
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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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Good</em> 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><em>Satisfactory</em> 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><em>Fair</em> 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><em>Weak</em> 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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