An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with
Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Sixmilebridge National School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Sixmilebridge County Clare</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>16908S</td>
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Date of inspection: 31-01-2019
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 inspectors 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 | 31-01-2019
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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

CONTEXT
Sixmilebridge National School is a co-educational mainstream primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. The school has an administrative principal, twenty mainstream classes, two classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs), ten full-time special education teachers (SET) and one shared SET. At the time of the evaluation, 536 pupils were enrolled.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS
- The principal and staff are commended for the creation of an inclusive and supportive atmosphere in the school.
- Good learner outcomes are in evidence for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- The overall quality of teaching is good, with very good practice observed in some settings.
- While the management and use of resources are effective, the timetabling of pupils’ support should be reviewed in some instances.
- The school implements the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Continuum of Support approach; however, there is scope for the further development of classroom-support plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The timetabling of pupils’ support should be reviewed so that, as far as practicable, each pupil accessing support receives that support from one SET.
- The school is advised to oversee the further embedding of classroom-support plans in all mainstream settings.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The overall quality of learning of pupils with SEN is good. The school has created a supportive and inclusive learning environment for pupils, where respectful interactions contribute to a positive learning environment. Pupils with SEN benefit from well-organised lessons and interventions related to literacy, numeracy and social skills.

Pupils with SEN display a high level of engagement in their learning. During the evaluation, pupils participated actively in a good range of interventions where they used concrete and tactile materials to assist with their understanding. Results of assessments conducted before and after focused
interventions indicate that many pupils are making substantial progress in relation to their learning objectives.

During the evaluation, lessons were observed in mainstream classrooms, special classes and support settings. Most of the learning activities observed were related to pupils’ identified learning needs. Building on this good work, pupils’ learner outcomes would benefit from the setting of more specific and incremental targets in individualised support plans, including the closer tracking of progress in priority areas of concern.

In the group discussion with a sample of pupils who are accessing support, almost all spoke positively about the supports that they receive, and were enthusiastic about their learning. Pupils also expressed an interest in forming a student council where all pupils, including pupils with SEN, have a voice. Responding to the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that their children are included in school and in classroom life.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The overall quality of teaching is good and some examples of very good teaching were observed. Almost all lessons were well structured and purposeful and teachers demonstrated effective classroom management skills. Active-learning methodologies and multi-sensory approaches were used in order to foster understanding and participation.

Commendable practice observed included the positive affirmation of pupils and worthwhile use of concrete materials in active learning methodologies. Good use was made of approaches such as group work, station teaching and co-teaching. A strong spirit of collaboration was evident during in-class intervention sessions where classroom teachers and SETs were observed to communicate effectively regarding pupils’ needs and progress.

All SETs prepare written plans for their work. However, some short-term planning is completed on a fortnightly instead of a weekly basis. All short-term planning in special education settings should be completed on a weekly basis, as recommended in Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.

A highly commendable range of assessment data is gathered by SETs and this information is used effectively to inform planning in support settings. Effective differentiation of lesson content was observed in some mainstream classrooms, especially where classroom support plans were devised. To inform classroom planning for differentiation and to identify the next steps in pupils’ learning during lessons, mainstream teachers are advised to analyse information from standardised tests, particularly in Mathematics.

3. THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF RESOURCES RECEIVED TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The management and use of resources are of good quality. Teachers and special-needs assistants (SNAs) work well together in responding to pupils’ needs. Commendably, the school recognises that continuing professional development (CPD) is intrinsic to the work of the school and CPD has been arranged for staff in relevant areas of special education. A culture of inclusion was observed across the school with a commendable commitment to the integration and reverse integration of pupils between classrooms and the special classes.
SETs are deployed through a combination of in-class interventions and some withdrawal of pupils in groups or individually. In some instances, several SETs are deployed to support one classroom. Where practicable, the support provided to any individual pupil should be provided by one SET. While the collaborative practice of SETs is of a high quality, their timetables need to be reviewed in order to maximise the time available for teaching and learning.

School policy and procedure reflect a commitment to the progression of the Continuum of Support model of support. In order to guide differentiation and tracking of pupils’ progress on a whole-school level, the school is advised to oversee and monitor further implementation of classroom support across all mainstream settings.

There is evidence that pupils’ transitions are well supported and managed. Support plans are in place and consultation with parents and external professionals is provided for in this process. The school liaises effectively with a variety of external agencies to access advice and to support transitions to post-primary schools. In responses to Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that they were aware of their child’s learning plan and were satisfied with the opportunities they receive to discuss their child’s progress with teachers.
Appendix

TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the findings of this report and is encouraged by the positive affirmation contained therein. The school is pleased with the recognition given to the supportive, inclusive, affirming and respectful learning environment as this is an important priority for our school. The inspectors noted the positive learner outcomes for pupils with additional needs and the Board is very pleased with the overwhelmingly positive response to parental questionnaires and the pupils’ focus group interview.

The school’s commitment to the integration and reverse integration of pupils between classrooms and the special classes is an important finding and one of which the school is very proud.

The Board is pleased that the work and commitment of the staff is recognised and affirmed. The report commends many aspects of teachers’ practice which reflects positively on our staff and the dedication they bring to their work. It is also pleasing that the inspectors noted the strong commitment of teachers and SNAs to continuing professional development (CPD).

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 accepts the recommendations made in the report and will undertake to ensure that they are prioritised.
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>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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 <strong>very good</strong> 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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