

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with
Special Educational Needs

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	S N Leath Ardan
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Beal Atha Na Fheadha Co Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16911H

Date of Evaluation: 11-05-2017



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 FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	11-05-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Meeting with SEN team• Meeting with SNA• 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

SN Leath Ardán (Lahardane NS) in County Mayo operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. The school has three mainstream class teachers and a current enrolment of seventy pupils. Two support teachers are based in the school; one support teacher is shared with other schools. One special-needs assistant (SNA) works in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory; some very good practice was observed. There is scope for further differentiation of tasks in most settings.
- The school's management of the resources it receives to support pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The organisation of support teachers' caseloads and timetables needs to be reviewed.
- Some in-class support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Further opportunities exist for all teachers to work collaboratively across the school as part of a whole-school approach to literacy and numeracy improvement.
- The school has commenced the development of individual student support files to record and track pupils' learning. A more systematic and co-ordinated approach to the recording and tracking of the progress of all pupils' who require additional support is required.
- The school engages with a range of external agencies to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The staff as a whole, led by the principal, should work collaboratively to implement whole-school initiatives in literacy and numeracy.
- A review of the deployment of additional teaching resources for special educational needs should take place without undue delay. More in-class support should be implemented.
- The arrangement whereby certain class groups are withdrawn on a daily basis for mathematics instruction should be discontinued.
- In order to record and track pupils' progress in a more systematic manner, the principal should co-ordinate the development of student support files for all pupils requiring support.
- Teachers should differentiate lesson materials and learning activities to cater for the range of identified needs in their classes.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Overall, pupils with special educational needs and those receiving learning support are making good progress in line with their assessed needs and abilities.

In most settings, pupils participated meaningfully in their lessons and engaged with purposeful learning activities. Very effective use was made of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in the infant classes to promote pupils' language skills. It was evident during the evaluation that pupils enjoy their learning and are motivated to learn. Supplementary reading material is provided and the pupils write across a range of genres. Pupils use information and communications technology (ICT) appropriately. Self-assessment learning folders are maintained in all classes and pupils are encouraged to monitor their own learning. This is good practice.

In the group discussion with a sample of pupils with special educational needs, almost all pupils reported that they enjoy their lessons, and benefit from the additional help provided by support teachers. In questionnaire responses, almost all parents expressed their satisfaction with their children's progress academically and socially.

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

The overall quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory with some very good practice observed. Pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher relationships are positive. A few classrooms host a range of attractive displays and teaching aids that are relevant to pupils' learning.

Pupils with special educational needs participate generally in mainstream class activities. However, there was an over-reliance on whole-class teaching and direct teaching methodologies in most classes. Teachers in all settings should differentiate lesson material and learning activities to cater for the range of needs of pupils with special educational needs. Where very good practice was observed, learning activities were appropriately differentiated, pupils engaged in active learning experiences and opportunities were provided to interact with peers. Staff should endeavour to extend this good practice throughout the school.

In support settings, specialist report recommendations inform provision. Individual education plans (IEPs) are inclusive and reviewed regularly. While learning goals reflect pupils' priority learning needs, teachers are advised to identify more specific learning targets in planning documentation. These learning targets should be specific, measurable and achievable.

It is praiseworthy that a whole-school approach to classroom planning has been adopted. The school has commenced the development of individual student support files provided by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to record and track pupils' progress. The principal should lead the implementation and further development of this process and ensure that all records are accessible and appropriately maintained.

Assessment practices are well developed throughout the school. Assessment for learning (AfL) strategies are used appropriately. A range of tests, including standardised tests, diagnostic tests in literacy, checklists and teacher designed tests is used effectively. Diagnostic assessments in numeracy

should be conducted. Individual pupil attainments in literacy and numeracy are benchmarked against performance in a suitable reasoning test. This is good practice.

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

The overall management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

Professional collaboration, led by the principal, should be fostered throughout the school, through the implementation of whole-school initiatives in literacy and numeracy. Opportunities should be provided for regular professional dialogue amongst all staff members.

A review of the deployment of additional teaching resources for special educational needs should take place without undue delay. It is recommended that further emphasis be placed on collaboratively structured, well-resourced and well monitored team-teaching and in-class support programmes, with a targeted focus on early intervention.

In the current school year, certain class groups are withdrawn for a significant time period on a daily basis by a support teacher for mathematics instruction. This does not represent an appropriate use of resources allocated to support pupils with SEN and furthermore, the pupils concerned do not have full access to some other curriculum subjects. This practice should be discontinued.

The board of management is supportive of the continuing professional development (CPD) of staff. Staff have undertaken training in the *Friends for Life* and *Incredible Years* programmes. Currently, a member of the teaching staff is accessing a post-graduate qualification in special education. The SNA plays a significant role in meeting the care needs of pupils and in supporting inclusion.

The enrolment policy of the school demonstrates a commitment to the admission of pupils with special educational needs. The school engages with external agencies to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. The school is proactive in engaging with the early years settings and post primary schools so that transitioning of pupils in and out of the school is supported.

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
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;