

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	Almhaine N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilmeague, Naas, Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17567A

Date of Evaluation: 07-12-2016



WHAT IS AN EVALUATION OF PROVISION 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 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.

EVALUATION OF PROVISION PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	07-12-2016
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and SEN coordinator• Meeting with SNAs• Review of relevant documents• Discussions with teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Pupil group discussion• Feedback to principal and SEN coordinator

SCHOOL CONTEXT

An evaluation of provision for pupils with special educational needs was undertaken in Almhaine NS in December 2016. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and teachers and a review of a selection of school documents and assessment data.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- This is an inclusive school which supports the holistic development of pupils. The school engages with external programmes and interventions to support the social, behavioural, and emotional needs of pupils.
- Whole-class teaching was the predominant methodology observed in mainstream settings. There is a need for more in-class support and early intervention programmes to differentiate for the range of identified needs.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in support settings is good. However, there is a need to review the school's current approach to the deployment of additional teaching resources for special educational needs (SEN) in line with *Special Education Circular 02/05* to ensure that the pupils with the most challenging needs are more consistently supported.
- The *Continuum of Support* has been introduced on a whole-school basis. In embedding this further, *Classroom Support*, *School Support* and *School Support Plus* documents should be used to support pupils with SEN.
- A commitment by the principal to the ongoing professional development of staff in special education is evident.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A review of the deployment of additional teaching resources for special educational needs in line with *Special Education Circular 02/05* should take place without undue delay.
- Support for pupils with SEN should involve a whole-school approach to the use of *Classroom Support*, *School Support* and *School Support Plus* documents and that learning targets be specific, measurable, achievable, time-bound and appropriate to pupils' priority needs.

- Short-term planning in all support settings should be completed on a weekly basis as recommended in the *Learning Support Guidelines (2000)*.
- More in-class and early intervention programmes should be implemented in order to differentiate for the range of identified needs.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- The overall quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs is good. An inclusive, welcoming atmosphere permeates the school.
- In the mainstream settings some teachers have devised effective strategies to meet the learning needs of pupils where pupils interact and discuss their learning. All teachers are advised to differentiate learning activities and to place a greater emphasis on co-operative, collaborative and active learning activities in order to provide a broader learning experience for all pupils. This differentiation should be clearly outlined in teachers' planning.
- In support settings, almost all lessons are well-structured to enable pupils engage in active learning experiences, and to interact with peers and teachers. Levels of enjoyment and active engagement by pupils in lessons and tasks were fostered through opportunities to talk, discuss and express opinions in a supportive environment. While numeracy skills for a few pupils are supported through an in-class support model, most pupils are withdrawn in small groups for numeracy support. In some settings, good use is made of concrete materials and highlighting Mathematics in the pupils' environment and these good practices should be extended across the school.
- During a focus group discussion pupils with special educational needs reported that they enjoyed their lessons, and benefited from the additional support provided by support teachers. They identified feedback from teachers as an effective methodology to help them to improve their work and to progress their learning.
- The four special needs assistants (SNAs) provide high quality support for the pupils in their care and they work as a team to ensure pupils' well-being and safety.

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

- The quality of teaching of pupils with SEN is commendable, with some very good lessons observed. Teaching strategies and use of resources in most withdrawal lessons are based on appropriate base-line assessment data. Pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher interactions are positive and good attention is paid to promoting social interaction.
- Teachers use a range of tests including diagnostic tests, basic needs, literacy and numeracy checklists, and school-designed checklists. However, there is scope to develop the tracking of pupil's progress throughout the school. It is recommended that results from standardised tests be used more in the planning, preparation and differentiation of lessons in all settings in order to support optimum progress for all pupils.
- Teachers use varied formats to prepare individualised planning for pupils with SEN. It is now recommended that all mainstream teachers use *Classroom Support* plans and that support

teachers use *School Support* and *School Support Plus* documents for individual and group learning plans.

- Support teachers are advised to identify specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound learning targets which reflect pupils' priority learning needs and to prepare short-term planning on a weekly basis as recommended in the *Learning Support Guidelines (2000)*.

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

- Management and use of resources is satisfactory. The principal's commitment to the continuing professional development of staff in special education is commended.
- It is recommended that a timely review of the SEN policy be conducted. The SEN policy should include whole-school approaches to SEN methodologies, and procedures involving teacher deployment to SEN teaching posts with a view to building capacity and affording teachers the opportunity to develop their SEN knowledge base.
- The school is advised to review its current approach to the deployment of additional teaching resources for SEN in line with *Special Education Circular 02/05* to ensure a more cohesive, consistent and inclusive approach to the education of pupils with the most challenging needs.
- Support for pupils is primarily on a withdrawal basis. In some classes, pupils are withdrawn for both literacy and numeracy resulting in more than one support teacher supporting the needs of the pupils in that class. It is recommended that more emphasis is put on collaboratively structured, well-resourced, and well-monitored in-class support programmes and interventions so that pupils are not regularly missing learning experiences with their class grouping.
- The school engages with a wide range of external programmes and interventions to support the social, behavioural, and emotional needs of pupils. The school is proactive in engaging with early years' settings and post primary schools so that the transitioning of pupils in and out of the school is supported.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The acknowledgement of our inclusive, respectful and caring learning community is greatly appreciated.

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 also welcomes the recommendations of the inspector in the SEN report. We now commit to putting the recommendations into practice. We have begun this by increasing our in class support, planning for SEN on a weekly basis and we have taken steps to address the inspector's recommendations as per Special Education circular 02/05.

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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;