

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	SN Ciarán Naofa
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Fiodharta Contae Ros Comáin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18194P

Date of inspection: 22-02-2018



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.

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Date of inspection	22-02-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Meeting with SEN team• Review of relevant documents• Analysis of parent questionnaires	<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 teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

SN Cíarán Naofa is a rural, co-educational primary school located eight kilometres west of Roscommon town, County Roscommon. There are three mainstream class teachers, and one full-time and one part-time special-education teacher working in the school. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is fair overall; the range of methodologies and resources in use requires review and extension.
- Two staff members have achieved a post-graduate qualification in SEN; there is potential for this expertise to be shared amongst the staff.
- Almost all teachers reference differentiation in their planning, but observed lesson material and learning activities were not sufficiently differentiated to cater for the range of needs of pupils with SEN.
- The quality of learning of pupils with SEN is poor overall; pupils with SEN frequently did not achieve the intended learning outcome during the lessons observed.
- The quality of planning and record-keeping in support settings varied from good to poor; individual learning plans were found not to reflect priority learning needs as identified in specialist reports in many instances, and the achievement of targets was not monitored with sufficient care.
- At the time of the evaluation, resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills for SEN teaching were not deployed appropriately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The management and use of resources received by the school to support pupils with SEN should be reviewed and changes made as a matter of urgency to ensure that personnel are deployed in a manner that provides appropriately for all pupils.
- The principal should lead a collaborative problem-solving model of assessment of special educational needs and should ensure that interventions to address these needs are guided by the use of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) *Continuum of Support* framework.
- The quality of teaching for pupils with SEN should be improved through the provision of more activity-based learning experiences rather than the observed over-reliance on pencil-and-paper tasks.
- Supports provided to pupils with SEN should be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress.
- There should be greater clarity in teachers' planning and in their implementation of differentiation strategies to address pupils' individual learning needs in all settings.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The quality of learning of pupils with SEN is poor overall. Most pupils engaged earnestly with tasks set by their teachers during the inspection; however, the pupils with SEN often did not achieve the intended learning outcome as the work given to them had not been differentiated in line with their ability or learning needs. While learning targets were identified in the individual learning plans, frequently the achievement of these targets was not recorded. A system for recording pupil achievement of targets should be agreed and implemented for all pupils with SEN. Furthermore, the school should ensure that the quality of pupils' learning is monitored more carefully in line with their ability.

Almost all teachers provided stimulating learning environments. Interactions between pupils and teachers and between pupils themselves were respectful. Evidence from the pupil focus-group interview indicates that most pupils with SEN like school. In response to questionnaires issued by the Inspectorate, the majority of parents said that their child feels safe and well looked after in school. However, in the lessons observed, the learning activities provided in both mainstream and support settings were based predominantly on pencil-and-paper tasks. There is a need to provide more appropriate learning experiences with a clearer focus on activating prior knowledge and more effective use of activity-based learning.

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

The quality of teaching of pupils with SEN is fair overall; instances of both good and poor practice were observed. Almost all teachers demonstrate skilful management of their multi-grade classes, and different programmes of work are planned for the different grades. However, lesson material and learning activities were not differentiated adequately to cater for the individual needs of pupils with SEN; this should be remedied. Two staff members have achieved a post-graduate qualification in special education teaching. This expertise should be shared more effectively to build whole-staff capacity.

Some teachers have made a start in using the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) *Continuum of Support* framework to identify and target learning needs. This is good practice and should be adopted at whole-school level within the SEN policy. The quality of planning provided by support teachers varies from good to poor. The good-quality planning provided clear targets, comprehensive records and some tracking of the progress pupils had made. However, in most plans there was insufficient cognisance taken of specialist reports in the identification of priority learning needs. In response to questionnaires, less than half of the parents agreed the work provided in support settings was matched to their child's needs.

The introduction of *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in the infant room to promote pupils' language skills is a worthwhile initiative. There is a need to deploy additional teaching resources in the infant and junior classes to strengthen station-teaching approaches which target the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills. An agreed whole-school approach to the teaching of reading should be introduced to ensure there is continuity and development in the teaching of reading skills across the school. Currently, almost all provision for support teaching is based on the withdrawal of pupils from their classrooms. The school has engaged recently in some in-class support but this work needs to be planned more effectively and in a collaborative manner so

as to provide optimal support to pupils with SEN. The principal should lead the staff in the implementation of collaborative, in-class support and in striving for improvement in provision.

The quality of assessment is fair overall. Standardised testing is undertaken and mainstream class teachers measure pupil knowledge of content taught, regularly using teacher-designed tests. Teachers demonstrated a good knowledge of how well their pupils were progressing in general. However, records of outcomes of diagnostic testing are very limited and insufficient use is made of assessment data in the provision of targeted interventions to respond to identified needs.

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

The quality of the management and use of resources the school has received to support pupils with SEN is poor. At the time of the evaluation, the school's procedures were in urgent need of review in terms of teacher deployment, and provision of support for pupils. Some pupils with SEN were not receiving access to the support which had been provided to the school by the Department of Education and Skills. The school is in receipt of thirty-two and a half hours of support teaching. At the time of the evaluation, nine of these hours were being used for teaching Social, Environmental and Scientific Education and seven of these hours were not being deployed at all. In exercising overall responsibility regarding the education of pupils with SEN, the principal, with the support of the board of management, should assign staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles. Special education teaching supports provided to the school should be used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs.

The school has a policy on special educational needs which was ratified by the board of management in February 2018. Although the content of the document is broadly inclusive, it is not reflective of current procedures implemented in the school and it is not in line with the requirements of *Circular 13/2017 Special Education Teaching Allocation*. Accordingly, the policy document and its implementation require review and revision.

The school has engaged with external agencies to support the learning of pupils with SEN. Transitions from early-years settings and to post-primary schools are well managed.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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 has met and discussed the contents of this report and it acknowledges and accepts the recommendations and its findings. It will endeavour to implement and support the implementation of all changes needed to support the learning of all the children but especially the children with learning needs. The principal will update the board as necessary and will be provided with all financial support or otherwise to ensure the recommendations of this report are implemented.

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 school is now utilising its allocation of special education teachers appropriately and is providing additional teaching support to all qualifying pupils, in accordance with the *Continuum of Support* framework and is ensuring that personnel are deployed in an appropriate manner.

The board of management has been informed by the principal that the staff has begun to earnestly address the recommendations of this report. Teachers are reflecting and adapting their teaching to provide more differentiated and activity-based learning experiences for the children in the school. The teachers will reflect these changes in their planning. The educational and resource needs of children have been identified through a more collaborative approach to the *Continuum of Support* model. Additional supports have been deployed to the infant room. The staff is looking at a more holistic approach to reading and indeed other areas of the English curriculum as suggested. The use of diagnostic testing to establish learning targets has been encouraged.

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 of 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;