Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Leamhach</th>
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<tr>
<td>School address</td>
<td>Thurles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>County Tipperary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll number</td>
<td>18213Q</td>
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Date of inspection: 07-03-2019
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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and
recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Náisiúnta Leamhach is a rural, mainstream, coeducational primary school located in Leugh, five kilometres northwest of Thurles in Co. Tipperary. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. There are 111 pupils on the roll currently and staffing includes a teaching principal, three mainstream class teachers, two full-time special education teachers (SETs) and a part-time SET who is shared with another school in the area. During the evaluation, one of the full time SETs was on leave and was being replaced by a student teacher working in a substitute capacity. There are also two teachers working in classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).There are five special needs assistants (SNAs) employed in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The school promotes a culture of inclusion and the learning experiences provided for pupils are very good; school management is highly committed to the provision of effective education for all pupils.
• The learning outcomes observed were of a high quality; monitoring and recording of pupils’ progress have scope for further development.
• Targeted and effective teaching was observed in all learning settings and the quality of lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
• The school has recently commenced using the continuum of support documents and the staged approach to providing support for pupils is implemented to good effect; there is scope to extend the use of assessment data and to further develop the target-setting process.
• The management and use of physical and material resources are very good; the assignment of responsibility to SETs to implement curricular areas with class groupings requires review to ensure compliance with Circular 13/2017.
• Practice for pupils with SEN has advanced beyond the provisions outlined in some of the whole-school planning and policy documents.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• The school should further develop the approach to the monitoring, recording and documenting of the progress of pupils with SEN.
• The school should make greater use of assessment data including diagnostic data when establishing clear and specific targets for improvements in pupil learning outcomes.
• The current practice of assigning responsibility to SETs for the implementation of curricular subjects with whole-class groupings should be discontinued in accordance with the provisions of Circular 13/2017.
• The whole-school planning and policy documents which guide provision for pupils with special educational needs should be reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect current practice and guide planning for further development.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The learning outcomes for pupils with SEN observed during the evaluation were of a high quality. In mainstream classes, support settings and special classes, pupils were supported and challenged through respectful and positive interactions. They were engaged enthusiastically in meaningful learning activities, which were targeted at enhancing learning outcomes, particularly in aspects of literacy, numeracy and social skills. In general, the teachers have a very good understanding of pupils’ learning and in particular their strengths and areas requiring support. The school should further develop the approach to monitoring, recording and documenting the progress of pupils with SEN. This information should systematically inform the establishment of progressive and developmental targets for improvements in learning outcomes in each instructional term.

The school promotes a culture of inclusion and the learning experiences provided for pupils are very good. They were observed to enjoy their lessons and learning and they commented very positively on the supports they receive in various settings. School management and staff have made exemplary use of a range of learning resources to provide stimulating learning environments for pupils and a good range of concrete, visual and tactile materials are used to support their engagement and understanding. The range of support models in place throughout the school provides opportunities for pupils from a range of class settings, ability levels and learning settings to work together. This practice is highly commended as it serves to promote social inclusion and provides very useful opportunities for peer-mediated learning.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
Targeted and effective teaching was observed in all learning settings and the quality of lessons observed ranged from good to very good. Teachers prepare, facilitate and implement a range of tasks in an enthusiastic and committed manner and they adopt a very positive approach to classroom management. In the lessons observed, teachers generally used a very good range of visual and multi-sensory approaches to actively involve pupils in their learning and to cultivate understanding. High levels of collaboration and cooperation were noted between mainstream teachers, SETs and special class teachers. This was particularly evident where pupils from special classes were integrated into mainstream settings and where pupils from the mainstream classes were included in activities in the special-class settings.

Teachers have engaged both individually and collectively in a good range of continuous professional development (CPD) aimed at supporting the effective inclusion and education of pupils with SEN. While they generally prepare good written planning to support their work, planning in settings for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) should be completed on a weekly basis. The school has recently commenced using the continuum of support documents and the staged approach to providing support for pupil is implemented to good effect. Good samples of stage one intervention programmes were noted in classrooms. Classroom teachers displayed an in-depth understanding of the range in ability levels amongst pupils and, in general, good levels of differentiation in
questioning, support and task provision were noted. While individual plans are prepared for pupil in receipt of support at stages two and three of the continuum, the school should make greater use of assessment data, including diagnostic data, when establishing clear and specific targets for these pupils.

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

The principal, supported by the SEN coordinator, leads the implementation of a reflective approach to supporting pupils with SEN. While the overall quality of the management and use of resources is good, the management of the material and physical resources is excellent. The principal and board of management have overseen the redevelopment and extension of the school building and they have succeeded in ensuring the provision of learning environments that are attractive, stimulating and accessible for all learners. All learning settings were observed to be well resourced and the ongoing engagement of staff and parents to support the provision of a broad range of materials is acknowledged.

All teaching staff are acutely aware of their role in supporting pupils with SEN. However, the current practice of assigning responsibility to SETs for the implementation of curricular subjects with whole-class groupings should be discontinued in accordance with the provisions of Circular 13/2017. A meeting with SNAs indicated that they have a clear understanding of their roles in supporting pupils to maximise their learning potential while simultaneously cultivating and supporting the development of their skills as independent learners.

Practice for pupils with SEN has advanced beyond the provisions outlined in some of the whole-school planning and policy documents. This is particularly evident in the policy document for the ASD classes. It is recommended that the whole-school planning and policy documents, which guide provision for pupils with SEN, be reviewed and updated to ensure they both reflect current practice and guide planning for further development.
Insiders 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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong></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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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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