

**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	Lochán An Bhealaigh N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Lochán An Bhealaigh, Ballinea, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18262G

Date of inspection: 05-12-2017



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 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 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

Date of inspection	05-12-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Meeting with special education teacher (SET)• 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 SET

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Lochán An Bhealaigh N.S. is a three-teacher, co-educational primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. It is located in a rural area near Mullingar. The school has a shared special education teacher (SET) for four days each week. At the time of the evaluation there were sixty eight pupils enrolled representing a slight increase in enrolment levels over the last few years.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- An inclusive educational atmosphere is evident in the school and learning outcomes for many pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good, overall, with some examples of very good practice observed.
- All teachers prepare good written plans for their work; the short-term planning in the special education setting should be completed on a weekly basis, as recommended in the *Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.
- Teachers maintain a commendable range of assessment information; however, there is scope in some settings to analyse this data more systematically to identify the next steps in pupils' learning and to inform approaches for differentiation.
- The school implements the *Continuum of Support* approach effectively to identify needs and to ensure that the greatest levels of support are provided to the pupils with the greatest need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The short-term planning in the special education setting should be completed on a weekly basis, as recommended in the *Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.
- It is recommended that assessment and observational data be analysed more systematically in all settings to identify the next steps in pupils' learning and to inform approaches for differentiation.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The overall quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is evidence that many pupils have made substantial progress in relation to their needs and targets. An inclusive and supportive atmosphere is evident in the school and pupils comment very positively about their learning experiences and the supports they receive. Responding to the Inspectorate questionnaire, all parents of pupils with special educational needs commented positively about the manner in which their children were looked after and included in school life. Learning environments are stimulating and the use of concrete, visual and tactile materials assists with pupils' understanding. Overall, learning programmes are well matched to pupils' learning needs, as identified through commendable use of the *Continuum of Support* approach. In the lessons observed in mainstream classes and also in withdrawal settings, pupils were supported and challenged through respectful interactions and meaningful learning activities related to literacy, numeracy and social skills. While learning objectives for pupils with special educational needs are identified accurately in most lessons, there is further scope, in some cases, to break down concepts into smaller incremental steps to assist pupils' understanding, particularly in some strands of Mathematics.

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

The overall quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good and some examples of very good teaching were observed. All teachers demonstrate very positive classroom management and effective instructional skills. In the lessons observed, teachers used a range of visual and multi-sensory approaches to actively involve pupils in their learning and to foster understanding. Some very effective differentiation of lesson content was noted in mainstream classrooms, especially where classroom support plans were devised. Classroom teachers and the special education teacher communicate effectively with each other in relation to pupils' needs and their progress. While all teachers prepare good written plans for their work, the short-term planning in the special education setting should be completed on a weekly basis, as recommended in the *Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*. All teachers maintain a commendable range of assessment information from standardised tests, screening tests, criterion-referenced tests and observational data. While this information is used well to inform planning for pupils' needs in many settings, there is scope in certain settings to analyse this data more systematically to identify the next steps in pupils' learning and to inform approaches for differentiation.

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

The school manages and uses the resources it receives to support pupils with special educational needs effectively. School policies are inclusive and good progress has been made on reviewing the whole school plan for special education to take cognisance of *Special Education Circular 13/2017*. The school uses the *Continuum of Support* approach to identify needs and to ensure that the greatest levels of support are provided to the pupils with the greatest need. Support teaching is deployed through a combination of in-class interventions and some withdrawal of pupils in groups or individually. Personalised learning plans for pupils with SEN reflect consultation with parents and external professionals. Almost all parents expressed satisfaction with the opportunities they received to discuss their child's progress with the teachers. While the learning targets outlined for pupils are

generally good, there is scope to make the targets in some plans more specific, measurable and referenced to observational and other assessment evidence. A whole-school approach is evident in the deployment of support teaching for pupils with SEN and all of the additional teaching resources are used for this purpose. To assist with tracking the flexible deployment of teaching resources, it is recommended that the school use the provision plan advocated in the *Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*. The school is also advised to examine opportunities to implement targeted in-class supports in the infant and junior classes as a means of early intervention and prevention of learning difficulties in key areas of literacy and numeracy.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

The following aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* were checked during the evaluation:

1. Teachers' access to a copy of the school's Child Protection policy
2. The prominent display of the name of Designated Liaison Person near the main entrance

The school was fully compliant with both aspects.

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 in 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;