An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with
Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Crossmolina National School</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Crossmolina</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Mayo</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 11-04-2019
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

**Date of inspection**  
11-04-2019

**Inspection activities undertaken**
- Discussion with principal and teachers
- Meeting with special education team
- Meeting with special-needs assistants
- Review of relevant documents
- 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**
Crossmolina National School is a co-educational primary school situated in the town of Crossmolina, County Mayo, operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. Currently, there are eight mainstream class teachers and an administrative principal. There are also five special education teachers (SETs) based in the school, two of which are deployed exclusively or almost exclusively in other schools as part of a local arrangement. There were 224 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**
- The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs is commendable.
- Effective learner experiences are provided for pupils; meaningful links have been made with post-primary students completing Transition Year (TY).
- The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall; however, the practice observed in the support settings ranged from very good to weak.
- The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs is good; some aspects of the organisation of special educational needs provision require further development, however.
- While the school has extended its range of teaching models, the in-class model of support is not being monitored effectively.
- It is highly commendable that many staff members have undertaken a post-graduate qualification in special educational needs.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- In the withdrawal setting where practice is weak, school management should ensure that adequate short-term planning is prepared and maintained and that challenging skills-based work is provided to pupils.
- Evidence-based interventions in literacy and numeracy should be further extended in the infant and junior classes to support early intervention strategies.
- The school should implement a more rigorous approach to monitoring the impact of in-class models of support on the learning outcomes of targeted pupils.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs is commendable. Pupils are motivated and their enjoyment of learning was evident. In focus group discussion, many pupils voiced appreciation for the supports provided to them including their involvement in Science Blast and library visits. Pupils expressed an interest in forming a student council where all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, have opportunities for participation. Analysis of the range of assessment data indicates that most pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in line with their abilities.

Effective learner experiences are provided. Purposeful pair work and collaborative group work were observed. A number of commendable programmes and initiatives are implemented effectively; these include the Lego Club, sensory regulation stations and Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. In addition, the school implements Friends for Life which is an evidence-based programme that promotes resilience and social and emotional competence in children and young people. Meaningful links have been made with the local post-primary school. During the evaluation, the pupils were observed enjoying and participating beneficially in a collaborative literacy lesson with TY students.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall; this included practice ranging from very good to weak in the support settings.

Teachers in mainstream classrooms use active learning methodologies and a range of visual and concrete resources, to ensure that lessons are interesting for pupils. Good use is made of approaches such as group work, station teaching and co-teaching. Highly effective practice was observed in the use of assistive technology and information and communications technology (ICT).

Support teachers provide a mixture on in-class and withdrawal support. In almost all of the withdrawal settings, teachers use multi-sensory approaches and tasks are clearly aligned with pupils’ priority learning needs. During the evaluation, in one support setting, short-term planning was not available for review and the learning activities provided to pupils were not sufficiently aligned with their identified learning needs. In order to improve the outcomes for these pupils, it is recommended that school management follow-up where short-term planning is not available and ensure that learning activities are designed carefully to address pupils’ identified learning needs. A particular emphasis should be placed on providing challenging skills-based work in this setting.

Teachers make good use of the student support file resources provided by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to record and track pupils’ progress. However, there is further scope for some class teachers to devise classroom support plans for pupils which identify their emerging needs more clearly.

Teachers use of a wide range of assessment modes, including screening, diagnostic and standardised tests combined with teacher-designed tests and observations. Commendably, there is a systematic, whole-school approach to tracking, monitoring and accurate recording of pupils’ attainment. Information from standardised tests is analysed by classroom teachers and informs classroom
planning for differentiation. A highly commendable range of assessment data is gathered by SETs and this information is used effectively to inform planning in almost all support settings.

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

The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs is good. Strong commitment from school leaders and the newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator contribute to this effective practice. The school policies and procedures reflect the inclusive atmosphere noted during the evaluation. A meeting with the special-needs assistants indicated that very positive working relationships have been cultivated with the teachers and their work was observed to contribute very positively to the care and inclusion of pupils. In the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents expressed very positive views about the school and the support that their children receive.

The school has extended its range of teaching models to include parallel teaching, in-class support and the withdrawal of pupils individually and in groups. However, some aspects of the organisation of special educational needs provision require further development to ensure a balanced needs-based approach is adopted. The introduction of in-class support for pupils is praiseworthy; however, the school should implement a more rigorous approach to monitoring the impact of this model of support on the learning outcomes of targeted pupils. Evidence-based interventions in numeracy and literacy should be extended further in the infant and junior classes, to support early intervention strategies. School management should ensure that the withdrawal of pupils for support in Mathematics is timetabled carefully in order to maximise opportunities for learning experiences with their class peers.

The board of management is supportive of the continuing professional development (CPD) of staff. It is highly commendable that many staff members have undertaken a post-graduate qualification in special educational needs. The school liaises effectively with a variety of external agencies including the Visiting Teacher Service to access support and advice in relation to pupils with additional needs. There is evidence that pupils’ transitions in and out of the school are well supported and managed.
Inspected 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.

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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><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Very good</em></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><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Good</em></td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em></td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><em>Fair</em></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>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td><em>Weak</em></td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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