Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

REPORT

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<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Greystones Educate Together National School</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Blacklion</td>
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<td>Greystones</td>
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<td>Co. Wicklow</td>
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<td>Uimhí rollá / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 30-01-2019
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 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.

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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 3 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.
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<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Analysis of parent questionnaires</td>
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<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>Pupil group discussion</td>
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<td>Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Greystones Educate Together National School is a co-educational, urban primary school under the patronage of Educate Together. Staff at the school comprises an administrative principal, eighteen mainstream class teachers, nine full-time special education teachers (SET), including two teachers assigned to the special classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), one shared SET, ten special needs assistants (SNAs) and two school secretaries.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS
- The school is a welcoming place, and high levels of commitment to inclusivity and the pupils’ holistic development are evident.
- The school is praised for the high-quality learning environments provided for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- The overall quality of teaching for pupils with SEN in mainstream, special classes and support settings is good with some very good practice observed.
- Overall, the quality of learning for pupils with SEN is good; pupils with SEN demonstrate high levels of engagement in lessons and enjoy a broad range of learning experiences.
- Credible progress has been made in developing pupil support files; there is a variation in the quality of the support plans in terms of target setting, the use of assessment information, and the provision for regular review.
- The management and use of resources received to support pupils with SEN is satisfactory; there is a lack of clarity and consistency in whole-school policy and approaches to provision for pupils with SEN.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- It is recommended that the school’s SEN policy be comprehensively reviewed in order to provide clear and comprehensive guidance to all aspects of the school’s provision, including protocols regarding the deployment and co-ordination of teaching resources, the selection of pupils for additional supports, assessment, communication within school and with parents, and the sharing of expertise among staff members.
- To optimise the impact of the school’s model of support on pupils’ learning, a more systematic and fine-grained analysis of assessment information is recommended in order to identify individual and group learning needs, to set specific, measurable, attainable and realistic targets (SMART), and to plan differentiated programmes of learning for all pupils in receipt of additional support.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The overall quality of learning of pupils with SEN is good. Teachers make very good efforts to make learning enjoyable for the pupils and pupils display high levels of engagement in a wide range of learning activities. During a focus group discussion, pupils with SEN reported that they enjoy their lessons, and they spoke positively about the additional help they receive from staff members. Furthermore, these pupils demonstrated a very good awareness of how best they learn, and they reported enjoying group work during both in-class lessons and in withdrawal settings. From a review of a sample of pupil support files, it is evident that many pupils are making good progress in attaining their targets. Nevertheless, there is potential to enhance the learning outcomes of pupils with SEN further, through a more consistent whole-school approach to the identification of targets. In addition, provision for a more consistent monitoring and regular review of the achievement of key targets for all pupils with SEN is advised. There is a need for closer links to be established between the identified targets in the pupils’ support files and the provision in mainstream classes.

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

The overall quality of teaching in mainstream, special classes and support settings for pupils with SEN is good with some very good practice observed. Lessons are generally well structured and aligned very effectively with the individual interests and needs of pupils. Resources are well chosen and used purposefully. Good efforts are made to use teaching methodologies and activities appropriate to the provision of meaningful learning experiences for pupils with an ASD. In the parent questionnaires, most parents agreed that the school is helping their child progress with reading, writing and Mathematics. Some samples of high-quality planning were observed in a number of settings. The school has made credible progress in developing support plans for all pupils with SEN. There is a variation in the quality of these plans in terms of target setting and provision for regular review. There is a need for a more systematic and fine-grained analysis and use of assessment information, to plan and provide the specific differentiated programmes of learning for individuals and groups of learners.

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

The quality of management and use of resources to support pupils with SEN is satisfactory. High-quality classroom environments are provided and classrooms are well resourced and print rich. An inclusive, welcoming atmosphere permeates the school, with high levels of commitment to inclusivity and pupils’ holistic development evident. The (SNAs) provide high-quality support for the pupils in their care. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that their child feels safe and well looked after in school. In addition, most parents agreed that their child is fully included in school and classroom life.

Due to a number of teaching staff being on various types of leave in this particular school year, some teachers have been recently deployed to the special education team and individual teachers have undertaken further professional development in special needs education. In order to build the capacity of all staff to address pupils’ special educational needs and to ensure the optimum impact of professional development on practice, school management should ensure that the learning and skills gained through staff engagement with professional development are shared with all staff members.
While there is a commendable commitment to inclusivity and to supporting pupils in their learning, there is scope to further refine and develop the model of support. Under current arrangements, some of the special education caseloads are overly large. In order to ensure that the pupils with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of support, there is a need for a deeper analysis and subsequent use of assessment data to inform decisions regarding which pupils receive support. Given the changes in staff on the SET team, it is timely that a review of the school’s current SEN policy be conducted. The reviewed policy should include clear protocols and procedures regarding communication within school and with parents, assessment, teacher deployment to SEN teaching posts, the criteria for selection of pupils for support, the co-ordination of teaching resources, and the facilitation of the sharing with all staff the knowledge gained by SETs through ongoing professional development.
## 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 of each area.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</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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<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</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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<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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.</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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<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

GETNS staff collaboratively recognise that the DES inspectorate acknowledged the school was a welcoming community which displayed a holistic approach to education.

With continued fundraising from PA initiatives and Sub-Committee’s efforts within the SEN department, pupil’s environments will improve. Further contextual CPD, accurate target setting, and further resourcing will ensure the quality of teaching mirrors best practice and can be described as excellent in the future.

Smart targets for pupils with SEN will ensure the good quality of learning noted will improve further. The ‘voice’ of pupils heard, affirmed that pupils enjoy school, are highly engaged and stimulated. The DES acknowledged the school engaged successfully with NEPS COS and the new model of allocation. The teaching quality 2018-19 has been negatively impacted by changing caseloads and shortages of fully qualified staff.

We acknowledge and welcome the practical advice of the DES inspectorate and look forward to creating a clear, consistent whole-school approach.

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 SET team propose an SSF Workshop to improve our identification of targets. This will be a whole-staff approach and staff with relevant CPD will head the stations. Parent and pupil voice will be heard through information gathering templates prior to targets being agreed.

The SET team have agreed that we need to be timely and diligent with our reviews, reflections and assessment of targets. We agree that in addition to the February and June reviews that we regularly review targets and keep an accurate running record of progress.

In some classes the SET teacher has laminated the main targets from the SSF for the class teacher’s desk to establish collaborative practice ensuring a link between the settings. As the DES recommend class bands should have a class liaison support teacher. Following the February/March review we had a SET team caseload reshuffle. This is a preferable model with improved links between mainstream and SET staff.

SET team suggest that an ‘Assessment’ block will be scheduled on the team members’ timetables. In this way assessments will be scheduled and findings analysed to plan relevant interventions.

The principal has encouraged a culture where upskilled staff members delivers a presentation from their CPD as part of CP hours. This has commenced. The school is now the host school for Middletown Autism Centre for 2019/20.

Preparatory work on a review of SEN provision is under way commencing with the Criteria for COS entrants and we aim to have the reviewed policy ratified by early next year.

Aladdin groups can easily be made so that SET staff communicate better with relevant parents.
The SENCO will attend the next cluster meeting of SET teachers which includes NEPS presentation on Assessment. The principal will then discuss what further relevant assessments will be purchased for our settings.

In as far as practicable the principal aims to have fully qualified and most experienced staff teaching on the SEN team. Teaching staff value the contribution of our SNAs to supporting pupils’ with SEN. The co-ordination of our SNA staff is the principal’s daily duty matching qualified, certified staff to pupils in need.

At year-end our principal requests a ‘Resources Wish’ List from staff members. We aim to coordinate these lists through involving SET liaison and ensure teaching resources requested are provided. We will also involve our BOM, PA and Sub-Committee to consider our required resources and see where fundraising can support our needs.