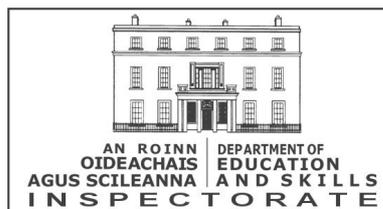


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Follow-Through Inspection
REPORT

Saint Michael's Special National School
Foxfield, Briarfield Villas
Greendale Road, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5
Uimhir rolla: 20279M

Date of inspection: 11 June 2015



Date of original inspection¹	18 October 2012	Type of original report	WSE Modified	Date of FT inspection	11 June 2015
Report published	Yes				
Follow-through inspection activities					
<p><i>The following activities took place in the course of the follow-through inspection</i></p> <p>Meeting with principal and/or senior management team Meeting with relevant teachers/members of staff Observation of teaching and learning Interaction with pupils Review of school documentation and records and pupils' work Meeting with the patron's nominee on the board of management</p>					
Recommendation in original inspection report		Progress achieved to date on implementation of recommendation			
<p>The board of management should formulate a strategic plan for the future development of the school. To this end the identification of whole-school priorities, the implementation of an action planning approach to address curriculum and organisational objectives and the development of systems to monitor the implementation and impact of all plans and policies cyclically are recommended.</p>		<p>Partial progress</p> <p>Following the whole school evaluation (WSE), an overall plan for the development of the school was devised. This plan provides a broad overview of areas requiring development and the actions to be undertaken. However, the plan requires a much greater degree of detail including the identification of specific curriculum and organisational areas for development, clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities of individuals and the establishment of specific timeframes for achievement of progress. Such an approach would provide an overall strategic plan to facilitate the board of management in the ongoing monitoring and review of policies and plans on a cyclical basis.</p>			
<p>The focus and operation of the in-school management team require significant change and development with a clear emphasis on both instructional and distributed leadership.</p>		<p>Partial progress</p> <p>In terms of in-school management (ISM), the school has an allocation of an administrative principal, a deputy principal and a special duties post. Since the WSE, the principal has put in place arrangements for more regular meetings of all staff, including meetings of teachers, and joint meetings of teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs).</p> <p>However, despite these actions, a culture of instructional and distributed leadership has not been established successfully. Going forward, clear agendas should be devised for all meetings and circulated in advance. Minutes of meetings, including decisions taken and actions to be carried out, should be recorded. Follow-up actions should be undertaken consistently. At the time of this follow-through inspection, the position of deputy principal was vacant and had been so since September 2014. The principal reported that a new deputy principal was recently appointed and is due to take up the post in September 2015. When the new ISM team is in place, it is critical that regular, formal team meetings be conducted and that decisions made are communicated clearly to staff. The focus of these meetings should relate primarily to the ongoing development of school protocols and curriculum planning. The principal should continue to undertake regular visits of a supportive and advisory nature to all learning settings in order to ensure consistent implementation of protocols and to promote best practice.</p>			

¹ Date on cover of original inspection report

<p>The school's individual education plans (IEPs) for students need significant development in line with best practice and should comprehensively address the specific individual needs of the students.</p>	<p>Good progress</p> <p>Following the WSE, the school sought support from the Special Education Department at Saint Patrick's College of Education and the Special Education Support Service (SESS). An agreed format for the development of IEPs is now in place and there is greater cohesion overall around their preparation. Priority learning needs and goals are identified and provision is made for more regular and frequent review. Parents are invited to attend all IEP meetings and the principal reports that parents receive a copy of their child's IEP. The quality of IEPs would be enhanced further through the setting of more specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed (SMART) targets for priority learning areas and the adoption of a consistent approach to the tracking of progress by teachers.</p>
<p>Agreed clear protocols should be put in place to facilitate the efficient day-to-day operation of the school.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p> <p>Since the WSE a number of policies have been developed including policies on accidents and injuries, intimate care, administration of medication, internet acceptable use, anti-bullying and child protection. However, greater clarity around protocols and procedures in terms of the day-to-day operation of the school is still required. Initially, there is need for greater clarity around responsibilities for the supervision of pupils and break times; more proactive, systematic in-school leadership is required in this regard. There is need too to ensure careful implementation of reporting mechanisms in relation to aspects of the policy on accidents and injury. Additionally, the code of behaviour requires review to ensure that practice around the management of behaviour is reflected fully therein.</p> <p>It is critical that all policies, procedures and protocols reflect actual practice in the school. As policies, procedures and protocols are developed they should be formally ratified and signed by the board of management. At a minimum, staff should be fully informed in respect of the policies, procedures and protocols and structures should be in place to monitor consistent implementation. The principal should take a more proactive leadership role in this process.</p>
<p>There is a need for cohesion and clarity in all whole-school curriculum plans to guide teachers in ensuring appropriate continuity, progression and depth of learning across the curriculum.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p> <p>Curriculum plans for three areas have been developed—Language and Communication, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)—and follow the curriculum and the guidelines for pupils with moderate general learning disabilities as outlined by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). However, while these plans provide a general overview for teaching and learning, they do not provide sufficient detail to specifically guide practice and to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning. A school review of the three curriculum plans is planned. As part of this process, it will be important to ensure that the specific content to be taught at each level is established. In addition, the development of useful plans for all curriculum areas is required. It was evident from evaluation of classroom practice that there is a clear need to optimise teaching input and teaching time. Greater clarity in respect of curriculum planning, coupled with a robust monitoring and review system, is required in order to ensure appropriate continuity, progression and depth of learning across the curriculum.</p>
<p>A whole-school assessment approach should be developed and used systematically.</p>	<p>Partial progress</p> <p>An assessment policy has been drafted that identifies a number of assessment approaches that may be used by teachers. It was evident during the follow-through inspection that teachers adopt a variety of approaches to assessment and the recording of pupils' progress. It is recommended that an agreed and consistent whole-school policy on assessment should be put in place and implemented by all teachers, both in terms of the modes of assessment to be adopted and how the data derived from assessment is used to guide pupils' learning. Regular review should be undertaken to ensure consistent implementation of agreed approaches.</p>

Further on-site professional development opportunities, to include the management of challenging behaviour, should be considered.

Good progress

Staff at the school, with support from Saint Michael's House, received training in the management of challenging behaviour. Three of the current teaching staff were trained as instructors in CALMS (Challenging, Aggressive Limitation and Management Systems) and more than half of SNAs have been trained in its use. Consequently, the school has assigned at least one person with CALMS training to each setting. Staff received inputs also on Positive Behaviour Support. Training courses in *Lámh* and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) have been scheduled. The school has also requested training in Contemporary Applied Behaviour Analysis from the SESS. In addition, some members of staff have attended autism-specific courses.

Summary of findings

The school has undertaken a range of measures in relation to the recommendations contained in the whole-school evaluation report published in April 2013. Most notable are the measures taken to strengthen the IEP process. The school has also made good progress in relation to securing professional development for staff in the management of challenging behaviour. There is still considerable work outstanding in relation to the implementation of the other recommendations contained in the WSE report.

Recommendations

The school's overall strategic plan requires a greater degree of detail, including the identification of specific curriculum and organisational areas for development, clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities of individuals and the establishment of specific timeframes for achievement of progress.

Greater clarity around protocols and procedures in terms of the day-to-day operation of the school is required. There is an urgent need for clarity around responsibilities for supervision of pupils and break times, and staff's understanding regarding reporting mechanisms on incidences of challenging behaviour and accidents and injuries. A review of the school's code of behaviour is also required.

It is vital that as policies, procedures and protocols are developed that they are formally ratified and signed by the board of management, their content is disseminated to all staff and they are implemented consistently.

There is need to establish a culture of instructional and distributed leadership in this school. The principal should continue to undertake regular visits of a supportive and advisory nature to all learning settings in order to ensure consistent implementation of protocols and to promote best practice. Going forward, formal regular meetings of the in-school management team and staff should be held. In addition, agendas should be devised for all meetings and circulated in advance. Minutes and decisions taken should be recorded and follow-up actions should be undertaken consistently.

It is recommended that an agreed and consistent whole-school policy on assessment should be put in place and implemented by all teachers, both in terms of the modes of assessment to be adopted and how the data derived from assessment will be used to guide pupils' learning.

Greater clarity in respect of curriculum planning, coupled with a robust monitoring and review system, is required in order to ensure appropriate continuity, progression and depth of learning across the curriculum. Curriculum plans for all curriculum areas should be devised to provide clear guidance to teachers regarding approaches and methodologies to be used and the specific content to be taught at each level.

To further enhance the quality of IEPs, more SMART targets for priority learning areas should be set and a consistent approach to the tracking of progress should be adopted by teachers.

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.