

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Special Educational Needs (SEN)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Monaghan Collegiate School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Corlatt Monaghan County Monaghan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64830E

Date of Inspection: 18-05-2017



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Special Educational Needs (SEN) under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	17 th and 18 th June 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and the special educational needs co-ordinator• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff• Interaction with special needs assistants

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Monaghan Collegiate School is a co-educational fee-charging school with a current enrolment of 254: 128 boys and 126 girls. The school has a protestant ethos which promotes inclusion and care for its students. A compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and access to the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are available in addition to the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning was good overall; this ranged from satisfactory to very good in the lessons observed.
- In the majority of lessons, there was potential to engage students more dynamically in their learning through the further use of active learning methodologies.
- Provision for students with SEN was satisfactory; the school plans to develop current structures in view of the new resource allocation model.
- The majority of teachers are timetabled to provide some support for students with SEN; however, teachers often use this time to provide additional teaching to whole-class groups, without a specific focus on the identified priority learning needs of students with SEN.
- At the time of inspection, planning for SEN was satisfactory overall with scope for the allocated resources to be used more effectively to support students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Approaches that promote active participation in learning for all, including students with SEN, should be identified and implemented on a whole-school level.
- The Circular 14/17 and the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* should be used to inform a review of provision.
- A smaller core team of teachers for SEN, who have the necessary experience and ongoing access to continuing professional development (CPD), should be developed to support the diverse needs of students.
- Subject teachers should plan more effectively for the needs of students with SEN in their classes and should ascertain the most suitable approaches to meet identified needs.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall teaching and learning was good; this ranged from satisfactory to very good in lessons observed. In the majority of lessons, the specific needs of students with SEN were not targeted effectively. Teachers should plan to meet the identified priority needs of students and develop classroom strategies that support diverse needs across lessons.
- In one very good lesson, the students were observed to be self-motivated, deeply engaged in the learning activities and to be enjoying their learning. Dynamic teaching and a high expectation of the students to take responsibility for their own learning were balanced with a responsive approach to support. Students worked co-operatively and purposefully in groups. All of these factors resulted in a truly inclusive lesson.
- Students were seated in rows in most lessons and this did not support meaningful interactions between students. In one lesson, students sat at rows of computers, although the computers were not used, and this contributed to passive engagement with learning. Consideration should be given to re-arranging classroom seating, where possible, to support more active student engagement.
- The majority of observed lessons progressed at a pace that was too fast and this inhibited deep and meaningful interrogation of the intended learning objectives, especially for students with additional needs. An appropriate pace should be used in all lessons which allows students to engage fully with the key learning.
- Most lessons began with clearly stated learning intentions. However, all observed lessons were of thirty minutes' duration and this was not sufficient for completion of the intended work. The time taken to review and reinforce learning at the end of lessons was inadequate and this limited opportunities for adequate assessment of learning. The school is introducing longer lesson periods in the coming year in preparation for changes to the Junior Cycle. Teachers should examine how learning could be optimised for all in longer lessons.
- Good use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in more than half of lessons. This was found to be most effective for students with SEN in two lessons where presentation slides had clear, uncluttered text and images or audio-visual content to supplement teaching.
- Very good planning was evident in one small group lesson with two students. Although the focus was on revision of previous learning, very good preparation was evident in the range of strategies used by the teacher including very good use of ICT to promote thinking and active engagement. Students' individual needs were carefully taken into account in preparing the lesson.

2. SEN PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for students with SEN is good. The school has an inclusive ethos and is committed to including students with a wide range of learning needs as evidenced by the range of needs across the school. The school is small and relationships between staff and students were observed to be warm and collegial.
- Provision for students with SEN is satisfactory; senior management indicated that they are committed to developing this in view of the new resource allocation model. The current use of resources within the school provides for the creation of smaller or supplementary classes for all students and not just those with SEN; this is not the most effective use of the teaching

allocation for students with SEN. Circular 14/17 and the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* should be used to inform a review of provision.

- A suitably qualified co-ordinator for SEN works closely with senior management in the development of the programme for SEN provision. To facilitate timetabling, the majority of teachers are scheduled to provide some support to students with additional needs. A smaller core team of teachers with a developed understanding of SEN should work together to plan for and address the particular needs of students. The CPD requirements of the team should be identified and teachers should be supported to develop skills in the area of SEN. This team should also provide guidance to colleagues to ensure that diverse learning needs are met effectively across all lessons.
- The SEN allocation is not all used for its intended purpose. Some of the resources for students with SEN are being used to supplement provision for the mainstream cohort. In two lessons observed, SEN hours were used to provide revision of previous learning with an exam focus for a first-year and a third-year group; the students with SEN did not receive targeted support in these particular lessons. The SEN allocation should be used in its entirety to meet the needs of SEN students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation for SEN is satisfactory overall with some elements of good practice. Planning for targeting students' priority needs is not as effective as it should be. Careful identification of needs should guide the school in optimising learning for students with SEN through in-class support, co-operative teaching, and small-group or one-to-one interventions, as appropriate.
- The *Continuum of Support* framework was used to identify support needs. Information relating to individual students' strengths and needs was provided to teachers to support them in differentiating teaching for the diverse needs in the classroom. However, while individual teachers' general planning for lessons was good overall, planning to meet the breadth of individual needs in classes was not evident in the majority of lessons; students with SEN were observed to disengage in a small number of instances. A school SEN provision plan should be developed that clearly outlines how students will be supported on a whole-school and individual classroom basis. The plan should outline how group and individual needs will be met and should demonstrate clearly that students with the greatest level of need receive the highest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.
- Planning for the transition of students from primary school to the Monaghan Collegiate School was good with significant liaison occurring between this school and feeder schools and engagement with parents and students.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the SEN co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

All arrangements for SEN provision by the school are a genuine attempt to promote inclusion and meet the needs of our students according to our resources as outlined in the new allocation model.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

1. Active participation – A review of the work on Assessment for Learning will take place and full involvement with the Junior Certificate CPD should embed the concepts of active participation.
2. Circular 0014/17 will be fully considered in all SEN provision.
3. A smaller core team of teachers for SEN – The school will work towards this as soon as possible. A small SEN planning team with the constraints of a small school setting will be established as soon as possible.

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 the school's provision of 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;