An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Special Educational Needs (SEN)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Grange Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Grange Abbey Road Donaghmede Dublin 13
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70020B

Date of Inspection: 13-09-2017

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. Teaching, learning 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; a response was not received from the board.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	12 and 13 September 2017
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods • Examination of students' work • Interaction with special needs assistants (SNAs) • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Grange Community College is a co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 213: 136 boys and 77 girls. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Programme (DEIS). The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes and a compulsory Transition Year are provided for students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Teaching and learning was good overall; this ranged from satisfactory to very good over the lessons observed.
- Highly effective practice was noted in one lesson for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- In the majority of lessons there was scope to use teaching strategies that promote greater active engagement in learning and differentiation for all students.
- Overall planning to meet the diverse learning needs of students is an area for improvement.
- Co-ordinators for SEN and ASD are in place; however, a core team of teachers with the necessary skills to support provision for SEN is yet to be established.
- Very good-quality care supports are provided for students.

Recommendations

- Further whole-school continuing professional development (CPD) that supports individual teachers to meet the diverse range of students' needs should be provided.
- Effective practices and skills currently in place in the school should be shared systemically with colleagues.
- All lessons should include a range of strategies to improve the quality of student engagement and to ensure that students' learning needs are met effectively.
- School management should re-examine how the *Continuum of Support* framework is used to support planning for SEN, and should balance maximum inclusion for students with skilled interventions, where appropriate.
- A core team of teachers with the necessary expertise should be developed so that optimum supports are provided for students with complex and/or enduring needs.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT**
   - The quality of teaching was good overall; this ranged from satisfactory to very good across the lessons observed. In one lesson, with a group of students with ASD, learning was supported through the use of visuals and carefully considered strategies for checking understanding and for student self-assessment. The very successful elements of this lesson should be shared across the school.

   - A range of lessons was observed including small-group learning support, co-operative teaching, and whole-class instruction. In response to the revised model for allocating SEN teaching resources, the school is working towards the greater use of co-operative teaching. It is commendable that CPD is being provided to support teachers in this area. Teachers should work collectively to develop their practice, in order to maximise the impact of this model of support.

   - In the majority of lessons there was scope to increase the level of students' active participation. In the lessons where there was a high level of active engagement, there was a good balance between the teacher and student voice, students worked in pairs or groups to discuss or debate topics and a variety of appropriate teaching strategies was used to support learning.

   - On a whole-school level, teachers have produced a chart for classrooms *'10 Steps Towards a Positive Learning Environment'*. Therein, the importance of identifying and stating clear learning intentions was identified as a key strategy for effective teaching and learning. However, in practice, most lessons did not begin with clarity regarding the intentions for learning. Teachers should revise the agreed procedures and embed this practice in lessons.

   - Interactions between teachers and students were observed to be respectful and positive and students' behaviour was commendable throughout the evaluation.

   - Assessment of learning within lessons was satisfactory overall, with one lesson having very good strategies in place. In the most effective lesson, the teacher used a range of measures such as student self-check sheets, individual whiteboards, *traffic-lights,* and skilled questioning. However, there was scope for better assessment of learning in the majority of lessons. Teachers should work together to share, agree and implement effective assessment practices.

2. **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**
   - Whole-school support for students with SEN is good. All students are enabled to access a broad and balanced curriculum and students with SEN are placed in mixed-ability classes in the junior cycle. In addition to general provision, students with ASD can access high-quality support for learning and Junior Certificate Level 2 Learning Programmes, if appropriate.
   - Senior management shows commitment to developing the teaching and learning for students with SEN and they have a good awareness of the needs of the students. Commendably, SEN is on the agenda for every staff meeting.
   - Information about students' progress comprises data from standardised tests, examination results, and in-school assessment across subjects. However, the data is not used to track the effectiveness of specific interventions for students with SEN. Effective measuring of baseline performance and identification of strengths and needs should be used to establish specific, time-bound targets for learning. A review of these targets should inform and improve future planning.

- Co-ordinators for SEN and ASD are in place to support the organisation of resources and students' learning. Both co-ordinators liaise with management, teachers and the care team. However, their work is largely separate. It is recommended that planning for all students who require support is considered in a more unified way to allow for greater sharing of expertise.
- A core team of teachers with the necessary experience and relevant expertise in SEN is not in place. This impacts negatively on the provision of effective, targeted learning support interventions. Management should address this issue and ensure that the necessary expertise is available, particularly for students with more complex learning needs.
- Teachers demonstrated commitment to improving practice through their openness to feedback. Staff are supported to engage with CPD for SEN; however, further work is required at a whole-school level and at individual teacher level to ensure that the needs of students with SEN are met more effectively.
- The school provides very good-quality care support for students. The management team, co-ordinators, guidance counsellors, teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff work together to create a nurturing environment for students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning for students with ASD is of a very high standard. The quality of planning for students with SEN other than ASD is satisfactory. To improve the quality of planning for SEN, the documentation should outline how students will have their needs met, by whom and how the effectiveness of supports over time will be measured.

- Using the *Continuum of Support* framework, the school has categorised almost one-third of the entire student cohort as requiring teaching and support beyond that which is provided by effective mainstream teaching. This categorisation is inaccurate and has the potential to negatively impact effective and inclusive planning. It is recommended that the school undertake an evidence-based review of the students' needs in order to identify those who require focussed interventions, and also to identify and address barriers to inclusion in mainstream lessons.

- The co-ordinators for SEN and ASD are at the core of planning activities for students with additional needs. Both are provided with six hours per week for this work. This is a significant amount of time to plan for the number of students in the school and the arrangement should be reviewed periodically to allow for the maximum teaching time possible.

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

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 of 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 *very good* 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;