Subject Inspection in Special Educational Needs (SEN)

REPORT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Beaufort College</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Trim Road</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Navan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Meath</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>72010I</td>
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Date of Inspection: 20-09-2017
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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>19 and 20 2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and key staff</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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School context
Beaufort College, Navan, is a co-educational school with an enrolment of 466 students: 344 boys and 122 girls. The school offers the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) in addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes. At the time of the visit, the school was in a phase of transition as new school buildings were being completed.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings
- The quality of the teaching and learning was good overall, with a minority of lessons observed as being of satisfactory quality.
- Commendably, co-operative teaching has been identified as a key strategy for meeting the needs of students with SEN; the effectiveness of this strategy varied from satisfactory to good.
- Teachers’ planning and practice for differentiation ranged from satisfactory to good; further strategies are needed to meet the range of students’ identified needs.
- Whole-school support for students with SEN is good; a core SEN team of three teachers is in place and a new SEN suite is being completed as part of an expansion development.
- Currently, students with SEN and students with English as an additional language (EAL), who have an exemption from Irish, receive support together in large-group SEN support lessons; this type of support is not sufficiently differentiated for the needs of the learners.

Recommendations
- Further whole-school planning for co-operative teaching should take place to maximise the effectiveness of this approach.
- How best to meet the diverse range of needs of students in mainstream and SEN support lessons should be a priority focus for further whole-school improvement work.
- Where students receive support outside of mainstream lessons, is recommended that small groups be organised to provide targeted interventions based on the common or individual needs of students.
1. **TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT**

- The quality of teaching and learning for students with SEN was found to be good overall with a minority of lessons observed being of a satisfactory quality. A range of lessons was observed including SEN support lessons and mainstream class instruction. The majority of lessons involved co-operative teaching.

- It is commendable that the school has identified co-operative teaching as a key strategy for meeting the needs of students with SEN. Teachers were observed to work together in five lessons with varying degrees of effectiveness; lesson quality ranged from satisfactory to good. There is scope to further develop this method of providing support to maximise its impact on learning.

- Teachers’ planning for differentiation within lessons ranged from satisfactory to good. Where effective practice was observed, teachers had planned for the diverse needs in the classroom and teaching approaches and methodologies were selected to facilitate meaningful learning. Overall, this is an area that should be prioritised for further development.

- Good use was made of pair and group work in the majority of lessons. In these lessons, students with SEN participated and engaged fully, and were active in their learning. This strategy, and other approaches that promote active engagement in learning, should be further embedded into teachers’ practice across all lessons.

- In most lessons, there was scope to increase expectations for students’ learning. There is a need to examine how students can best be supported within lessons whilst being given opportunities for learning that are sufficiently challenging. Focus should now be placed on ensuring that teachers’ planning and practice better reflects the individual learning needs of students. Higher expectations for student achievement, commensurate with their ability, should be maintained.

- The quality of assessment ranged from satisfactory to good. In most lessons, success criteria were identified although some of the lessons would have benefitted from an evaluation element to enable teachers and students to assess learning outcomes. Additionally, in some lessons, there was a need to include recapitulation to consolidate learning. These elements of good practice should be included in all lessons.

- Relationships were observed to be warm and respectful and a good level of student behaviour was evident.

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. Very inclusive enrolment practice is evident; the school enrols learners with a wide range of needs.

- Important information regarding ability and attainment is gathered from standardised tests, examination results and assessment of students’ progress across subjects. The school should track the progress of students with SEN specifically in order to self-evaluate the overall effectiveness of SEN provision.

- A core SEN team of three teachers works hard to support students with additional needs. It is very good that two members of the team have qualifications in the area of SEN and that
another intends to undertake SEN-related study in the coming year. The SEN team should continue to develop and share its expertise in order to build capacity throughout the school.

- Students with SEN and those with English as an additional language (EAL) needs who have exemption from Irish receive instruction together in large-group learning-support lessons. It is recommended that smaller groups be organised to provide targeted interventions based on the common or individual learning needs of students.

- All staff are supported to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) for SEN at both an individual and whole-school level. At a whole-school level, workshops on differentiation have taken place. An audit of teacher CPD requirements should be carried out to identify priority needs and fill gaps where necessary.

- The school provides very good-quality care for students. The care team, SEN team, school management, teachers, and special-needs assistants work well together to provide supports to students. Students’ transitions are managed in a supportive way. There is also a behaviour support class and restorative practices are used to assist students in taking responsibility for their actions. Initiatives such as the breakfast club provide additional support to some students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, planning and preparation for students with SEN is good with some elements requiring improvement.

- Senior management is keen to develop the effectiveness of teaching and learning for students with additional needs. SEN is on the agenda for every staff meeting. The principal is coordinating SEN provision currently. It is recommended that the leadership for SEN provision be distributed further in the future.

- There is scope for improvement in terms of the timetabling of supports so that students’ needs are met in more focused manner, and to ensure that those with the greatest level of need have further access to the most skilled SEN teaching.

- Approximately one-third of teachers are timetabled to provide SEN support. Most of the teachers provide the support through co-operative teaching. Based on lessons observed, the role of the second teacher needs to be developed to optimise the benefit of this way of working to students with SEN.

- The school is beginning to develop the way in which it uses resources in compliance with Circular 0014/2017. A new suite of purpose-built rooms will be available shortly to enhance provision for students with SEN. This is an opportune time for the school to reflect on how the new environment can be used to enhance learning.

- The three SEN team members are timetabled a significant amount of time for planning and preparation. In implementing the new model for provision, the school is investing time in activities such as developing student support files. It is recommended that the school continue to review the amount of time for planning activities to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between teaching time and planning time.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and deputy principal 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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<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 <strong>very good</strong> 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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