

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Special Education  
REPORT**

**Mount Seskin Community College  
Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24  
Roll number: 70141N**

**Date of inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	<b>1 and 2 December 2015</b>
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of relevant policies and documents</li> <li>• Discussion with Principal, Special Educational Needs (SEN) co-ordinator and SEN team, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) co-ordinator and Librarian, and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning in eight learning settings.</li> <li>• Interaction with students and examination of written and project work.</li> <li>• Feedback to principal, SEN co-ordinator, SEN team, and the Behaviour for Learning teacher.</li> </ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching was of a very high standard, and lessons observed were structured and purposeful, and effectively differentiated.
- Well-embedded team-teaching practices were a feature of the inclusive support model, and JCSP supports are well-utilised to enhance students' literacy and social skills.
- The principal demonstrated very high levels of commitment to the provision of good quality inclusive education, and a whole-school commitment to inclusion was evident in policy, school culture, and teaching practices.
- Priority SEN timetabling ensures that a core team of appropriately qualified teachers provides most of the support teaching, and all students have access to all subjects and curricular programmes.
- Strong links with the local primary school and a commendable highly collaborative transfer programme assist the induction and orientation of incoming students and their parents.
- The SEN coordinator and team have implemented a flexible and appropriate range of good quality supports to meet the diverse needs of students with SEN, and the development of a whole-school collaborative planning template would support the process of target setting in Individual Learning and Support Plans (ILSP), and the monitoring of attainment.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To complement the very good teaching practices observed, teachers are advised to share with students the intended learning outcomes in lessons, and to evaluate with the students at the end of lessons the extent to which outcomes have been achieved.
- The SEN team is recommended to develop a whole-school collaborative planning template to support the setting and recording of specific targets in ILSPs, and to facilitate monitoring of progress and attainment, and the more effective dissemination of prioritised targets to all subject teachers.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mount Seskin Community College is an inclusive school with an enrolment of 315 students. The school operates under the auspices of the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board (DDLETB), and has Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) status. The college offers a range of curricular programmes, and a Level 2 FETAC programme. An evaluation of special education provision was conducted over a period of two days during which teaching and learning were observed in eight learning settings.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching was very good, with targeted individual support and a positive, encouraging atmosphere in every learning setting visited. Teachers utilised a range of methodologies to promote good learning, including collaborative and active learning, and appropriate scaffolding and differentiation. To complement these good practices teachers are advised to share intended learning outcomes with students, and to evaluate with the students at the end of lessons the extent to which learning outcomes have been achieved.
- Team-teaching practices were a well-embedded feature of the inclusive support model currently in use in the mixed-ability class groupings, and partners worked very well together, using different team-teaching configurations.
- Teachers displayed a great awareness of students' diverse needs, learning difficulties, and of their strengths. Teachers' assistance was balanced with opportunities for independent work. Teachers facilitated engagement in pair and group tasks as part of lessons.
- In the special class setting, teachers made learning meaningful for the students through use of real-life resources, teacher-designed differentiated tasks and work sheets, and by explicitly linking learning to the life experiences of the students.
- Whole-school literacy initiatives are embedded in lessons, and JCSP supports are well-utilised to enhance students' literacy skills. Attention focuses on clear explanations and use of subject specific vocabulary, and multiple meaning vocabulary. Students' reading for enjoyment is very successfully fostered, and commendable emphasis is placed on students' oral presentation of their completed projects.
- Students with SEN were well supported through the creation of a positive learning environment, affirming interactions with teachers and good quality individualised support. Written work and project work were well presented and carefully monitored. Very good quality structured feedback was provided to students on how to develop and improve their projects and presentations.
- The SNAs have clearly defined roles, which they carry out to a very high standard. All SNAs demonstrated commitment and flexibility. They very competently supported the students.

## **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Subject provision and whole-school support was very good. The principal demonstrated high levels of commitment to the provision of good quality inclusive education, and a whole-school commitment to inclusion is evident in policy and practice.
- The SEN co-ordinator actively facilitates the sharing of information and good practices, ably supported by a very diligent and dedicated SEN team. The team has implemented a flexible range of good quality child-centred supports, aimed at meeting the identified needs of students.
- Priority SEN timetabling ensures that a core team of appropriately qualified teachers provides most of the support. Continuing professional development in the area of special education is encouraged and facilitated by the principal, and supported by the DDLETB. Collaboration between the SEN team, the behaviour support teacher, subject teachers, JCSP co-ordinator, and librarian is of a very high standard.
- Student placement is within mixed-ability classes, with additional team-teaching support. This is highly commended. Full access to curriculum and course levels is provided for students with SEN. Reasonable accommodation for certificate examinations is provided.
- Incoming students are well-supported through the highly collaborative and well-established transfer programme. Very good quality individualised induction for students with SEN is provided. SEN supports are informed by transfer information, school based assessments, information from subject teachers, and report recommendations.
- Base line data in relation to students' attainment in literacy and numeracy have been established. Effective whole-school summative and formative assessment practices are in place and are regularly reviewed.
- The school has one sanctioned special class for students with moderate learning difficulties. Plans to provide a new classroom for them and for a special class for students with autistic spectrum disorders are underway.
- The school has the capacity to reflect, self-monitor and self-evaluate, and to implement strategies to meet the diverse and changing needs of students, year by year. This was demonstrated by its flexible and holistic approach to provision, and the capability of the SEN team to begin to respond effectively and efficiently to the inspection recommendations during the evaluation process.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of planning and preparation carried out by the SEN team is high. Planning and record keeping correctly focused on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills, and on their individual social, behavioural and care needs.
- Highly commended behaviour plans are in place for students who require them. Subject teachers are included in a consultative and collaborative planning process, and their observations and feedback are recorded and collated. Information is effectively utilised to inform the process of target-setting.
- ILSPs have been drawn up for students with SEN. These learning plans should include agreed prioritised assessable targets. To facilitate this, the SEN team should develop a

whole-school collaborative planning template to further support the setting and recording of specific targets in ILSPs, and to facilitate effective monitoring of progression and attainment, and the dissemination of the prioritised targets to all subject teachers

- The school's three-year DEIS plan sets out targets in relation to improving attendance, school completion, and the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. It is notable that student attendance which was identified as an issue, has now improved, through raising student awareness of their own attendance records, and encouraging, celebrating and rewarding good attendance.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, SEN coordinator and team, and NBSS teacher. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board notes the overall positive observations made by the Inspector in terms of SEN provision in the school and believes that the report represents a comprehensive insight into the school's approach to including students with SEN into the school.

The Board accepts the recommendations contained within the report and views them as constructive actions that will further enhance SEN provision in the school.

## **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. Sharing and evaluation of Learning Outcomes with Students

Time will be given at a staff meeting in the current school year during which the teaching staff will engage in work around this recommendation. The NCCA *Focus on Learning materials for Workshop 1 Learning Intentions and Success Criteria* will provide the framework for this piece of work.

### 2. Development of whole-school collaborative planning template

The SEN Department have developed and refined a new template for our ILSPs in light of the recommendation by the Inspectorate in order to facilitate the monitoring, progress and attainment of our SEN students. We appreciate the guidance of the Inspectorate on this.