An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Inspection of Special Educational Needs
REPORT

Gorey Community School
Gorey, County Wexford
Roll number: 91492N

Date of inspection: 10 December 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

<table>
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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>9 and 10 December 2011</th>
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| **Inspection activities undertaken** | **• Observation of teaching and learning in fourteen class periods**
| • Review of relevant documents | • Examination of students’ work |
| • Discussions with principal, teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) | • Feedback to principal and teachers |
| • Interaction with students | |

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Whole-school policies and practices offer a broad and balanced curriculum for all students while remaining responsive to individual needs.
- The school successfully operates a variety of support models for students with special educational needs (SEN).
- The school is committed to providing an inclusive education for all.
- The school maintains effective cultures of teamwork and reflection with regards to planning and preparation for students with SEN.
- The school has the capacity to self-monitor and evaluate its many inclusive practices; engagement with the National Council for Special Education’s *Inclusive Education Framework* would guide this process.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the school develop whole-school policies on literacy, numeracy, assessment, and the support of gifted and talented students.
- There is scope for development in the individual planning process for students with low-incidence disabilities.
INTRODUCTION
Gorey Community School has an enrolment of over 1500 students with diverse needs. The school has hosted an autism unit since 2008. Most of the students are successfully integrated with their peers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
- Observed teaching ranged from good to excellent. Teachers demonstrated a real awareness of individual student needs. There was a positive working atmosphere in every classroom. Evidence of learning was obvious in oral responses and the collated work of students.
- Lessons were organised and purposeful. Learning outcomes were shared at the start of each lesson and often referred to at the end. Links were made with prior learning.
- Appropriate methodologies and strategies were employed including visual imagery, scaffolding, repetition, and wait time. Effective differentiation was apparent in set tasks and questioning. Additional training in the development of classroom pedagogy and planning is required to realise the full potential of the recently introduced interactive whiteboards in enhancing the learning experiences of students.
- Teachers were patient and inclusive. There was frequent use of praise as students were affirmed in their efforts and achievements. Students were confident and comfortable in asking questions and participating in learning activities. They were respectful of their teachers and appreciative of their interest and support.
- Team teaching is provided as a support in a number of classes. Its use in managing a literacy initiative for first-year students should be monitored regularly to ensure the continued best use of resources. The school should explore the use of the various formats of team teaching as alternative models of support.
- Direct instruction in literacy and numeracy, and subject support are provided on a withdrawal basis. Literacy and numeracy skill development was productively integrated into many lessons. The school is commended for initiating a range of literacy and numeracy interventions for selected groups of students. It is recommended that the school now develop policies on literacy and numeracy to document existing good practice, to guide the development of whole-school approaches, and to confirm the responsibility of each teacher in the integration of literacy and numeracy development into their subject planning and teaching.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT
- The school has developed a range of policies to guide the enrolment of and the provision for students with SEN. The policies provide useful information and promote inclusion while ensuring that individual needs are met. It is recommended that the reviewers of the SEN policy consider the benefits of creating an overarching whole-school policy on inclusion.
- The school gathers relevant information on students at entry from parents and feeder schools, and all students sit standardised tests of literacy, numeracy and cognitive ability. The school should develop a whole-school assessment policy which identifies the various purposes of and types of assessment in use. The school is also advised to review the
current tests to ensure that they are useful for monitoring student progress through the school.

- The co-ordinator of SEN efficiently fulfils her significant responsibilities in organising and monitoring the provision. She leads a team of nine appropriately qualified resource teachers. The team provides considerable support to the co-ordinator and to the staff ensuring an inclusive education is available to all. Management should investigate the use of shared folders on the school network to facilitate access to assessment results, student profiles, individual learning plans (ILPs) and other relevant information.

- The school successfully operates a variety of support models including withdrawal, support classes and team teaching. Most of the resource teaching hours are deployed appropriately to the SEN team, but other teachers are also allocated one or two lessons per week. Management should endeavour to facilitate the access of those teachers to pertinent professional development and to minimise their number.

- Fifteen qualified SNAs are sensibly and flexibly deployed to support access to the curriculum and to promote the independence of targeted students. Many students are active in extracurricular activities and many attend a lunchtime games club supervised by the SNAs.

- The school’s offering of the Junior Certificate School Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied, as well as providing modules from ASDAN and the Further Education and Training Awards Council to a limited number, affords further support for students with SEN and contributes positively to their retention and attendance.

- Academically gifted students are identified through assessment test results and psychological reports as well as by staff referral. They are supported through informal mentoring and attendance at the Centre for Talented Youth. It is recommended that the school formalise a policy and further develop practices to identify, support and monitor talented and gifted students to ensure all students achieve to their potential.

**Planning and Preparations**

- The SEN team prepares learning profiles for each student. These are accessible to all staff and no doubt contribute to overall good quality lesson planning and preparation. Support class planning is based on literacy and numeracy needs, or mainstream subject and student needs. Resource teachers also provide support in areas such as self-management, organisation, and social and life skills.

- ILPs are developed for some students with low-incidence disabilities. This process requires further development in a number of aspects including setting eligibility criteria, the writing of specific targets which are measurable, realistic and time-bound, and the involvement of mainstream teachers in identifying and supporting targets. The developed process should be outlined in the SEN policy.

- A register of students clearly documents the appropriate use of the allocated resources. Commendably, the school operates a structured process for annually reviewing and revising support including the discontinuation of support. There is also a good system of secure record-keeping within the SEN department. Resource teachers maintain monthly records of work completed.

- Transitioning to post-school placements begins in fifth year and features constructive contact with parents and potential placements plus ongoing support from the school.
• A well-resourced SEN suite features sensory, life skills and art therapy rooms, a library, classrooms and offices.

• Teachers have benefited from a range of individual and whole-school professional development opportunities. The school should consider regularly auditing staff regarding their professional needs in providing inclusive education.

• The school is fully capable of self-monitoring and evaluating and should consider engaging with the National Council for Special Education’s *Inclusive Education Framework* to guide this process.

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

*Published May 2012.*
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The SEN Department welcome the report issued from the SEN Departmental Inspection.

We are very pleased with the main findings of the report which recognises the commitment of the school in providing an Inclusive Education for all. The report recognises the quality of service provided to students with SEN so that they may reach their potential.

We acknowledge the two recommendations included in the report.

We are currently engaging with development of whole school policies and will continue to engage with these as a work in progress.

We recognise the importance of individualised planning for all our students with low incidence disabilities. We will continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to bring these plans to fruition.

We wish to thank the inspectors for their fair and balanced/thorough diligent report.