

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Special Educational Needs
REPORT

Holy Faith Secondary School
Belgrove Road, Clontarf, Dublin 3
Roll number: 60750J

Date of inspection: 18 April 2012



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 EDUCATIONAL
NEEDS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	18 and 19 April 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Discussion with special needs assistant• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 7 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the seven lessons observed was very good.
- Senior management is supportive of the special educational needs (SEN) team and is committed to providing an inclusive education for all.
- The allocated resources are used effectively for the purposes intended.
- Students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the school utilise standardised norm-referenced student assessment on entry, to target and inform whole-school policy on advancing educational achievement in all subject disciplines.
- The school has a draft special educational needs policy. When reviewed, the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved in implementing the policy, together with the role of the subject teachers in providing inclusive education, should be included.
- It is recommended that the school develop whole-school policies on homework, support of exceptionally able students, and literacy and numeracy.
- A student register should be established to track the resources provided, the personnel assigned, and the outcomes for the students.
- It is recommended that the school conduct an audit of the staff's professional development needs to support mixed-ability teaching and the full inclusion of students with special educational needs.

INTRODUCTION

Holy Faith Secondary School, a voluntary secondary Catholic school has a current enrolment of 632 girls. The school offers a broad curriculum, including the Junior Certificate programme, Transition Year (TY) programme, Leaving Certificate programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good. Seven lessons were observed over the course of the two-day inspection. They ranged in size from one-to-one withdrawal to small-group withdrawal to whole-class teaching groups, and spanned both junior and senior cycle programmes. The lessons ranged in focus from the development of literacy and numeracy skills to subject-specific assistance in Mathematics, German and English.
- Lessons were well planned and paced. Mutual respect between teachers and students was evident. Questions of lower order and higher order were used to appropriately challenge and support students.
- Some lessons began and concluded with an outline of the objectives of the lesson and the desired learning outcomes for the students. Good use of the whiteboard was evident in all lessons.
- Teacher-led discussion was the dominant methodology. The school is encouraged to explore a wider variety of teaching strategies to include graphic organisers, text highlighting and key words. Consideration should be given to how literacy and numeracy skills can be promoted in all subject lessons.
- It is recommended that an audit of staff professional development needs, to support mixed-ability teaching and the full inclusion of students with special educational needs, be undertaken. The Special Educational Support Service (www.sess.ie) may be able to support the school in facilitating professional development for all mainstream staff in these areas.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Enrolment is open to all and the school engages in a range of inclusive practices underpinned by a holistic philosophy and mission statement.
- The school has an efficient system of gathering student information through contact with the feeder primary schools, parents and external professionals. Additional testing on entry uses school-designed tests in English, Irish and Mathematics plus a measure of general cognitive ability. It is recommended that the school utilise standardised norm-referenced student assessment on entry. This information should facilitate whole-school planning and policy on advancing educational achievement in all subject disciplines.
- The allocated resources for students with special educational needs are used appropriately in a manner that supports learning and teaching. To further develop the quality of provision and whole-school support it is recommended that the school maintain a detailed register of students with special educational needs. This register should include those students in receipt of support, their learning needs, the hours allocated, the manner in which these hours are used, the teaching and non-teaching staff involved and the progress

students make. This register will serve to inform and guide all staff in their engagements with individual students.

- One fulltime special needs assistant (SNA) is appointed to the school. Her non-teaching duties and contributions are acknowledged by school staff and students.
- The school places students in mixed-ability settings in first year. All students, including those with special educational needs, have full access to all subjects and benefit from the school's practice of offering taster courses in the full range of subjects, including all options, for nine months. The first-year students in receipt of learning support may reduce their option choices in October following consultation with the parents. Ability classes are formed in Mathematics and Irish at the beginning of second year. Students who are exempt from the study of Irish are provided with support during the Irish lesson. Students in the senior cycle who require learning support but who are not exempt from the study of Irish receive support during option time or module time.
- Interventions to support identified students focus on individual needs which may be related to language, mathematics or other subjects.
- Support offered is flexible, responsive, inclusive and student-focused. It includes student withdrawal, small-group withdrawal and the creation of small classes. Support is provided to junior cycle and senior cycle students.
- There is a range of impressive co-curricular and extracurricular activities open to all which helps to promote among students, a shared sense of belonging and of being valued.
- There are three teachers involved in delivering supports to students with special educational needs. The acting co-ordinator is currently pursuing the *Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers involved in Learning Support and Special Education*. She works closely with management and colleagues of the Special Educational Needs team to ensure that procedures are implemented and regularly reviewed.
- Whilst the school is alert to a range of needs, it is recommended that any future planning and policy review should take cognisance of how best to support the needs of students who are deemed exceptionally able.
- The school has a draft special educational needs policy. As indicated at the time of the inspection, this document requires some additions. It should include the role and responsibilities of the board of management, senior management, co-ordinator, guidance counsellor, year heads, special needs assistants, parents, students and information on the role of the subject teachers in providing inclusive instruction.
- The special educational needs team is formally timetabled to meet on a weekly basis. Agendas are drawn up and minutes of all decisions taken recorded and provided to management.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The school adopts a systematic and timely approach to planning and preparing for all students who enrol in the school.
- Learning profiles detailing strengths and priority learning needs are developed for students with additional learning needs and reviewed biannually. It is recommended that the targets set are specific, measurable, realistic and time-bound.

- Subject planning and individual teacher planning and preparation attends well to students with special educational needs.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, and the SEN team 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.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board wishes to commend all staff involved with the inspection and congratulates them on the very positive report received.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

During the course of this year, the Board will address the recommendations that have not already been implemented.