

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Special Educational Needs**  
**REPORT**

**Christian Brothers' Secondary School**  
**Synge Street, Dublin 8**  
**Roll number: 60470D**

**Date of inspection: 8 March 2013**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING  
IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	7 and 8 March 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of the teaching and learning observed in eight lessons was good.
- Strategy and basic skills instruction and subject-specific support are provided through resource classes and team teaching.
- The school engages in a range of good practices to promote numeracy and literacy development and to track student progress, although the literacy policy requires further development.
- The resource teacher plays a significant administrative role in organising and co-ordinating the provision.
- Concerns raised during a recent whole-school evaluation regarding timetabling all of the allocated resource teaching hours for their intended purposes have still not been fully addressed.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Management should seek to facilitate professional development for all teachers in both teaching and classroom assessment strategies, and resource teaching to build overall capacity.
  - It is recommended that a common weekly planning and work record template be created for the use of all support teachers.
  - Management should create a core resource teaching team and ensure that all of the allocated resource hours are timetabled to provide targeted support for students with special educational needs.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

CBS Synge Street operates under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The current enrolment of 255 boys includes students from diverse backgrounds with a range of ability and needs. The school offers the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) as well as the established junior and leaving certificate programmes and participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of the teaching and learning observed in eight lessons was good with some commendable practice in place. Most teachers effectively differentiated the instruction through individualised support, the tasks they set, the questions they asked and the responses they accepted.
- Students were most engaged when teachers used active learning and co-operative learning strategies. Student engagement could be further enhanced through the judicious use of information and communication technology. Effective use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies was noted in a minority of lessons. Management should seek to facilitate whole-school professional development opportunities to ensure the employment of a wide range of teaching and classroom assessment strategies.
- Resource teaching focused on subject-specific support and on strategy and basic skill instruction. Teachers know their students well and are caring and patient in their interactions. There was good evidence of mutual respect and positive student-teacher relationships. Students responded positively when their efforts were praised.
- A recent initiative to integrate the promotion of numeracy skill development into every subject area is impressive. Significant work in designing, administering across the school and analysing the results of a criterion-referenced numeracy test has heightened awareness and driven whole-staff collaboration. In addition, good links have been made with the numeracy targets in the school's DEIS action plan.
- The development of literacy skills is being progressed through participation in a number of JCSP initiatives, a local one-book project and the renovation of the school library. A recently administered student literacy questionnaire has provided insights that could inform future planning. The existing whole-school policy on literacy requires further development particularly regarding the role of mainstream teachers in embedding literacy instruction into their subject teaching.
- The school has established good protocols in retesting and tracking student progress in both literacy and numeracy. However, it is advised that standard rather than age-related scores be used to facilitate comparisons between measured cognitive ability and attainment results.
- There is variation in how teachers keep records. It is recommended that a common weekly planning and work record template be created for resource teachers. The completed templates should be placed in each student's file as a record of achievement at the end of each week.

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

- The provision features individual and small-group withdrawal and team teaching. Team teaching is used successfully for classroom management and to provide individual support in mainstream classes. The school's recent move to mixed ability classes and the provision of the JCSP across the school should benefit all students.
- A resource teacher with a relevant post-graduate qualification plays a significant administrative role in organising and co-ordinating the provision for students with special educational needs or requiring learning support.
- The school has the services of a behaviour-for-learning (BfL) programme teacher who is supported by the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS). This teacher diligently creates and oversees the implementation of individual behaviour plans for a number of students and capably provides individualised behaviour therapy and literacy tuition.
- A care team which includes the resource teacher, the BfL teacher, the guidance counsellor, the school completion officer and the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator meets weekly with the senior management team. This is good practice
- The school acknowledges the need to build the school's capacity regarding resource teaching and has undertaken to do so. Efforts should be made to facilitate professional development in this area and to assemble a core resource teaching team during the next academic year. It is welcome therefore that the school proposes that the resource teacher, the BfL teacher and the JCSP co-ordinator meet and collaborate regularly from September.
- Concerns raised during a recent whole-school evaluation regarding timetabling all of the allocated resource teaching hours for their intended purposes have not been fully addressed. The school is experiencing significant challenges in maintaining a full curriculum for all students, but this cannot be remedied through the inappropriate use of resource hours. This situation must be addressed in the next academic year.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The resource teacher co-ordinates the collation of pertinent information on students and has created a range of useful templates that facilitate the identification of student needs and relevant learning and behaviour targets. The resource teacher effectively supports teacher planning by listing individualised support strategies for mainstream teachers to integrate into their teaching. She also creates individualised education plans with prioritised learning needs and suitable targets for her students. It is suggested that targets be reviewed each May instead of, or as well as, September.
- A document has been drafted which has the elements of both an overall school policy and an annual work plan. The separation of these two aspects into two documents is advised. The administrative role of the resource teacher should be agreed with management and detailed in the policy document as should the role and responsibilities of other personnel including senior management, mainstream teachers and teachers who are allocated resource teaching hours.
- Teachers allocated resource teaching hours plan their work using the information and suggestions proffered by the resource teacher and in consultation with the students and

their subject teachers. Teachers should also consult the *Guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities* (NCCA, 2007) to inform their planning.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and resource teacher 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; a response was not received from the board.

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