

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

**Subject Inspection of Special Education**  
**REPORT**

**St Kevin's Community College**  
**Fonthill Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22**

**Roll number: 70042L**

**Date of inspection: 1 May 2013**



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

**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>30 April and 1 May 2013</b>
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of relevant policies and documents</li> <li>• Discussion with the principal, the special educational needs (SEN) coordinator, the National Behaviour Support Services (NBSS) teacher, the care team and the special needs assistants (SNA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning during nine class periods</li> <li>• Interaction with students</li> <li>• Feedback to the principal, the deputy principal, the SEN coordinator and the NBSS teacher.</li> </ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Well developed team-teaching practices and effective differentiation strategies are a feature of the support model in use in special classes.
- Whole-school literacy initiatives are embedded in all classroom and support practices.
- The school's commitment to inclusion, evident in every aspect of school policy and culture, is highly commended.
- Collaboration between the SEN team, the literacy link teacher and the student support team facilitates the planning and provision of a high quality holistic support model for students.
- The SEN coordinator and team members have developed a flexible range of good quality supports to meet the diverse needs of students with special educational needs.
- A comprehensive transfer programme assists the induction and orientation of incoming students and their parents.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To enhance learning opportunities, it is recommended that teachers facilitate regular student participation in collaborative and active learning tasks during lessons.
- In line with best practice, the school should include parents of students with low incidence special educational needs in individual education planning and review meetings.

## **INTRODUCTION**

St Kevin's Community College is an inclusive school with an enrolment of 319 students. The college operates under the auspices of the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and has Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) status. The college offers Junior Certificate (JC), Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year programme (TY), Leaving Certificate (LC), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). An evaluation of special education provision was conducted over a period of two days during which teaching and learning was observed in nine classroom and special education settings.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with targeted individual support and a positive, encouraging atmosphere in each classroom visited. Appropriate scaffolding and differentiation strategies were skilfully utilised by teachers, and learning objectives were shared with students in most lessons observed. To complement these good practices, teachers are advised to consolidate learning at the end of lessons and to evaluate with the students the extent to which objectives have been achieved.
- Well developed team teaching practices are a feature of the support model currently in use in special classes. Teachers were very affirming and created a safe environment where students were well supported and encouraged to engage in whole-class discussions and to ask and answer questions. To enhance learning opportunities, it is recommended that teachers facilitate regular student participation in collaborative and active learning tasks during lessons.
- Students interacted well with teachers. They applied themselves most effectively where their interest was maintained through utilisation of a variety of resources and teaching methodologies and where teacher assistance was balanced with opportunities for independent work. They engaged in an admirable range of appropriately challenging reading and writing activities. JCSP literacy and Environmental and Social Studies projects were well presented and of a good standard.
- The school is commended for the prioritising of cross-curricular literacy. Whole-school literacy initiatives were embedded in all lessons observed. Attention to the teaching of subject and examination specific vocabulary and terminology was evident, and students were effectively supported through the use of key words notebooks, writing frames and graphic organisers. Literacy support in the JCSP library enhanced students' literacy skills and encouraged students' interest in reading.
- Good quality NBSS behaviour plans have been drawn up for students who require them. Rules and procedures are realistic and relevant. Consequences and rewards are clearly set out, and are understood and conscientiously followed by staff and students. Students are highly commended for their helpfulness and good behaviour in classrooms and on corridors during the inspection.

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

- The whole-school commitment to inclusion, which is evident in policy and culture, is highly commended. Collaboration between the SEN team, the literacy link teacher and the student support team facilitates the planning and provision of a high quality holistic

support model for students. Staff professional development is encouraged by senior management and supported by the VEC.

- A flexible range of good quality supports have been developed and implemented to meet the diverse needs of students with special educational needs. Student placement within mixed ability classes or special classes is informed by transfer information, school assessments and report recommendations. In this regard, the school is advised, where practicable, to extend the practice of mainstreaming students with special educational needs in mixed ability classes.
- Resources received through DEIS, the VEC, the JCSP and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) are combined and well utilised to develop a good quality inclusive in-class support model, with reduced pupil-teacher ratios and team teaching in special class groupings. Newcomer students are also supported through team teaching, as the school currently has no assigned language support teacher.
- All students with assessed low incidence special educational needs receive NCSE support allocations through withdrawal teaching in addition to in-class support. Reasonable accommodation for certificate examinations is provided for school and state examinations.
- Timetabling ensures that a core team of appropriately qualified teachers is enabled to provide most of the support teaching. However, where students are supported by additional teachers across a range of models, the school should be cognisant of the need for continuity of support.
- An impressive range of literacy initiatives has been developed by the school and includes a junior and senior book club, a book club for parents, group reading sessions and annual literacy award ceremonies.
- Students take part in Fun Maths and mental maths activities as part of the newly reintroduced TY programme. The school is advised to implement its whole-school cross-curricular numeracy strategy.
- The School Completion Programme is effectively utilised to encourage student attendance and retention. The reintroduction of a TY programme in 2012, to further the aim of retaining students in school and supporting their learning through provision of customised learning experiences, illustrates the laudable whole-school attention to the pastoral care and support of students.
- A team of five SNAs competently supports students with complex and multiple special needs. SNAs demonstrated commitment, flexibility and clarity in their specific roles and responsibilities.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The special education department demonstrates the capacity to plan and implement to a very high level. Planning and record keeping correctly focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, and the social, behavioural and care needs of students.
- Very good arrangements are in place to communicate the strengths and needs of students with special educational needs to teachers and SNAs. Well established communication channels ensure teachers are kept informed of approaches and methodologies suited to supporting students in classroom settings.

- Special education planning and support documents are of a very high quality. Summative and formative assessments are regularly reviewed to meet the changing needs of students. The student register, individual educational plans (IEP) and student profiles are centrally stored and available to all relevant staff members. Highly commendable NBSS behaviour plans and care plans are in place for students who require them.
- IEPs and classroom plans are of a high standard. Students help set their own specific targets and contribute to assessing their own progress. However, for students with low incidence special educational needs the school should include parents in formal IEP planning and review meetings in line with best practice.
- A comprehensive transfer programme assists the induction and orientation of incoming students and their parents. Timely liaison with, and information gathering from feeder schools, is combined with school based initial assessments to enable the provision of appropriate supports for all incoming students, and in particular for those with special or additional needs.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal, SEN coordinator and NBSS teacher. 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.

# Appendix

## School response to the report

### Submitted by the Board of Management

#### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.**

The Board would like to acknowledge the many positive comments across a wide range of areas contained in the report. In particular, the board is pleased that the inspection highlighted the high standard of teaching and learning taking place in the school. The board appreciates that the inspection acknowledged the following:

- 1 There are well developed teaching practices in the school.
- 2 That literacy initiatives are embedded in all classroom practices.
- 3 The school is committed to inclusion.
- 4 There is a high level of collaboration between the various school teaching and support teams.
- 5 There is a flexible range good quality supports to meet the diverse needs of students.
- 6 That the school has a comprehensive transfer programme.

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

- 1 Teachers will facilitate regular student participation in collaborative and active learning tasks during lessons.
- 2 The school will include parents in individual education planning and review meetings.