Inspection of Special Educational Needs Provision
REPORT

St Kevin’s Community College
Dunlavin, County Wicklow
Roll number: 70800E

Date of inspection: 30 November 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- The school has developed a flexible range of responses to advance inclusion and to meet the diversity of student needs.
- Teacher knowledge of, and care for, students is a significant school strength.
- All resources are used efficiently and effectively in response to the individual needs of the student for whom they have been allocated.
- Regular monitoring and recording of student progress provides evidence of the achievement of students with special educational needs (SEN).

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school’s policy and practices in literacy and, in particular, numeracy require development.
- It is recommended that an action plan be developed to advance team teaching as a means of in-class support.
- The school is piloting an individual education planning process but this requires further development.
INTRODUCTION

St. Kevin’s Community College is a co-educational school operating under the aegis of County Wicklow VEC (Vocational Education Committee). It has a current enrolment of 494 students including students with a range of diverse abilities and needs. The school participates in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Most of the teaching and learning was good and some was excellent. There was a good awareness of student needs and individual support was targeted effectively. Teachers were patient and inclusive.
- Lessons focused on the development of literacy or numeracy skills or subject support. Students were well behaved and co-operative. Many students were reticent to participate in class discussions and subsequently teachers were advised to promote oral (and listening) skills as part of literacy development.
- A range of co-operative learning methodologies such as think-pair-share and place mats have been successfully introduced to support inclusion in mainstream classes.
- Literacy is developed through a range of school-wide initiatives including a reading club. The school has recently renewed the development of the library but it is currently underused due to staffing issues. Attainment in literacy is monitored through an entry assessment and re-assessment in second and third year. Results should be recorded as percentile or standard scores rather than reading ages.
- The literacy and numeracy sections of the DEIS plan require further development. Targets should be rewritten to ensure that they are measurable. Consideration should be given to sub-dividing students into groups based on achievement so that separate targets can be set for each. The whole school literacy policy also requires review. This should be done in conjunction with DEIS planning.
- It is recommended that the school develop an assessment strategy for numeracy to guide the identification of students in need of interventions and to monitor progress.
- Assessment practices include monthly and end-of-term testing. JCSP (Junior Certificate School Programme) statements are used effectively. Informative biannual progress reports are issued to the parents of targeted students.
- Detailed assessment records are kept and there was good evidence of progression. Students with SEN have achieved successfully in state examinations and many have progressed to further and higher education.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school’s admission policy and enrolment practices are open and inclusive. The school has established a supportive process to ensure a positive transfer for enrolling students. All students have access to a full and balanced curriculum and are placed in mixed ability classes in the junior cycle.
- Students who would benefit from the support of the JCSP are identified on entering second year. They remain in mixed ability classes with the exception of set classes for English, Mathematics and JCSP support.
• Three appropriately-qualified teachers, one acting as co-ordinator, efficiently organise and monitor the provision and provide advice and support to the staff. They maintain collaborative links with the management, the guidance department, and parents, and with relevant external agencies.

• The policy on students with additional needs provides an accurate description of the provision and extensive information regarding the school’s many inclusive practices. The school is wisely considering engaging with the National Council for Special Education’s Inclusive Education Framework and is seeking professional development in this regard.

• Students are supported through extra literacy and numeracy classes. Those who are exempt from Irish attend small group lessons at these times. Students are also supported through awareness and differentiation in mainstream classes. The school is currently piloting team teaching to provide in-class support. It is recommended that the school devise an action plan to expand this good practice.

• The school meticulously documents the use of its allocation of teaching resources. It is clear that all targeted students are receiving support and that the hours are used for their intended purpose. A small core team of appropriately qualified teachers provides the majority of the support teaching. This is good practice.

• The homework club is prioritised for students who are underachieving and for those without sufficient home support. The club gives access to support from the co-ordinator as well as from English and mathematics teachers.

• The school’s three well-qualified SNAs are sensibly deployed in accordance with Department guidelines. They know the assigned students well and actively promote the students’ independence while supporting their access to the curriculum.

• A good range of resources has been assembled to assist teachers. An inventory of all resources contains an easy guide to their use with different year groups. A range of documentation including reports, communications, student profiles, and teaching plans are kept securely in a designated resource room.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• The school engages in a systematic, school-wide development process.

• Relevant information on individual student needs and abilities is made available to teachers to inform planning at whole-school, class and individual levels through shared folders on ePortal and regular input to staff meetings. Planning is also informed through ongoing liaisons with the students and their subject teachers.

• A variety of acceptable formats were used by teachers to plan lessons and record work completed. These formats included termly schemes of work based on the needs of a group. Teachers provide feedback each term to the co-ordinator in areas such as type of help given, the measured benefits and suggestions for next learning targets.

• The school is piloting the use of individual learning plans with a few students. While each parent has been informed of their child’s plan, the school should now consider how to more actively involve parents, and the students and their teachers in the setting and implementing of the targets. Criteria regarding which students require a plan should be set. Current targets are mainly behavioural. Consideration should be given to possible
targets in other areas such as organisation, communication and literacy, social skills, and numeracy.

- An initiative to foster a whole-school approach to subject planning has been started. There is now a good understanding of how SEN should impact on planning.
- Opportunities for relevant professional development have been embraced with the support of management and County Wicklow VEC.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the SEN co-ordinator 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 Board of Management of St. Kevin’s Community College welcomes the findings presented in this very positive report on the quality of learning and teaching in special educational needs. It is very pleased with the strengths identified, in particular, that the care of our students was recognised as a significant strength of our school and that we successfully meet the diversity of needs of our students. The Board of Management is also very happy that the very good quality of teaching and learning was recognised and affirmed.

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

The Board of Management appreciates the positive and helpful recommendations made in the report.

We will continue to develop and promote team teaching as a worthwhile method of in-class support for students through out the school.

The Board of Management is committed to further developing the school’s practices in numeracy and literacy and places strong emphasis on these policies.

We will further develop individual education planning required for students with special educational needs as resources permit, prioritizing students with the greatest needs.