

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Inspection of Special Educational Needs
REPORT**

**Christian Brothers Secondary School
St James' Street, Kilkenny
Roll number: 61550G**

Date of inspection: 13 December 2011



**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	12 and 13 December 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussions with principal, teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs)• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good.
- The school's mission statement and declared vision as well as its many practices and policies support inclusion.
- The transition process for new students and the information gathered at entry helps to identify students with additional needs and to inform planning.
- A designated co-ordinator effectively leads a core team of qualified resource teachers with the support of the management.
- Overall planning and preparation is student-centred and responsive to individual student needs.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should evolve a whole-school approach to promote the development of literacy and numeracy across the school.
 - All students should be periodically assessed in literacy and numeracy skills as part of a whole-school approach to ensure consistent progress and to inform the targeting of specific interventions.
 - It is recommended that the current individual education planning process be further developed to meet the needs of students with more complex special educational needs (SEN).
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INTRODUCTION

CBS James' Street, Kilkenny is a voluntary catholic secondary school for boys under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The school population of 661 comprises students with a range of diverse needs. The school offers the Junior Certificate, a Transition Year programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed in eight lessons was very good. Classroom practices ensured inclusion of all learners. An awareness of student abilities and needs guided the provision of individualised support.
- Lessons were well organised and purposeful. Learning outcomes were shared orally, and sometimes in writing, and often referred to at the end of the lesson. New work was suitably linked to prior learning. There was ample evidence of learning in the written work examined and in the oral responses of students.
- Teachers effectively employed a range of suitable strategies to engage students including clear instructions, key vocabulary, active learning, scaffolding, and the use of repetition and differentiated questioning.
- Each classroom maintained a positive working atmosphere. Teachers were patient and knowledgeable of student abilities and needs. Praise and affirmation were used successfully to motivate students.
- Team teaching was employed successfully in a number of mathematics classes. The school should consider further development of team teaching as an alternative model of support for students with additional needs.
- Classroom assessment practices include observation, regular testing, diagnostic teaching and formative correction.
- The school has some measures in place to promote literacy. It is recommended that the school now develop whole-school plans to promote a school-wide approach to literacy and numeracy. Amongst other things this approach should consider how the literacy and numeracy skills of all students are assessed, developed and tracked, and give guidance to teachers in promoting literacy and numeracy in their subject areas.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- A whole-school, inclusive approach is taken in support of the diverse range of learners. This is reflected in the mission and vision statements as well as in practices and policies.
- The school has established a successful transition process for new students. Information gathered at entry helps identify students with additional needs and informs planning. The effective promotion of good behaviour includes an assurance that the difficulties of students with SEN are taken into account.
- The SEN co-ordinator leads the organising and monitoring of the provision and the support for colleagues. She is ably assisted by a team of qualified resource teachers who meet weekly. Management provides positive support to the co-ordinator and the team. A strong culture of teamwork, collaboration and professional support pervades.

- A register of students clearly shows the school's allocated resource hours are being used for their intended purpose and are responsive to the individual needs of the students.
- Overall there is good deployment of staff. Appropriately qualified resource teachers provide the majority of withdrawal and support classes. In addition, a small number of other teachers furnish subject support.
- The school efficiently deploys five special needs assistants (SNAs) in line with the Department circular. They are fully cognisant of their role in supporting curriculum access while promoting independence. Their work is appreciated by all concerned.
- Staff can access a range of useful information to support their planning for, and teaching of students with SEN. With the support of management, teachers have accessed professional development in a number of relevant areas.
- Literacy, numeracy and subject support classes are provided for students who do not study Irish or a modern foreign language. Only when necessary are students withdrawn from lessons for support. The school is advised to ensure that there is no withdrawal from any Social, Personal and Health Education lessons.
- The literacy skills of students receiving support are reassessed during the junior cycle. It is recommended that this reassessment take place for all students as part of a whole-school literacy approach. This would help monitor the progress of all students and facilitate the implementation of appropriate interventions for those students who are underachieving. In support of this approach, the school is advised to select a literacy assessment which can be used throughout the school and to use percentiles or standard scores in place of reading ages to summarise and monitor reading skill development.
- A number of students attend programmes at the Centre for Talented Youth and participate in academic competitions such as the Mathematical Olympiad. The school should consider developing a policy to guide the identification, support and monitoring of all students who are exceptionally able or talented to ensure that they achieve their potential.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation were of good quality, being both student-centred and responsive to individual needs. Resource teachers complete a form for each support class twice each term which assists in evaluating the provision.
- Extensive whole-school SEN planning is conducted by the SEN team. The SEN department plan is a good source of information, advice and guidance for staff. It details the roles of the co-ordinator and the SNAs, and is reviewed every two years. The school should ensure that the date the board of management ratifies any policy is recorded and that a date for review is stated.
- The school engages successfully in an individual planning process. A team of co-ordinators prepare student profiles and teachers add objectives and strategies for their subject. This form of planning is sufficient for students with low-level targeted needs but not for the small number of students with more complex needs. For these students, it is recommended that the SEN team and subject teachers collaborate in identifying specific learning and behaviour targets that are agreed with the students and their parents. These targets can then be implemented across the whole school ensuring a consistent response from all teachers. Targets should be specific, realistic, time-bound and, most important of all, measurable.

- All subject departments are advised that their planning should provide guidance on how best to plan for students with SEN.
- Teachers issue regular reports to parents. Informal and scheduled meetings, and notes in the school journal, also provide parents with information on student progress.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and members of the SEN team at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Published May 2012.