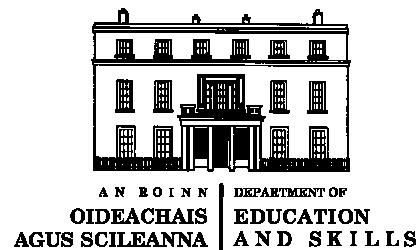


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Special Education
REPORT

Glenstal Abbey School
Murroe, County Limerick
Roll number: 64150F

Date of inspection: 5 April 2016



**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	5 & 6 April, 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, Special education Needs (SEN) co-ordinator, teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs)• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, SEN co-ordinator and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teaching and learning observed was consistently very good with many examples of excellent practice.
- Very good teacher-student rapport was evident.
- Good communication and collaboration between the SEN department, subject departments, parents/guardians, and students, is established practice in the school.
- High quality preparation and planning for SEN provision takes place.
- All students have access to a broad curriculum.
- A core team of trained teachers of SEN provide most of the additional supports, which is excellent practice.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Team-teaching should be explored and introduced.
 - Timetabling of all known additional hours should be planned for in advance, and factored into the overall timetable, at the time of its construction.
 - Formal meeting time should be timetabled for the core SEN team, to plan and coordinate SEN provision.
 - A formal system of sharing information on students with SEN should be established.
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INTRODUCTION

Glenstal Abbey School is a secondary school for boys, attached to the Benedictine monastery. This fee-paying boarding school has a current enrolment of 232 boys. Almost all students attend as seven-day boarders while a small number of students also attend as day boarders. The monks of Glenstal play a significant role in the life of the school. The school provides a broad curriculum including the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Lessons observed ranged in structure from whole-class groups to small-group withdrawal and focused on a range of areas including Mathematics, English, Chemistry and Literacy support. The model of support provided though withdrawing students from some classes, should be reflected upon. In this context, team-teaching should be explored and introduced to provide support for students with SEN who follow a full curriculum and therefore cannot be supported by being withdrawn from lessons.
- Teaching and learning was consistently very good in all lessons observed, with examples of excellent practice also evident. These included sharing learning intentions, purposeful collaborative activities which were differentiated and scaffolded, opportunities for independent student tasks to apply and consolidate their learning, and student note-making.
- Very positive teacher-student rapport was evident, and was characterised by mutual respect, good manners and appropriate use of humour. Teachers demonstrated very good knowledge of their students and of their identified needs.
- Classroom management was very good in nearly all lessons, where good routines were established. This was particularly good when students were engaged in their learning through structured and organised activities. To promote more purposeful peer-collaborative activities, the configurations of some classrooms should be re-considered.
- Assessment of learning outcomes was a clear focus in lessons, observed through peer and self-assessment and by revisiting learning intentions at the end and/or throughout lessons. Quizzes, good use of teacher questioning and hot-seating were also used to assess learning. Good procedures are in place to record and monitor student attendance and lesson content in support classes. This record should be extended to include the assessment of outcomes and student progress, which should inform future planning and target setting, to meet the needs of students with SEN.
- Lessons observed were student-centred and appropriately concentrated on the development of literacy and numeracy. Students were encouraged to help each other, to problem-solve, to think critically and to apply skills through structured extended written tasks. Subject-specific key words, terms and spellings were reinforced to positively consolidate student learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Glenstal Abbey School has high expectations of its students. It is very positive that all students have access to a broad curriculum and that most class groupings are formed on

the basis of mixed ability. The work of the SEN co-ordinator in leading and encouraging whole-school inclusive practices, supported by senior management, is very positive.

- Three teachers have specialised training in the area of SEN. It is excellent that school management encourages and facilitates teachers to undergo such training and that whole-school continuing professional development in the area of SEN inclusion and practices has been provided.
- A small core team of teachers provides most of the additional supports, particularly at junior cycle. This ensures continuity of support and optimal use of the resources, which is very good practice. The timetabling of additional supports takes place after the construction of the overall school timetable. It is recommended that planning to meet the identified needs of students takes place prior to the construction of the overall timetable and all known additional hours be included at the time of its construction, providing more continuity and less fragmentation of support for students. This should occur, particularly for senior-cycle students, whose curricular needs may have to be met by specialist subject teachers. Where possible, the students' mainstream subject teacher should provide the additional support in these instances.
- A newly built designated classroom for support lessons provides students with a very positive environment in which to learn. This is a bright, print-rich room which stores student work and materials. The resources needed to make this room an even richer learning environment should be reviewed and provided, as resources allow, and as needs emerge.
- The SEN policy is currently under review. It is recommended that this policy should be known as a whole-school inclusion policy, reflecting the very good inclusive practices of the school.
- Currently, the school does not have a formal assessment policy. Subject plans and practice observed focus well on assessment practices and procedures. It is recommended that this good practice should now be formalised and reflected in the school's assessment policy. This policy should pay due attention to how assessment in mainstream and support settings is used to inform individual student learning plans.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- High quality planning and preparation for SEN provision takes place through gathering relevant information from a variety of sources. This is very good and the data gathered is used to plan additional supports to meet the identified needs of students with SEN. It is recommended that student-support files be developed, as advised by the National Educational Psychological Service, to record and track interventions, learning plans and outcomes.
- Communication between the SEN department, parents and teachers is good and there is evidence of collaboration in devising learning plans. Mainstream teachers inform these plans through information that they gather on students and which they record on the 'continuous assessment cards'. This excellent practice monitors student progress and provides for identification of emerging needs. This should be extended, whereby, mainstream subject teachers use the key information on the learning plans to devise targets and strategies for their lessons that ensure the individual and identified needs of students with SEN are being met. A formal system of accessing and sharing information on students with SEN should be established.

- Student-support structures are strong and it is very good practice that the pastoral care team includes members of the SEN team. The work of the guidance counsellor, as part of the SEN core team, facilitates very positive support for students with SEN in the development of social, emotional and communication skills. Short interventions to develop life-skills for students identified as in need, is an excellent and flexible, student-centred use of resources. A wide range of extra-curricular activities further enhances the holistic development and experiences for students.
- Formal meeting time to plan, organise, monitor, review and record SEN provision and student progress should be timetabled for the core SEN team, within the limits of available resources. This time should allow for devising learning plans and for communication and collaboration with subject teachers. The valuable work of the SNAs should also inform this planning process.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, SEN co-ordinator and teachers 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.