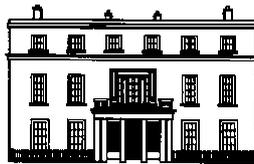


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**St Paul's Community College**  
**Browne's Road, County Waterford**  
**Roll number: 72241E**

**Date of inspection: 18 September 2012**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	17 and 18 September 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussions with principal, deputy principal teachers and special needs assistants</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of the teaching ranged from good to very good.
- The school has an open enrolment policy and provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all students.
- Staff are positive about inclusion and proactive in providing inclusive education.
- The provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) is based correctly on individual needs and remains flexible.
- Two teachers effectively co-ordinate the provision for students with SEN and lead a core teaching team.
- The school provides an autism-friendly learning environment for students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The school's literacy and numeracy policies would benefit from links with the school's DEIS Action Plan and regular review.
  - SEN team meetings should be minuted for circulation to management and relevant staff.
  - It is recommended that the policies guiding the provision for students with SEN be extended, ratified by the board of management, and reviewed regularly.
  - The school should review the assessment instruments currently in use.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

St Paul's Community College is a co-educational post-primary school operating under the patronage of Waterford Vocational Education Committee and participating in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). The student population of approximately 450 comprises students with a diverse range of abilities.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of the teaching observed in seven lessons ranged from good to very good. Teachers' knowledge of the individual needs and abilities of their students was used to good effect to provide targeted interventions as well as specific subject support.
- Resource teaching is based on identified student needs and focuses on a combination of literacy, numeracy, subject support and the development of specific social and behavioural skills. Teachers effectively used clear instructions and explanations, and repetition to ensure the students' understanding of the set tasks. An informal working atmosphere was created in each classroom through the well-structured lessons, and the very positive interactions between teachers and students.
- Mainstream lessons included all students through targeted questioning, assigned group roles, pair work, and differentiation of the curriculum and outputs. The teachers provided students with an oral overview of the intended learning outcomes for each lesson and made explicit links to the learning from previous lessons.
- A range of autism-appropriate approaches and teaching methodologies are employed in the special classes for the students with ASD. Students engage successfully with a wide range of academic subjects as well as social and personal development, and communication and life skills at levels appropriate to their abilities. Visual schedules, well-structured routines, choice, and clear explanations are all used to cope with rigidity of thought. Transitions are signalled and well-managed during the day.
- The school is to be commended for its significant efforts to progress the development of literacy and especially numeracy skills across the school through a range of co-ordinated initiatives. Practice is guided by detailed policy and planning documents developed by working groups. The policy and plans would benefit from links with the school's DEIS Action Plan and regular review.

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

- Staff are positive about inclusion and proactive in providing inclusive education. Recent advances have included the introduction of mixed-ability classes for junior cycle students and a school-wide focus on promoting differentiated instruction. Collaborative timetabling by management and the SEN co-ordinators ensures access to a full and balanced curriculum for all students. Good communication and co-operation between staff and with parents are positive features of the provision.
- Support is provided efficiently through a flexible combination of team teaching and the withdrawal of students for small group teaching. Additional support, particularly in literacy, is provided by two behaviour support teachers.
- Two well-qualified teachers work together to co-ordinate the provision for students with SEN. They meet regularly with management, the guidance counsellor and a core SEN

teaching team, and liaise frequently with Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), National Behaviour Support Service, and School Completion Programme personnel to maximise the quality of the provision. The co-ordinators were advised to minute these meetings and circulate them to management and relevant staff.

- The SEN team provides formal and informal support to the mainstream staff in their efforts to ensure inclusive classrooms throughout the school. The management and the staff are commended for participating in an impressive range of professional development opportunities that support inclusive practices.
- Special needs assistants (SNAs) are sensibly and flexibly deployed to facilitate inclusion and support curriculum access.
- The provision for students with SEN is based correctly on individual needs and remains flexible. An SEN policy guides the provision and contains useful information for the whole school community. When next reviewed, it requires further development to include the roles and responsibilities of the SEN co-ordinators, the teachers deployed with resource hours, and the subject departments.
- The school hosts a designated unit for students with ASD. The facilities are autism-friendly and well resourced with individual work spaces, group work tables, a sensory room and areas devoted to the development of independent living skills. While some direct teaching and support work takes place in these rooms, the students experience as much inclusion with their mainstream peers as is possible and practicable, in accordance with their needs. This is good practice. Teachers were advised to renew their efforts to facilitate reverse inclusion for these students.
- An ASD policy has been developed to guide the autism provision. It provides a range of useful information about the provision. It could be enhanced with guidance on the transitioning of students to post-school placements. It is recommended that the SEN and ASD policies be ratified by the board of management and reviewed regularly.
- The extensive resources available to support students include a range of information and communication technology in classrooms, a well-stocked library and a good collection of modified teaching materials.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Information from feeder schools, parents and school-based testing is gathered to inform the planning for students with SEN. The school should review the assessment instruments currently in use to ensure that they provide a maximum of purposeful information to support the school in measuring student progress.
- Consultation when the timetable is constructed ensures the appropriate use of the allocated resource hours and the continuation of a core resource-teaching team. All resource teachers develop student profiles to inform their individual and withdrawal group teaching plans. These are a useful source of information regarding the support provided and help the school to track student outcomes.
- Management encourages teachers to identify how literacy and numeracy development can be productively integrated into each subject area. Subject planning now references specific subject-relevant literacy and numeracy strategies.

- Staff in the ASD unit work collaboratively to develop individual education and behaviour support plans (IEPs). The IEPs are well informed by functional assessment instruments, professional reports, observations of students and meetings with parents, and so address each student's specific needs effectively. The IEP targets are well written and cover a range of appropriate behaviours. SNAs and mainstream staff are involved in monitoring and recording student progress.

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

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