

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Special Educational Needs
REPORT**

**Loreto College,
Swords, County Dublin
Roll number: 60810B**

Date of inspection: 10 September 2013



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

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL
NEEDS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	9 and 10 September 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal, deputy principal and special educational needs team • Discussion with Care team members • Interaction with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of teaching and learning during 8 class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with some excellent practice witnessed.
- The school's mission statement and declared vision as well as its practices and policies support inclusion.
- The school has developed a range of structures that are responsive and flexible in meeting students' needs and maximising students' strengths.
- The current range of whole-school assessment procedures, practices and strategies require formalisation.
- The transition process for new students and the information gathered at entry helps to identify students with additional needs and to inform planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- When reviewed, the roles and responsibilities of mainstream teachers, board of management and principal should be included in the special educational needs (SEN) policy.
- The school should formalise a policy and further develop practices to identify, support and monitor exceptionally able students to ensure all students achieve to their potential.
- The school should develop a whole-school assessment policy which identifies the purpose and value of all existing practices.
- In order to fully capture the inclusive nature of the practices witnessed, the school should revise the SEN section of the admission policy.

INTRODUCTION

Loreto College is an all-girls voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust Board.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good, with some excellent practice witnessed. Lessons were well organised and purposeful. The predominant teaching methodology was direct instruction with skills being taught explicitly.
- Successful differentiation to support student learning was seen in most of the lessons taught through appropriate modifications to content, delivery of instruction and assessment techniques.
- Information and instructions were simple and clear. There was an effective use of repetition to enable comprehension and to reinforce learning.
- Teachers were patient and caring. There was frequent use of praise as students were affirmed in their efforts and achievements. Students were respectful of their teachers and appreciative of their interest and support.
- Teachers' knowledge of individual students and the course content were used effectively to create positive learning environments. Best practice was observed where teachers engaged and motivated students in their learning through a combination of effective questioning, structured activities, and focused feedback.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- All students have access to a full and balanced curriculum and are placed in mixed-ability classes in the junior cycle.
- The support teaching is delivered by a core team of five teachers, one of whom acts as the co-ordinator. This is good practice. The SEN co-ordinator has the role of overseeing the organisation and monitoring of the provision. The team meets once a term. In the interests of best practice, the school is advised to facilitate more regular meetings of this team to assist collaboration, planning and evaluation
- The school has made tentative steps with regard to team-teaching, where two teachers work in the classroom at the same time. The school is encouraged to consider further development of team-teaching as an alternative model of support for students with additional needs.
- A literacy policy describes whole-school literacy practise and initiatives. Attainment in literacy is monitored through an entry assessment and re-assessment in second year to facilitate tracking progress. The school plans to advance a whole-school approach to promote the development of numeracy across the school this year.

- The school has an SEN policy which provides a good overview of the school's whole-school approach. It is recommended that on review, the roles and responsibilities of mainstream teachers, board of management and principal be identified and recorded in the policy.
- The special-needs assistant is sensibly and flexibly deployed to facilitate inclusion and support curriculum access.
- The staff's capacity to ensure inclusion and to promote differentiation continues to develop through management's supported access to a range of professional development opportunities. The school should consider regularly auditing staff needs, particularly in the wider implementation of inclusive teaching practices.
- While the school celebrates the holistic attainments of students, it does not deliberately monitor students who achieve highly on the entry assessments to ensure that they reach their potential. It is recommended that the school formalise a policy and further develop practices to identify, support and monitor exceptionally able students to ensure all students achieve to their potential.
- A dedicated resource room contains a range of appropriate learning materials with easy access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities.
- In order to build on the good practices developed for students with SEN, it is recommended that a whole-school assessment policy be developed which identifies the purpose and value of all existing practices, including how information is gathered, interpreted and used to inform learning objectives as well as reported to students, parents and teachers.
- Application for reasonable accommodations in State examinations are made on behalf of eligible students and the school endeavours to also provide these accommodations during school exams.
- The school's admission policy outlines in detail the procedures involved. However, the section in relation to SEN does not fully capture the inclusive nature of the practices witnessed. It is recommended that the school revise this section.
- The school's Code of Behaviour promotes good behaviour and identifies ways that can support positive behaviour and promote meaningful inclusion for all students.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers engage in a range of practices to plan instruction for students with additional needs. To further harmonise planning across the school, and to ensure it targets individual student need, the school should develop a planning template that allows for the recording of learning objectives and outcomes as well as noting content and learning activities. This will facilitate the tracking of student progress and act as a record of attainment to be maintained in each student's file.

- The school has engaged in the practice of individualised planning for students. In the interests of inclusive practice, the process of identifying and reviewing goals should include, where appropriate, consultation with the students and their parents as well as with relevant school personnel.
- Early and co-ordinated contact is made with the relevant primary schools and this work, combined with good relationships with personnel from external agencies, adds to the quality of planning and preparation.

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.