### REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>St Martin’s Special School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>St. John's Villas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lower Grange</td>
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<td>Waterford</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>19108B</td>
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**Date of inspection:** 15-03-2018
WHAT IS WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT
During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:
1. The quality of pupils’ learning
2. The quality of teaching
3. The quality of support for pupils’ well-being
4. The quality of leadership and management
5. The quality of school self-evaluation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum, which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school’s provision in each area. The board of management of the school 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.

CHILD PROTECTION
During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:
1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, and Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>15-03-2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>15-03-2018</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</td>
<td>• Analysis of parent and teacher questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meeting with parent representatives</td>
<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meeting with teachers</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
St. Martin’s is a co-educational special school catering for pupils with moderate, severe, and profound general learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Pupils from four to eighteen years of age attend the school. Staffing includes the principal, twelve class teachers, five part-time teachers, thirty-three special-needs assistants (SNAs) and a school nurse. Support services provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) include Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and an agency nurse. While the attendance of the sixty-six pupils is generally good, a significant number of pupils are absent for more than twenty school days for medical reasons. The pupils avail of the Department of Education and Skills funded transport. St. Martin’s is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore and the trusteeship of the Religious Sisters of Charity. In the current school year the school has moved to a new purpose-built building. School accommodation and facilities are maintained to a very high standard.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The school provides a very high quality of care and support for pupils’ well-being within a welcoming, well-designed and attractive environment.
• Teaching and learning of a high quality are evident across classrooms and there is a commendable emphasis on the promotion of language and the use of augmentative communication.
• The board of management is commended for its long-standing commitment to the development of St Martin’s School; the board, principal and staff demonstrate very high levels of commitment to the work of the school.
• The principal provides highly dedicated excellent leadership in the ongoing development of the school and is ably supported by the deputy principal and in-school management (ISM) team; although it is timely that the duties of this team be reviewed.
• The school has acquired excellent new facilities which will benefit the pupils greatly and can provide the opportunity to consolidate the primary and post-primary dimensions of the school.
• The school has engaged productively with school self-evaluation (SSE) and has school improvement plans and reports in place.
RECOMMENDATIONS

• In the context of the new school facilities, the opportunity should be taken to consolidate the primary and post-primary dimensions of the school in order to further extend agerelated activities for senior pupils, as far as practicable.

• In light of the changing organisational and curricular needs of the school, the ISM team should review its duties and meet on a more structured and regular basis.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

• Learning of a high quality is evident in classrooms across the school, with very good achievement in learning evident in a number of settings. The classrooms of the newly acquired school building are attractively presented and well organised. Pupils engage purposefully in the learning activities across the curriculum areas and their involvement is supported through well-planned individual and group activities. In the parent questionnaires almost all parents indicated that their child is doing well in school.

• Pupils’ learning in language and communication is given consistent attention in classrooms across the school. In the context of a whole-school emphasis on functional communication, pupils’ receptive and expressive language skills are carefully promoted as they are supported and enabled to communicate their needs and interests. Well-constructed activities, sensitive to the needs and interests of the pupils, facilitate their purposeful involvement in the learning tasks. Pupils are enabled to engage beneficially in a good range of songs, rhymes, circle-time, story and drama activities.

• Pupils using augmentative communication, including manual signing for people with disabilities (LÁMH) and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), have good opportunities to develop skills in the classroom and the wider school environment.

• Development of skills in reading and writing is facilitated through carefully differentiated approaches as pupils progress at their own pace. In Mathematics, pupils participate in a range of activities, suitably differentiated, and there is a good emphasis on the use of concrete materials and linking Mathematics to the environment and pupils’ experiences. Purposeful pupil involvement in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), the Visual Arts, and Music was observed. Pupils enjoy regular opportunities in Physical Education, including gross motor activities, movement to music, swimming and horse-riding.

• Information and communication technology (ICT) is widely used across classrooms to support pupils’ learning. Pupils’ access to the curriculum benefitted from the use of ICT resources, including interactive whiteboards, Big Macs, switches, Eye Gaze technology, iPads and laptops.

• For senior students, the school places a strong emphasis on the promotion of life-skills and independence. Pupils also have opportunities to pursue Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) modules in areas relevant to their learning needs, such as Home Economics. The school previously facilitated pupils in pursuing certification through the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) awards. The senior pupils participate in a range of curriculum activities, including the development of communication, language and literacy skills and gain confidence in speaking, listening, reading and writing according to their individual needs. A key aspect of the SESE and SPHE programmes is enabling pupils to access
the wider community. Pupils plan and undertake shopping trips, visit supermarkets and cafés. They practise the skills of using public transport, as independently as appropriate. They engage purposefully with the functional aspects of numeracy, with particular attention paid to the management of time and money and have good opportunities to use their skills in areas such as Home Economics, Woodwork, and Horticulture.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- A high quality of teaching is evident in classrooms across the school. Teachers undertake detailed long-term and short-term planning for their work. Teaching approaches and curriculum activities are based on the appropriate National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) guidelines for pupils with general learning disabilities. The teaching staff has participated in a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) through the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and other agencies. Teachers use an eclectic range of approaches to meet the diverse needs of their pupils. Specific programmes and strategies are employed with individual and groups of pupils. These include approaches such as the Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH), PECS, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), visual schedules, Floortime and Social Stories.

- Individualised education planning is undertaken for each pupil and members of the multidisciplinary team support this process. Pupils’ priority learning needs are identified and programmes are put in place to address specific needs. Good records are maintained of pupils’ progress. Teachers use a range of assessment tools to monitor how pupils are advancing in their learning, including the SESS Curriculum Access Tool for pupils with general learning disabilities, the Galway Checklist of Skills and the Routes for Learning materials for pupils with severe, profound and complex needs. Across the school pupils’ work is acknowledged and celebrated, particularly on occasions such as the regular school assembly.

- Commendable work has been undertaken by the school, over several years, to enable pupils in the senior classes to acquire certification of their achievements through the QQI and FETAC awards. School planning is now in hand to introduce the Junior Cycles at Levels 1 and 2 for the post-primary age pupils, facilitating their achieving of certification through the Junior Cycle programme. Transition planning is also a feature of the programme provided for pupils in their final years in St. Martin’s. The new accommodation and facilities provide an opportunity to consolidate the primary and post primary dimensions of the school in order to further extend age-related activities for the senior pupils, as far as practicable. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents indicated that teaching is good in the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS’ WELL-BEING

- The school provides a very high quality of care and support for pupils’ well-being within a welcoming, well-designed and attractive environment. Pupils’ well-being is given the highest priority and there is a commendable level of collaboration among staff in relation to the care and support provided for pupils. The school has undertaken substantial policy development and put a comprehensive range of organisational arrangements and practices in place to support the work of the staff in providing for pupils’ care and well-being. Staff are conscious of the highly complex needs of many of the pupils, including medical needs. An overriding priority is to provide a safe and secure environment for all pupils. The SNA team undertakes ongoing training in relation to the care needs of the pupils. When it arises, staff are skilled at identifying the antecedents of problematic and challenging behaviour, employing
preventative strategies and managing complex leaning environments. Specific areas of the school are designated for emotional regulation, including the multisensory room, soft play area and sensory garden. Pupils have access to purpose-built playground areas and a therapeutic swimming pool. The school has achieved the Active School flag. A cooked lunch is provided for pupils each day.

- Communication between home and school is very good. Each pupil has a home-school journal providing the opportunity for communication between parents and staff on a daily basis. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually and parents are welcome to meet staff on request when necessary. The St Martin’s website carries information on school policies and other areas of interest to parents. In light of the increasing diversity of pupils attending, the school should review policies in order to strengthen the ethos of inclusion for pupils of all denominations and backgrounds. Pupils are also actively involved in the Green Schools committee, and following on from this, the formation of a pupils’ council can provide additional opportunities for pupils to contribute their views to the life of their school community. In the parent questionnaire, almost all parents feel that their child enjoys school and that they feel safe and are well looked after and respected in school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The management and development of the school is overseen by a highly effective board of management. Board members are commended for their longstanding commitment and support of the development of the school. The principal provides highly dedicated and excellent leadership in the ongoing development of the school and is ably supported by the deputy principal and ISM team. The ISM team meets frequently to support the planning and management of the school. In the context of the changing organisational and curricular needs of the school, the ISM team should review its duties and meet on a more structured and regular basis.

- The school has developed good working relationships with the HSE, the Central Remedial Clinic and the Brothers of Charity Services. A range of health services is provided in the school building to facilitate parents and this also contributes to the co-ordination of services for pupils. The parents feel welcome in the school and in their questionnaires almost all parents indicate that overall they are happy with the school and that it is well run.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has undertaken substantial work in SSE in the areas of language, augmentative communication – LÁMH, and in numeracy and has completed school improvement plans and reports. Further engagement is planned in light of the recent resolution of the industrial issues which had stalled SSE work nationally.

CONCLUSION

- This school has very good capacity to engage in school improvement and to continue to develop. It is evident that the school leadership, management and staff members are committed to the ongoing work and development of the school in order to most effectively address the needs of the pupils and the families it serves.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

Board of Management of St. Martin’s Special School welcomes the very positive and constructive inspection report which recognises and acknowledges the following:

1. The very high quality of care and support for pupils’ well-being.
2. That teaching and learning of a high quality are evident across the classrooms.
3. That a highly effective Board of Management is in place.
4. That the Principal provides highly dedicated and excellent leadership and is ably supported by the Deputy Principal and ISM team.
5. The school has acquired excellent new facilities which will benefit the pupils greatly.

Part B   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 notes the recommendations made in the report and will continue to support the Principal and Staff in implementing the following:

1. The Principal & In School Management team are reviewing their duties in line with circular 63/2017 at structured weekly meetings;
2. Principal and staff will continue to expand the age appropriate experience of the senior post primary pupils through the Junior Cycle Programme, specialist subject areas of IT, Home Economics, Horticulture, Woodcraft, Science and Life Skills programmes.
3. Will continue to develop the new school building and facilities to enhance the learning experience.
THE INSPECTORATE’S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum, which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school’s provision of each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><em>Very good</em> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <em>outstanding</em> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><em>Good</em> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils’ learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <em>very good</em> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td><em>Fair</em> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><em>Weak</em> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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