

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St John's Special School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Youghal Road Dungarvan Co Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19282R

Date of inspection: 10-05-2018



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agus Scileanna**
Department of
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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 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.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
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, 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

Dates of inspection	10-05-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. John's Special School is situated in the town of Dungarvan in Co. Waterford. The school is under the patronage of the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The school caters for pupils with mild and moderate general learning disabilities. Some pupils have additional needs that relate to sensory and physical disabilities or to autism spectrum disorders. In recent years, the school has made provision for pupils with severe and profound general learning disabilities. There are fifty eight pupils on roll in the age range four to eighteen years. There are nine classroom teachers and sixteen special needs assistants employed in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good and their work is of a high standard.
- The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is very good with several examples of high quality practice observed; there is however, some variation in practice in the preparation of individual education support plans.
- Opportunities exist to extend pupils' learning and to advance aspects of literacy and numeracy in the teaching of certain subject areas.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good with clear educational direction provided by the principal and staff.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being in this school is very good and the management of pupils is caring, positive and consistent.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good with staff engaging very successfully with the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers are advised to develop a consistent approach to individual education planning across the school.
- In some cases, the learning activities should be scaffolded further to encourage greater participation and extended learning.
- Teachers should document how activities in co-curricular subjects can be used to further enhance pupils' learning in literacy and in numeracy.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. The pupils are happy in school and their enjoyment of learning is evident. They take pride in their work and take responsibility for improvement. The pupils and older students collaborate regularly and effectively and participate actively in lessons. Pupils demonstrate a knowledge appropriate to their stage of development and they apply this knowledge to many learning situations. The quality of their work is of a high standard and they contribute well to classroom discussion. Interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very respectful and positive. During the evaluation, the pupils were courteous and often keen to engage in conversation. The findings from the pupil questionnaires are very positive, indicating that the pupils feel safe in school and are well-supported in their learning.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is very good with several examples of high quality practice observed. The teachers have engaged in a wide range of continuous professional development opportunities and further study that is relevant to pupils' learning. They are enthusiastic and create inclusive, stimulating, learning environments where pupils are motivated to engage in, extend and enjoy their learning.
- All teachers prepare good quality long-term and short-term plans across the range of educational contexts. They identify clear learning objectives that are contextualised to pupil' learning needs. Learning tasks are manageable and structured to enable pupils to achieve success. In most lessons observed, teachers adopt a gradual and systematic approach, building on the pupils' existing understanding, moving from the concrete, to the pictorial, to the abstract. In some cases, the learning activity should be scaffolded further to encourage greater participation and extended learning, taking account of pupils' cognitive ability and preferred learning styles.
- A range of resources is prepared thoroughly by teachers to complement thematic lesson activity. This very good practice should now be captured and serve as a whole-school resource for teaching and learning. For the older pupils, the teachers have introduced the Junior Cycle Level 2 programme, leading to suitable accreditation. In some cases, closer consideration should be given to ensuring that pupils access all strands of the *Primary School Curriculum*, including the Arts. The school has introduced a range of multi-sensory, activity-based curriculum activities such as Home Economics, Woodwork and Horticulture. It is recommended that the teachers document how these activities can be used to further enhance pupils' learning in literacy and in numeracy. The teachers' responses to questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, were very positive.
- Teachers prepare good quality education support plans. These plans focus on improving communication, social skills, behaviour and aspects of literacy and numeracy. To build on established good practice, teachers are advised to consult the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) *A Continuum of Support* and develop a consistent approach to individual education planning. These support plans should provide a summary of advice from relevant professionals. Priority learning needs should be identified and documented in advance of setting targets and the outcomes for pupils should be recorded regularly. The work of the school's support teacher, who provides particular additional supports to selected individuals and groups, is closely aligned with that of the class teachers. This involvement should also be described in pupils' support plans.

- The overall quality of assessment is very good. A range of suitable assessment approaches is used. Teachers provide pupils with constructive and supportive oral and written feedback. Video recordings could also be utilised in assessment to record progress in some settings. In a number of cases, functional assessments of behaviour are used, as appropriate, to assist in identifying triggers for particular behaviours and situations that may cause anxiety for pupils. Some pupils present with sensory difficulties; the use of functional assessment of vision and hearing should be extended to create optimum learning environments to address these needs. Assessment outcomes and information are discussed by teachers at the end of each year and used sensitively to improve the teaching and learning programmes and to inform future planning.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being in this school is very good. The school benefits from close links with a number of health service professionals and with NEPS. The school has well-developed practices at transition times. On completion of their learning in this school, students avail of adult training provided by a number of services. Individual and group success in projects is celebrated and valued. The senior pupils carry out a variety of administrative tasks in meaningful activities and related to real-life experiences. The positive supportive relationships among pupils is noteworthy.
- Home-school links are well developed. There is regular communication with parents who are very supportive of the school. The parents' consultation meetings in the development of individual education plans and the schools' open-door policy ensure a good level of parental involvement in their children's education. In responding to questionnaires, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education being provided to their children.
- The school's special needs assistants (SNA) make a valuable contribution to the care of pupils. They attend to their immediate physical needs and help pupils in successfully accessing particular activities. The approach observed in the management of pupils was caring, positive and consistent. A very effective set of strategies has been put in place to promote school attendance.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management succeeds admirably in fulfilling its duty to provide direction to the school and board members are well informed about ongoing school matters. They have considered and approved a range of policy documents. The board is commended for their support of staff's engagement in continuous professional development. It has overseen the effective development of the school's accommodation which is attractive and stimulating. The board is committed to achieving further improvements that will serve to address the pupils' needs currently and into the future.
- The principal's very effective leadership is characterised by high professional standards. She engenders an enthusiasm for teaching and learning across the school. She succeeds admirably in promoting a culture of continuous improvement. The deputy principal and in-school leadership personnel provide highly competent and dedicated support. The clear educational direction provided by the principal and the in-school leadership team is reflected in the dedication and professionalism of the entire staff. Other staff members take on key leadership roles in delivering the curriculum and in the organisation of beneficial and worthwhile activities.

- The school is well-resourced with information and communications technology (ICT) facilities. ICT is making a significant contribution to the quality of learning in several curriculum areas while allowing pupils to develop considerable confidence and skill in computer use. Consideration has been given to pupils with additional needs and augmentative communication devices have been acquired.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good. The school has engaged very successfully with the SSE process and significant work has been undertaken in the further development of literacy and numeracy with a particular emphasis on comprehension. The work to date has had a positive effect on educational provision within the school.

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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	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
Good	Good 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 very good standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair 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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak 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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

St John's Special School welcomes the positive WSE-MLL report following the recent inspection in our school.

We are very proud of our school and the quality of teaching and learning that occurs. The recognition in the report of how positive relationships between, pupils, staff, board of management, parents and the whole school community contributes to the broad learning opportunities given to our pupils is welcomed.

Area 2 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 and staff are committed to reviewing and reflecting on our practice. The findings and recommendations of this report will form part of our engagement in the school self-evaluation process.