An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Schools at High Support Units, Special Care Units, and Children Detention Centres

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Crannóg Nua School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Portrane County Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>Roll Number 20136N</td>
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Date of Inspection: 01-12-2017
WHAT IS AN EVALUATION OF SCHOOLS AT HIGH SUPPORT UNITS, SPECIAL CARE UNITS, OR CHILDREN DETENTION CENTRES?
The Inspectorate carries out a programme of annual inspections of schools at High Support Units (HSU), Special Care Units (SCU) and Children Detention Centres (CDC). Schools at HSUs are primarily for children with severe emotional and behavioural challenges and schools at SCUs cater for children who are the subject of special care orders granted by the courts. Schools at CDCs generally cater for children who have been convicted or placed on remand by the courts. However these distinctions are not absolute and most of the settings caters for children from more than one of these categories. The inspection approach used in evaluating provision in these schools is designed to address the particular circumstances in which they operate.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT
During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching and support for students
2. School organisation and management
3. School planning and 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; a response was not received from the board.
## EVALUATION OF SCHOOLS AT HIGH SUPPORT UNITS, SPECIAL CARE UNITS, OR CHILDREN DETENTION CENTRES

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection:</th>
<th>1 December 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Analysis of teacher questionnaires</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student focus-group interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>Examination of students' work</td>
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<td>Interaction with students</td>
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<td>Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Meeting with management of school and of residential centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Analysis of teacher questionnaires</td>
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### SCHOOL CONTEXT

The newly built school is located beside the specifically designed HSE Special Care Unit of Crannóg Nua, in Portrane, Co Dublin. Previously, the school catered for students from both High Support units and from non-secure high support facilities. Now the school is in transition and, in future, it is expected that students from secure settings primarily will be provided for.

At the time of the evaluation, three of the students were from a special care unit and the others were in residential care or in supported homes placement. Current enrolment is seven students and there are five teachers on staff. An additional thirty hours of teaching time for specialist subjects has also been provided by the Department of Education and Skills.

TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, acts as the school patron and the principal anticipates that the Education Training Board will assume that role in the near future. In addition to its association with residential centres, the school maintains beneficial links with the Social Work Department in TUSLA and with the Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Education and Skills.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- With the support of the board of management, the school is led very well by the principal who works in a highly committed and professional manner and a culture of strong collaboration among staff is evident.
- The school is in transition from one which once catered for students from both High Support Units as well as from non-secure facilities to a school that will provide primarily for students from secure settings; in this context, the school’s enrolment policy will require amendment/adjustment.
- The teachers have established a supportive relationship with the staff of the residential centre; the school’s responsive practice in relation to the delivery of aspects of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme in collaboration with health professionals is not yet outlined in a written whole-school policy.
- The quality of teaching observed in lessons was very good and staff members have engaged in a significant amount of continuing professional development (CPD) that is highly relevant to the context.
• The students are well cared for and complex and challenging situations are managed in a sensitive manner. However, the child protection policy should be amended to comply fully with regulations.

• The quality of the physical and material resources available in the new school is very good and these resources provide a very supportive learning environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Bearing in mind the school’s designation and its location within the care facility, the board, in collaboration with the patron and with the approval of the Department of Education and Skills, should develop its enrolment policy further in order to clearly outline who is eligible to attend the school and describe the criteria to be used when considering enrolment and admission.

• The child protection policy should be corrected to confirm that the Designated Liaison Person is a senior member of the school staff rather than a staff member of the residence.

• The teachers should explore ways in which students can work collaboratively to a greater extent on cross-curricular projects.

• The school’s practice in relation to the delivery of sensitive aspects of the SPHE programme should now be described in a written whole-school policy.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING, TEACHING AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

1.1 THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

• The quality of students’ learning is very good and their progress is carefully monitored. By their contribution to classroom discussions and as evidenced in their written work, students demonstrate that their knowledge, skills and attitudes are developing across a range of curriculum areas.

• Close attention is paid to initial assessment of students and their learning outcomes are reviewed regularly. The board of management and principal ensure the provision of a broad, and relevant curriculum that is enriched by a variety of learning opportunities. By fostering pupil’s holistic development in a respectful and caring manner, students’ behaviour is managed effectively.

• In focus group meetings, students were very positive about their experience in this school. They felt valued and reported that their opinions were listened to by the teachers. Some students indicated that they would like to be challenged more in their school work.

• Close attention is paid by teachers to monitoring the students’ progress in literacy and numeracy. Their acquisition of essential life skills including cooking is notable.

1.2 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

• The quality of teaching was very good in the lessons observed. Teachers have very good subject and pedagogical knowledge and they prepare carefully for lessons. Teaching resources in terms of physical facilities and material curriculum resources are ample.

• Teachers create orderly, student-centred learning environments. The students are treated with respect and they are well managed. Through their enthusiasm for the curriculum, the teachers motivate the students successfully to engage and enjoy their learning.
• Classroom environments are well organised, and attractive. Visual material, including pictures, and print-rich material support incidental learning. Internet access is limited to a small number of learning areas and the school management is taking steps to improve this.

• Teachers’ assessment practices are highly effective.

• In order to further enhance the high-quality teaching, teachers should explore ways in which students can work collaboratively to a greater extent on cross-curricular projects.

1.3 THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

• The quality of support for students is highly commendable. The teachers respond to students’ individual learning needs and they differentiate teaching and learning activities as necessary. The daily time-table is managed sensitively to take into account the immediate needs of students.

• The principal and the director of residential care attest to a high level of co-operation between the school and the residence. Daily communication takes place between the teachers and the residential staff. Meetings between the principal and residential care manager take place regularly. Meetings of school staff with psychologists and therapists are reported to occur frequently also. The principal has established useful supportive links with the principals of other schools with a similar designation to Crannóg Nua.

• When a student first attends the school, the teachers endeavour to gather information from previous schools about students’ progression and detailed progress reports are provided when a student leaves the school.

• The school’s attendance policy promotes regular attendance and the level of attendance is generally good.

• All of the teaching staff participate in behaviour management training. In motivating students, tangible rewards for attendance and positive engagement are provided to students.

• Significant emphasis is placed on providing a well designed programme of life skills.

• Depending on individual students’ circumstances, the school relies on the support of the health professionals to deal with more sensitive aspects of the SPHE programme. This practice should now be documented in a written whole school policy.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools without modification and in general, the school is compliant with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. The principal and deputy principal have been identified as designated liaison person and deputy and their names are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school. However, a perusal of the documentation found that the person named as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in the school’s child protection policy is a member of the staff of the residence. The person named in the policy as the DLP should be a senior member of the school staff. This matter should be attended to immediately in order to ensure full compliance with the Child Protection requirements.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 LEADERSHIP OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

• The leadership of the principal is of an exceptionally high standard, and she possesses very significant strengths. The principal demonstrates a commitment to the holistic development of each pupil. She and other school leaders have established an effective learning environment and maintain it through active communication. The principal and other teachers manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that
demonstrates equality and fairness. Staff members feel that they are listened to and many have benefitted from professional development opportunities.

2.2 MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

- The management of the school is characterised by very effective practice. The school functions very well and, in response to questionnaires, the teachers regarded the communication system and care support systems that exist within the school highly.
- The students who attend the school come from a range of backgrounds including secure or non-secure residential care centres and students’ homes. Bearing in mind the school’s designation and its location within a secure care facility, the board, in collaboration with the patron and with the approval of the Department of Education and Skills, should develop its enrolment policy further in order to clearly outline who is eligible to attend the school and describe the criteria to be used when considering enrolment and admission.

3. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

3.1 THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

- School planning has very significant strengths. The school provides an extensive, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum. Deliberate and informed efforts are made to meet the individual learning needs of students.
- When a student is admitted, the teachers considerately and in cooperation with care staff, commence a process of formal and informal assessment to establish learning baselines in literacy, numeracy and in other areas of learning.
- Individual education plans are prepared that seek to address students’ priority academic and personal needs.
- Staff members have also developed valuable literacy and numeracy policies.
- Bearing in mind the experience that students attend the school for a limited period of a number of months, the teachers have decided to pursue certification programmes of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) rather than the established Junior Cycle Programmes. This practice supports the achievement of suitable accreditation within a narrow time-frame. Where the school is aware that students are to attend for extensive periods of time, the Junior Cycle option should be considered.

3.2 THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school self-evaluation is good. Taking into consideration the teachers’ union directive in regard to members’ engagement in the Department’s school self-evaluation process, the principal and teachers engage consistently in personal and collaborative reflection on their professional practice. There is a strong commitment to CPD among staff and their regular evaluation of the educational provision is informed by their growing knowledge and skills. Close professional collaboration with care staff in the residences is in evidence. Teachers demonstrate a willingness to assume leadership roles in the work of the school. The school has very good capacity for continuing improvement.
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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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.</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><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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><strong>Fair</strong> 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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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated wholeschool 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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*Published March 2018/Foilsithe Márta 2018*