

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Evaluation of Provision for Students with
Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary
Schools**

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Josephs C.B.S.
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Merville Ave Fairview Dublin 3
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60390F

Date of inspection: 21-03-2019



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

EVALUATION OF PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs (SEN - PP) is a focused evaluation of provision for students with additional and special educational needs in mainstream post-primary schools. As this inspection model places a particular emphasis on the quality of learner outcomes for students with additional and special educational needs, most of the time spent in the school by inspectors is given to visits to mainstream classes and support settings.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated provision for students with additional and special educational needs under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. The quality of learning outcomes of students with additional and special educational needs
2. The quality of learning experiences of students with additional and special educational
3. The quality of the management and use of resources received by the school to support students with additional and special educational needs
4. The quality of the structures in place to foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of all students with additional and special educational needs

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 a mandated person.

The school did not meet the requirements in relation to 3 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken at the time of the inspection visit. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs

Date of inspection	21-03-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent group discussion • Observation of teaching and learning in fourteen lessons • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Student group discussion • Meeting with special needs assistants • Feedback to principal and teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with principal and teachers • Meeting with SEN co-ordinators • Meeting with parents of students with additional and special educational needs • Review of relevant documents 	

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Joseph's CBS is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Edmond Rice Schools Trust. The school is included in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion. Current enrolment is 298 students and the programmes on offer are the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school has resources to provide for four classes for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of learning outcomes and experiences of students with special educational needs (SEN) varied from good to fair; while good practice was noted, the evident weaknesses in a small number of lessons impacted on students' learning.
- The management and use of resources received to support students with SEN requires immediate action; the significant resources provided to the school are not utilised optimally.
- An effective physical environment has been created to support students with ASD but the overall school environment is not effective in supporting learning and student wellbeing.
- The structures in place to foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of all students with SEN require improvement in specific areas.
- The code of behaviour and its implementation require review as it does not sufficiently promote positive behaviour and does not support students with SEN adequately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A comprehensive programme of continuing professional development (CPD) to support staff to meet the diverse learning, wellbeing and social needs of students should be put in place as a matter of priority.
- Senior management needs to utilise all resources provided to the school to ensure that students' identified needs are supported optimally and in line with Circular 14/2017.
- Management and staff should consult with students and plan to develop the school environment to better support learning, behaviour and to celebrate the diversity within the student cohort.
- The code of behaviour should be reviewed to more effectively and more positively support all students at the school; external support should be accessed to support this review.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES OF STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of learning outcomes of students with SEN varied from good to fair.

Where most effective practice was observed students were provided with opportunities for meaningful paired work and self and peer assessment. A safe learning environment was created by the teacher which supported rich learning through trial and error, discussion and peer collaboration. Tasks selected were appropriately challenging, enjoyment in learning was evident and there was good achievement of learning objectives.

In mainstream lessons there was, overall, a need for teachers to have greater understanding of students' additional learning needs and strategies to meet those needs effectively. It is recommended that an audit of staff CPD needs be undertaken and a comprehensive programme of CPD put in place that supports the development of teachers' capacity to differentiate effectively to improve learning outcomes for all students with additional needs.

On review of a small sample of term reports, it was evident that some learners with SEN were making insufficient progress. Teachers' commentary around the learners' outcomes and students' additional learning needs was not always helpful in tone. Similarly, insufficient written feedback to support students to improve was noted in some students' copy books. The school should review how feedback about students' learning is provided and ensure that feedback supports improvement meaningfully.

The quality of learning outcomes for students with ASD is enhanced by the school's strong commitment to provide education in the mainstream setting, where appropriate. However, learning outcomes for a number of these students are compromised as there is insufficient support for students' social and life skills development. This needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

2. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of learning experiences of students with additional and SEN ranged from good to fair.

Thoughtful consideration has been given to providing a supportive environment for students with ASD in terms of access to lockers, toilet facilities and desks in a quieter area of the school. The quality of the general environment in classrooms and other areas varied and overall there was scope to develop a more student-centred environment. In collaboration with students, staff should plan to use the environment more effectively to reflect and celebrate the diversity and strengths of all students.

The quality of learning experiences for students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) requires significant improvement. Insufficient supports are provided to these students from the school's allocation of teaching hours. It is positive that testing has taken place to determine levels of language proficiency, however no targets have been set and little monitoring or review is taking place.

In mainstream settings there was a need to increase the use of effective strategies to effectively support these learners' needs. Due to the fact that English is the language of schooling and insufficient fluency in English is a key barrier for these students in accessing education a review of provision for students with EAL needs is now required.

In the most effective lessons teachers engaged students actively and promoted student voice through astute questioning and well-considered collaborative activities. In most lessons there was scope to further develop these critical elements for meaningful inclusion. Teachers should develop their skills collectively to support diverse learning needs more effectively.

Overall, in the lessons observed, student behaviour was good and interactions between students and their teachers were positive. A very caring approach was noted in most lessons. A direct correlation was evident between positive behaviour and positive classroom experiences where there was sufficient balance between support and challenge for students.

3. THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF RESOURCES RECEIVED TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

There are serious deficiencies in the management and use of resources received to support students with SEN and immediate action is required.

A significant amount of the teaching resource allocation is not being used for the intended purpose and some of the allocation in use is not supporting students' needs adequately. In the first instance senior management should ensure that all of the teaching allocation provided for students with SEN is used to support those students. Senior management and teachers need to prioritise the review of SEN provision at all levels, using the *continuum of support* framework, and ensure adherence to the principles of Circular 14/2017.

At the 'support for all' level of the *continuum of support*, provision requires development. Further development of teachers' understanding of students' needs and how best to plan for diverse needs is required including collaborative teaching as appropriate. To assist teachers, appropriate CPD should be provided to support these aims.

At the 'support for some' and 'support for a few' level, provision requires improvement. Currently, small groups for students with identified needs are created. In some lessons observed, there was a need to address students' identified learning needs in a more targeted manner. Where required, focussed support for learning or behaviour, through skilled interventions should be available. Where this is not necessary, students should have their needs met alongside their peers who do not have SEN.

4. THE STRUCTURES IN PLACE TO FOSTER INCLUSION, EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF ALL STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school is inclusive in its openness to accepting students with diverse needs and backgrounds. However, there are weaknesses in the structures in place to foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of all students. Overall the structures require improvement in specific areas.

Following the recent departure of key members of the SEN team, the school has put in place two co-ordinators to oversee provision for students with ASD and SEN. The co-ordinators are committed to

the ongoing improvement of provision for students with additional needs and valuable work in the development of student support files is evident and will support provision going forward.

Some very positive initiatives are in place to support student wellbeing including an active wellbeing committee comprised of students, parents and staff. Opportunities for student voice are provided through the student council, the 'Headstrong' committee and the school's 'Big Brother' mentoring system.

While the students present with diverse strengths and needs, the range of activities available at break times is very limited. Good opportunities are provided for students who are interested in sports, however, students who are not involved with sports activities have very limited choices. A plan should be put in place to meet the social development needs and interests of all students.

The code of behaviour has been recently reviewed, however, the policy does not sufficiently support students with SEN. Some students with identified needs are frequently sanctioned for poor behaviour including detention and suspension. Students and parents referenced issues with bullying and the impact of behavioural issues on learning and wellbeing. The school should prioritise the introduction of positive behaviour support mechanisms, including preventative and restorative approaches to behaviour management and the code should reflect these supportive changes.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school welcomes the positive aspects of the report, namely the good outcomes referred to for students with special educational needs (SEN); the creation of an effective physical environment to support students with ASD; and the commitment of staff with specific responsibility for SEN to the ongoing improvement of provision for students with additional needs. The school also acknowledges the areas for improvement (please see B below).

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

As recommended in the report a comprehensive programme of continuing professional development (CPD) to support staff to meet the diverse learning, wellbeing and social needs of the students is being put in place, beginning in late August 2019 with a whole-staff inservice in the areas of Speech & Language and Communication. Further training/in-service in the SEN area has been requested from the PDST for August and throughout the 2019/20 school year, and we await a response.

Recruitment of teachers plus redeployment of teachers currently on staff to work in the area of SEN is being undertaken by senior management in relation to Timetable Planning (currently ongoing) for the school year 2019/20.

An emphasis on communicating to all teachers the specific learning difficulties of students will be undertaken in order that teachers will better understand those needs and meet them effectively. Term reports, and the language used in such reports will receive more scrutiny and written feedback and how it is currently provided will be reviewed with a view to providing more meaningful support to students. Greater support for students with EAL needs is planned with dedicated staffing requirements being met through careful timetabling (currently taking place).

Greater planning in the allocation of teaching resources to support students' needs will take place.

It is planned to involve the Student Council in looking at ways to improve the school environment to better support learning and behaviour and to reflect the diversity amongst the current student cohort. It is planned to broaden the range of activities available to our students.

The Code of Behaviour will be reviewed with a view to prioritising more positive behaviour support mechanisms. External support has been requested from the PDST to support such an exercise.

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 students' 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 <i>very good</i> 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 students' 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;