

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Special Educational Needs (SEN)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Joseph's C.B.S.
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newfoundwell Rd Drogheda County Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63840C

Date of Inspection: 05-10-2017



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Special Educational Needs (SEN) under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	5 October 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal, special education co-ordinator and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Discussion with special needs assistants (SNAs)• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Saint Joseph's Secondary School is an all-boys voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 790. The school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme in addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of observed teaching and learning for students with SEN and additional needs ranged from satisfactory to good; some very good practice was also noted within individual lessons.
- Senior management supports inclusive practice by promoting continuing professional development (CPD) and through the provision of a wide range of intervention resources for students.
- A teacher with a relevant post-graduate qualification co-ordinates SEN supports in the school; there is a need to further develop a core team of teachers to provide SEN support and to extend the level of SEN expertise in the school.
- The *Continuum of Support* provides a framework for planning and a variety of very good strategies is in place to support students; in some instances provision was found not to align with sufficient accuracy to the students' learning needs.
- Collaborative practices are evolving in response to the revised model of resource allocation but there is scope to further advance the use of co-operative teaching.

Recommendations

- A core SEN team with relevant expertise should be further developed to support the school in meeting the identified needs of students.
- Co-operative teaching should be further advanced, on a whole-school level, as a means to enhance inclusive practice.
- Interventions at the 'Support for Some' and 'Support for a Few' levels of the *Continuum of Support* should address the identified learning needs of students in a more targeted manner.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of observed teaching and learning for students with SEN and additional needs ranged from satisfactory to good; some very good practice was also noted within individual lessons.
- In the lessons observed, supports were provided through one-to-one tuition, small and large-group withdrawal and in a mainstream lesson.
- The most effective lesson observed identified learning outcomes clearly and recapitulated previous learning well. Targeted questioning was used effectively to maintain active student engagement and assess learning. A variety of carefully planned activities, including motivating and well-planned visuals, and the use of video, supported the literacy needs of students effectively. The commendable strategies used in this lesson should be shared as a means to further enhance inclusive practice across lessons.
- Very high-quality preparation was evident in the EAL lessons observed. Very good communication between the teacher and the subject specialist was evident. It was reported that the students had a mechanism to self-refer which is highly commendable practice. School examination results were also used to identify students' needs. However, there was need in some instances for teachers to ensure that learning tasks were sufficiently challenging. Further diagnostic assessment of EAL needs is required to guide teachers in providing the most appropriate learning experience.
- The school reports that there is strong collaboration with external agencies. Implementation of a programme recommended by one such agency was observed. A very high level of support was provided to the student: both one-to-one teaching and SNA support. The student struggled to engage fully with the highly structured lesson format. It was reported that the provision of support in this manner was short term only and would be reviewed in consultation with relevant personnel. This will be beneficial as, during the observation period, a more responsive teaching approach was needed to better support student wellbeing and learning.
- Students' behaviour was of high standard generally. In a small number of instances, students' engagement with learning was observed to wane as lessons progressed. In these instances, the learning intentions and success criteria needed to be clearer and the lesson content better aligned to the students' identified learning needs.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for students with SEN is good. It is good practice that students are taught in mixed-ability classes in first year. Optional subjects for all year groups are also provided in mixed-ability settings.
- Senior management supports inclusive practice by promoting CPD and through the provision of a wide range of intervention resources for students. SEN is an item on the agenda at staff meetings.
- A suitably qualified co-ordinator plays a pivotal role in organising SEN supports. However, more than one-third of the teaching staff is timetabled to deliver one-to-one or small-group support lessons. As a result, some fragmentation of provision was evident. The school aims to provide those students with the greatest level of need with the highest level of support. In

order to fully meet this commitment, the school should further develop a SEN core team with the necessary expertise to meet complex needs.

- Important CPD has been provided to teachers in a range of areas that support inclusion. The areas covered include differentiation and assessment. The school has identified useful strategies such as learning-intention boards and a traffic-light system for assessment; however, their use was not evident in several of the lessons observed. These, potentially very effective, systems should be used more consistently across lessons.
- Commendably, co-operative teaching is already an embedded practice in Mathematics and in some English lessons. The school intends to develop this approach as a mechanism for meeting the needs of students with SEN across other subjects. This will be beneficial to further enhance inclusive practice.
- Currently, support is provided mainly for students in the period when they are not studying Irish due to an exemption from the subject. Curricular reduction or withdrawal from other subjects is also used to create time for the provision of support. Strategies such as co-operative teaching should be considered as an alternative to limiting the breadth of curricular access and the use of one-to-one support, where appropriate.
- Good contact is maintained with parents. Very good initiatives are in place for parents to support their sons such as *'Maths for Mums and Dads'* and a study-skills workshop.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning for the transition of students from primary school and the collation of information and data are very good. Valuable information is gathered by the SEN co-ordinator and others through liaison with feeder primary schools, parents and incoming students. Information from standardised tests, psychological reports, teacher reports and other assessment data is gathered to establish support needs and to track the progress of students with SEN.
- Commendably, a school provision plan has been developed which identifies the supports that are available at each level of the support continuum. Useful personal pupil profiles are in place for students with SEN, and teachers have access to this information through the school's online administration platform. In most instances, teachers used this information well in preparing for the lessons observed. In some instances, however, teachers' planning for special education lessons was not focussed sufficiently on the specific learning needs of the students; this should be addressed.
- The implementation of the school's SEN plan has been impacted by recent departures of key SEN core team members. It is commendable that a new team has been established. The school reports that it has considered and will implement suitable CPD for the team. This will be advantageous in order to ensure that interventions at the 'Support for Some' and 'Support for a Few' levels of the Continuum of Support, in particular, have maximum effectiveness.
- An intervention for students on a reduced curriculum was observed. The aim of the intervention was to develop subject-specific vocabulary and the development of examination skills. While the intervention may support students in the particular curricular area, an intervention more closely aligned to the students' specific needs is recommended.
- Teachers demonstrated a good commitment to improvement through openness to feedback. In some cases, teachers indicated that they would benefit from greater involvement in the planning processes for SEN; such an involvement would help to enhance teachers' understanding of the rationale for decisions made and how needs are to be met.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the special education co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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 <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 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management (BOM) is very pleased that much of the good work done by the SEN department in St Joseph's is acknowledged and affirmed by this inspection report. The report particularly commends the very good practice observed within individual lessons which reflects the high calibre of our staff and the degree of commitment they bring to their work.

As an ERST school we are particularly pleased that the whole school support for inclusive practice is acknowledged in the report as inclusiveness is part of the ethos of St Joseph's.

"The Edmund Rice School promotes inclusiveness, mutual respect and a sense of inter-dependence for the development of the school as a community where personal growth is facilitated." (ERST Charter)

The school's implementation of the new model of resource provision is also recognised noting the high degree of supports at each level of the support continuum. This is reflective of the school's commitment to provide the greatest level of support to students with the greatest level of need.

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

A core SEN team with relevant expertise should be further developed to support the school in meeting the identified needs of students.

The inspection report acknowledges that the SEN team of teachers has been impacted by recent staff departures and that a new team has been established. The BOM will support every effort to further develop the SEN team through the provision of CPD relevant to special education. The BOM wishes to highlight that support lessons are included in the overall timetable at the time of its construction, thus ensuring resource classes are provided by suitably qualified staff and quality learning experiences are provided for students with SEN.

Co-operative teaching should be further advanced, on a whole-school level, as a means to enhance inclusive practice.

The inspection report acknowledges that co-operative teaching is already an embedded practice in Mathematics and in some English lessons. The BOM recognises that collaborative teaching is an inclusive way of meeting the needs of many students with SEN. St Joseph's SEN development plan 2017 – 2019 states that this model of provision will be developed in other subject areas as a way of supporting students with SEN. The further development of collaborative teaching has the full support of the BOM.

Interventions at the 'Support for Some' and 'Support for a Few' levels of the Continuum of Support should address the identified learning needs of students in a more targeted manner.

The inspection observed and commended provision for students with English as an additional language, students with literacy and numeracy difficulties and students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Interventions recommended by NEPS and the NCSE are being implemented in support classes. The development of Individual support plans for students with SEN was also commended. The BOM has confidence that these support plans will enable mainstream and SEN teachers to address the specific educational needs of students in a more targeted manner.