

**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	Cabinteely Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Johnstown Road Cabinteely Dublin 18
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91310E

Date of inspection: 02-03-2020



**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 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 a mandated person.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs

Date of inspection	13, 14 and 28 February 2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Meeting with SEN team• Meeting with parents of students with additional and special educational needs• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Student group discussion• Meeting with special needs assistants• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Cabinteely Community School is a co-educational post-primary school in South Dublin with a current enrolment of 455 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school has an additional teaching allocation of 9.48 full-time teachers, or 208.5 teaching hours per week, to provide additional supports for students identified with special educational needs (SEN). The school has ten special needs assistants (SNAS).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The principal and a strong and developing team of special education teachers (SET) and SNAs work hard to support students, bringing about incremental improvements to outcomes and experiences.
- The quality of learner outcomes and experiences was good or very good in most of the lessons observed and adequate in a minority of lessons; further developments in planning and more opportunities for collaborative work are needed.
- Good relationships between teachers and students were a feature of lessons, and highly effective outcomes and experiences were noted in lessons addressing social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- The management and use of resources received to support students with special educational needs requires improvement; a significant minority of the hours allocated to the school are not used for their intended purpose.
- Most supports are provided within the mainstream classroom and this positive approach is addressing the needs of many students inclusively; some flexibility is needed to address complex or transient individual needs.
- Some aspects of the structures in place to support inclusion and the holistic development of pupils require improvement; unsatisfactory bathroom facilities and some aspects of student experience are hindering attendance and practices that restrict access to teaching and learning are impacting some students with SEN.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board of management, together with senior leadership, should ensure that the additional teaching hours given to the school to support students with SEN are used solely for their intended purpose and that all practice complies with circular letter 0014/2017 and the associated *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.

- Special education teachers should identify the priority learning needs and targets of individual students and mainstream teachers should use this information in their lesson planning.
- Teachers should further develop opportunities for students to collaborate, and the very effective differentiation and assessment strategies observed in some lessons should be extended across all subjects.
- As part of the ongoing review of the Learning Code and associated practice, senior management should ensure full alignment with the goals of the DEIS plan so that attendance and retention are prioritised for all students.
- Management should consider the views of students and parents regarding break times and bathroom facilities and ensure that a safe and healthy environment is maintained for all.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

A strong and developing team of special education teachers and SNAs works hard to support students and bring about incremental improvements to outcomes and experiences. The direction that has been established is very positive and will require schoolwide support to be most effective.

Learning outcomes were good or very good in most of the lessons observed, and adequate in a minority of lessons. In all lessons students demonstrated good levels of motivation to learn and a positive approach to their work.

In the most effective lessons, where differentiation was exemplary, students pushed themselves to do more than was required, surpassed the intended learning, and their sense of achievement was evident. In highly effective lessons students made useful connections with their learning outside of the classroom and they were able to reflect on decisions and justify responses.

Most students took all opportunities offered to collaborate and in their interactions they demonstrated an open-minded and enquiring attitude towards the shared work. At times, they were observed developing an appreciation of the opinions of others and learning to value differing perspectives. However, in a significant minority of lessons there were missed opportunities for deeper learning through positive interactions and discussion. While it is acknowledged that maintaining a calm and orderly environment is a priority, the full implementation of the new Junior Cycle programme requires that students attain skills in working with others and communicating.

Highly effective outcomes were observed in an innovative lesson designed to address social, emotional and behavioural needs. Students developed key skills in communication, social interaction and self-regulation as they engaged in the tasks and they clearly valued this carefully targeted work.

In a minority of lessons, students engaged with tasks and learned to follow certain processes but their understanding of what they were doing was limited and there was a real need to contextualise the learning, make it relevant for students or simply check for understanding of key points.

Observation of the academic tracking system indicated that attainment of a sample of students with additional learning needs are in line with or exceeding expectations. It is very positive that outcomes for these students are monitored closely by the SET and that mainstream teachers have access to this tracking information for all students.

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

Learner experiences were good or very good in the majority of the lessons observed, and adequate in a minority of lessons.

Good relationships between teachers and students were a feature of lessons. Engagement was supported by respectful interactions between teachers and students that helped to sustain on-task activity. Teachers clearly wanted to support their students and involve all students positively in the learning.

Where learning experiences were most effective, teachers had planned the lesson so as to include students through direct questioning, differentiated activities and tasks that put student engagement at the heart of the lesson.

In some lessons activities were differentiated not just to accommodate varying levels of attainment but also individual strengths in styles of learning and modes of expression. This very positive approach appealed to students; they were ambitious and persevered with increasingly challenging work. In some lessons clear expression of differentiated learning intentions led to valuable reflection on learning and a sense of achievement for the students. In the majority of lessons there was scope to extend the differentiation, for example by differentiating the learning intentions, the tasks, the homework and the assessments.

Some effective use of formative assessment strategies was observed where students were learning to assess their own work and that of their peers. In one lesson students' copybooks contained a grid where they recorded 'What Went Well' and 'Even Better If..' after all written assignments. When asked, these students were confidently able to say what was going well for them in that subject and what they needed to work on. Reflective practice has yet to be embedded across all lessons. In some instances verbal feedback was limited and in some copybooks ticks and initials were the most commonly used feedback. Some students reported that when they express difficulty they are told to 'work harder' or 'listen better'. To extend and embed positive practices, all teachers should seek to identify and address causes of difficulty and give specific guidance on how students can improve.

Some highly effective targeted reinforcement of key words was observed at the start of some lessons. In other lessons there was insufficient challenge in the vocabulary used and incorporated into the lesson. Teachers should communicate high expectations while also accommodating different levels of learning.

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

While there have been significant advances in recent years, the management and use of resources received to support students with SEN requires improvement. A register of students with SEN has been established, the continuum of support is being used, and a SEN team has been established. However, a significant minority of the additional teaching hours is not being used appropriately; these are mostly used to make smaller class groups. The board of management and the senior management team should ensure that the full teaching allocation is used for its intended purpose and all practice complies with circular 14/2017 and its associated guidelines.

The school has prioritised co-teaching as the main model of support. All staff attended a short input on co-teaching at the start of the year. While the resource was generally well utilised and in some instances very effectively employed, there is scope to further develop the practice. In some lessons teachers needed a greater level of understanding of the individual priority learning needs and targets of the students and in some lessons co-teachers were simply helping individual students during tasks or activities rather than taking a full partnership approach with responsibility for teaching.

Teachers are encouraged to further explore the possibilities of co-teaching; for example co-presenting in different ways, supporting learning with the use of technologies, or linking with the Behaviour for

Learning teacher in order to meet individual behavioural targets. Co-teaching practices need to be fully and collaboratively developed in order to ensure this valuable teaching resource is used to full effect.

While the introduction of co-teaching is very positive, some students need more interventions than those provided within mainstream lessons. Currently those who have exemptions from Irish access small group lessons in literacy or numeracy at Irish lesson times. Some students access one-to-one for development of skills in behaviour for learning. Most of those without Irish exemptions do not access any additional support lessons. This situation should be reviewed so that when necessary, individual needs can be addressed, either within one-to-one settings or small groups of students with similar needs. Some students may have ongoing needs that cannot be fully addressed in the mainstream classroom, while short targeted interventions can be useful for others.

The SEN team is making incremental improvements to practice. This year a key teacher was assigned to each year group; this very positive move opens up the possibility of closer communication between parents, students and teachers in individual planning. Student support files are currently under development and key information is available to all teachers on an online platform. It is recommended that the SET identify the priority learning needs and set the targets for these students. It is important these targets are SMART, and focussed on developing key academic, social, behavioural, or self-management skills. Mainstream teachers can then consider the targets in their lesson planning. Live documents can enable teachers to feedback to the planning process. Behaviour for learning targets should be twinned with other learning targets in these files; currently the two systems operate in parallel.

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 has many strengths in supporting inclusion, equality and the holistic development of students; however, some aspects require improvement.

Students with SEN have access to all school activities and programmes. The move towards mixed ability grouping is positive and management plans to embed it across all years. An effective transition programme includes visits to and from feeder schools, individual visits and a sports day. Some students also benefit from participation in Festina Lente, a local equine-assisted learning programme arranged by the Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator.

Following an initiative led by senior management, the SEN co-ordinator and one SNA undertook training in the Nurture programme and have piloted this highly effective short term intervention programme with small groups of students. The programme addresses students' emotional, social and behavioural needs and the teacher has adapted it to include aspects of literacy and learning. Parents of students who have participated reported high levels of satisfaction. The SEN team is considering how best to develop the programme; a nurture room has been assigned and a lunch time friends club now meets there. Management supports this innovative and commendable work and is encouraged to extend it further.

A Behaviour for Learning teacher works with students to improve self-management and emotional, social and behavioural skills. This teacher sets targets and provides recommendations to mainstream teachers. Currently some students on reduced timetables access this support. These students should not be excluded from portions of the school day. Routine attendance and the delivery of twenty-eight hours of tuition per week should be standard for all students, including those with behavioural difficulties.

A new Learning Code was introduced in September 2019 to promote positive behaviour and has been generally well received. However, some students and some parents perceived it to result in negative

labelling, penalties for relatively small offences, and penalties for behaviours that are part of the student's condition. The high numbers of exclusionary procedures is a concern as many of the students impacted have SEN. The ongoing review of the Learning Code should ensure full alignment with the goals of the DEIS plan. Alternatives to suspension should be given further consideration so that attendance and retention are prioritised and the focus is on pathways to improved behaviour. For students with extreme behaviours, it is important that all available supports are fully utilised.

Some parents and some students reported very positively on the hard work of teachers in promoting attendance, providing extra-curricular activities, checking in with students and dealing with issues as they arise. However, arrangements at break and lunch times were a concern for both parents and students; some reported that these are difficult times for students and a broader range of options is needed. Significant concerns were raised about the standard of cleanliness in the toilets, and a number of students said that they avoided using them. Notwithstanding senior management's concerted efforts to resolve the issue, the problem remains. It is now recommended that a whole school approach which takes into account the views and experiences of students be progressed to ensure an optimum environment for all.

The SET and the SNAs have engaged in a commendable range of continuing professional development(CPD); further CPD is recommended to develop co-teaching practice, introduce L2LPs and further develop differentiation in the classroom.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the opportunity to focus on our SEN provision and to benefit from the advice of the inspectors. We will fully take on board the recommendations made in order to make constant improvement to how we work.

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

Recommendations

- The Board is aware of the circumstances which led to this recommendation (teacher supply/legacy) and is now content that the school is in compliance with Circular letter 14/17
- The second phase of co-teaching goals for 2020-21 has been to ensure targets for students with SEN are shared between SEN teachers and subject teachers in lesson planning.
- The school is in year two of a formative feedback initiative using WW/EBI format and incorporating MS TEAMS.
- The learning code is constantly under review and the focus for 2020-21 has been on positive behaviour and rewards for engagement and participation by students.
- The Board is aware of the issues in relation to updating toilets and of the progress that has been made. The Board continues to work to resolve issues around facilities which are outside of the control of management.

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;