

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

**Subject Inspection in Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	The Abbey School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Station Road Co. Tipperary
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	65490L

**Date of Inspection: 23-03-2017**



**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. Learning, teaching 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.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	23-03-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 8 class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Abbey School is a voluntary secondary school for boys, under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools' Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 412 students who are offered Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The school has an allocation of approximately three teachers to provide supports for students with SEN.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Overall, teaching in the lessons observed was of a very high standard, and students demonstrated very good understanding and recall of previous learning.
- The school has many strengths in relation to provision and whole-school support for SEN, although some aspects of provision merit further development, including the development of timetables for support lessons and the establishment of a core teaching team.
- Senior management is committed to providing good quality provision for SEN, while further capacity building amongst teachers should continue.
- A range of support models that reflect good practice is used, and some smaller mainstream classes are created which would benefit from the involvement of co-operative teaching teams.
- Very good planning and preparation at individual teacher and department level takes place, which could be enhanced by the further development of educational support plans and student support files.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Building capacity amongst teachers, to support inclusive whole-school and classroom practices, should be prioritised.
- Planning for SEN provision should take place in advance of the construction of the overall timetable and support lessons should be timetabled at the time of its construction.
- A core teaching team should be established and be enabled to provide most of the supports for students with SEN.
- Co-operative teaching teams should be developed to provide additional and focused supports for students with SEN when smaller class groups are created for the purpose of supporting these students.
- Cohesive and collaborative educational support plans and student support files should be developed for students with SEN.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Overall, teaching in the lessons observed was of a very high standard. Classes visited were formed on the basis of whole-class groups, in-class support and small group withdrawal. Subjects included Geography, Science, History, Maths and English, across the year groups.
- Highly effective practice included, very clear demonstrations and use of concrete materials and visuals to support learning. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used in some lessons. The development of literacy and subject-specific literacy was very effective in most lessons; this was achieved through the use of key words and application of these words.
- In a small number of lessons, peer-tutoring was facilitated. In one lesson, students worked together to discuss and problem-solve, with one student volunteering to explain the assigned task. This demonstrates excellent practice in building confidence, communication and independent learning skills.
- All lessons were very well structured and a variety of strategies was used to engage students in their learning. A range of very well prepared resources was also used to aid learning. This reflects very good planning and preparation for teaching.
- Questioning was used to very good effect to encourage students to think, to make links and to recall learning. Instruction was scaffolded for students and lessons focused on the development of examination skills, where appropriate.
- All lessons were characterised by a calm, encouraging and supportive classroom atmosphere. This provided students with a very positive learning environment.
- In all lessons, students were very engaged in their learning. This was achieved through students being provided with opportunities to be purposefully engaged in independent and collaborative tasks.
- Students demonstrated very good understanding and recall of previous learning. This learning was aided by strategies such as repetition, the use of crosswords and the development of flash cards, all of which supported student memory skills and consolidation of learning.
- Good assessment of student outcomes through class and term assessments, and through questioning and application of skills, takes place. In a few lessons, checklists were used to allow students to self-assess. This reflects very good practice. However, there is scope for the development of more formal assessment structures in support lessons for students with SEN. Student progress should be assessed and used to inform student learning plan targets.

### **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The school has many strengths in relation to provision and whole-school support for SEN, although some aspects of provision merit further development. It is very positive that senior management is committed to providing good quality provision for SEN. This is reflected through providing some CPD opportunities to staff. It is excellent that the co-ordinator and assistant co-ordinators have additional qualifications in SEN. The co-ordinator, who is also the deputy principal, and the principal, are keenly aware of the importance of putting good structures in place to support students with SEN. Building capacity amongst teachers, to support inclusive whole-school and classroom practices, should be prioritised to progress this.

- Timetabling of the additional support lessons takes place at the beginning of the academic year, following the construction of the overall timetable. Attempts are then made to match the needs of students, with the skills of the teachers who have time available on their timetable. Consequently, it is challenging to provide continuity of teaching supports for students with SEN. This does not reflect best practice. Planning for SEN provision should take place in advance of the construction of the overall timetable and support lessons should be timetabled at the time of its construction. This should provide consistency and continuity of teaching supports for students with SEN.
- It is very positive that the assistant co-ordinator's timetable is dedicated to SEN. A large number of teachers is involved in providing additional supports for students. It is also positive that a small core administration team meets weekly to discuss SEN provision; however, a core teaching team for SEN should be developed in order to provide greater stability and continuity of support. This team should be enabled to provide most of the supports for students and assist in the planning of SEN provision. This team should also be involved in developing educational support plans for students with SEN.
- Teachers have high expectations for their students and they are encouraged to reach their individual potential. This is very positive. It is also very good that students have access to all subjects and levels.
- Additional teaching supports are received mostly through a model of withdrawal and through in-class support in a small number of lessons. Some smaller mainstream classes are also created. Co-operative teaching teams should be developed to provide additional and focused supports for these smaller class groups when their purpose is to support students with SEN for whom the additional teaching allocation is specifically provided.
- The school has an allocation of two special needs assistants (SNAs) who support the care, organisational and health and safety needs of students to which they have been assigned. They also assist other students who have been identified as needing some support. Their work is duly noted.
- Whole-school structures which support the work of the SEN department include the established role of the year head and the class-tutor system. The year heads compile a composite report on progress on individual students. This work is excellent and should be shared with the core SEN team to complement their work, and to further inform tracking of progress of students with SEN.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Very good planning and preparation at individual teacher and department level takes place. This is guided by the very good work of the co-ordinators.
- Incoming students are well-supported through an established transfer programme. Very good quality induction for all students is provided and individualised transition support is provided for students with SEN. Planning to meet the needs of these students is informed by transfer information, school-based assessments, information from parents and subject teachers, and report recommendations. Very good individual profiles are developed and shared with teachers.
- Very good procedures are in place to track and identify students' emerging needs. Comparing relevant psychometric assessment results, class and term tests, and formal and informal teacher observations on students, are employed.

- Teachers who are assigned support classes at the beginning of the year, are informed on the abilities and needs of individual students by the assistant co-ordinator. Some teachers use the relevant information to develop individual learning plans for these students. Some of these plans were observed to be of very high quality, focusing on the priority learning targets relative to the subject area being supported. This is excellent practice. However, no overall cohesive and collaborative education support plans are in place for students with SEN and student support files are yet to be developed.
- Cohesive and collaborative education support plans and student support files should now be developed. The files should document the continuum of support, the individual educational support plans and the outcomes of these plans. Teachers should access the key information provided within these, to plan for students with SEN in their subject areas. The potential of the school's intranet system should be explored as a mean of confidentially sharing the necessary information of these plans with teachers.

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

## 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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;