

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	Presentation College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Putland Road Bray Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61800D

Date of inspection: 08-11-2019



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	08-11-2019
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

Presentation College Bray is a long-established school for boys serving the town of Bray and a wider catchment. It is in the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year programme with very high uptake, and the established Leaving Certificate. The school has an additional teaching allocation of 7.28 whole-time teacher equivalents (WTE) or 160.16 teaching hours per week, to provide additional supports for students identified with special educational needs (SEN). The school has three special needs assistants (SNAs).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of learner outcomes and experiences was good overall, with significant variation ranging from very good to less than satisfactory.
- The management and use of resources is good overall; however, current planning and communications systems are not facilitating the optimal use of resources.
- There are some good initiatives in place to support inclusion and the holistic development of students; there is a need for further work to develop and promote a culture of meaningful inclusion in the school.
- Some innovative practice has taken place within the context of technology and horticulture lessons; individualised planning can further support this work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Management, in collaboration with the special education teachers (SET) should review the planning and communications systems so that lesson planning can be informed by effective identification and monitoring of the priority learning needs of students.
- Teachers should consider the priority learning needs of their students when planning lessons and where possible, collaboration between mainstream and support teachers should seek to optimise learning outcomes for students with SEN.
- Management and staff should consider what further initiatives can be taken to promote understanding of difference and meaningful inclusivity within the school community; the review of the vision and mission statement is timely in this regard.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Overall the quality of learning outcomes in the lessons observed was good, with significant variation ranging from very good to less than satisfactory.

Where outcomes were very good, there was a highly effective balance between challenge and support. In these lessons, enjoyment in learning was clearly evident. Students demonstrated their motivation to succeed, their ability to adapt their behaviour, their ability to reflect on themselves as learners and their sense of achievement in various ways.

In some lessons students worked in pairs or groups, tackling tasks that were differentiated to accommodate full engagement, and their learning was supported by both their peers and by the skilful questioning of the teacher.

Skill development was the focus of some very good lessons. At times there were carefully planned opportunities for students to discuss topics using the language of the subject, tease out their ideas and in some cases assess their own thinking and rethink where necessary. These features of highly effective practice all contributed to enhanced learner outcomes.

There was very good or good attainment of the intended learning in more than half of the lessons observed. However, in some lessons outcomes were limited by a lack of consideration of the individual priority learning needs of the students, taking into account their strengths, their interests and their challenges. In some lessons there was scope to further develop differentiation as a key practice.

Some support lessons observed were in effect mainstream lessons delivered to a smaller group, without consideration of the students' underlying needs, nor any attempt to address their particular skill deficits. No significant attempt was made to tailor strategies for learning mainstream content that minimised barriers and tapped into individual students' strengths. In these lessons planning was not aligned with students' needs and outcomes were negatively impacted.

Co-ordination between mainstream and support teachers was evident in some lessons but in other lessons there were missed opportunities for teachers to twin their work, optimise outcomes and facilitate a much needed sense of achievement.

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

The quality of learner experiences was good overall. Some highly effective learner experiences were observed in many lessons. However, there was a significant range with less than satisfactory experiences in a small number of lessons.

Where learning experiences were most positive, careful planning put student engagement at the heart of the lesson and students participated co-operatively in carefully structured activities that provided appropriate challenge for all. Learning intentions were clearly communicated and sometimes referenced at a later stage. Students asked questions confidently and were respectful of the opinions of their peers. Students' sense of satisfaction was evident in these lessons and at times they showed a keen interest in preserving the products of their work for future reference.

In some lessons, visual inputs were used very effectively to engage interest and support learning. Video clips showing student friendly exemplars, the physical arrangement of ideas on a graphic organiser, or the timely use of concrete objects or detailed visual images were all examples of this. However, there were lessons which relied far too heavily on worksheets, on the written word, on teacher talk, or on textbooks and there were missed opportunities to present content in a variety of ways.

When talking about their learning experiences, students reported that they are regularly expected to take down notes from the board, or at times, take down notes that are dictated orally. This presents a range of significant challenges for students including getting all of the writing down in time, getting it down legibly, and copying down and listening at the same time. Teachers should be mindful of the writing difficulties of some of their students and consider how digital technologies can be used to overcome such challenges.

Some effective use of assessment for learning strategies was observed in a number of lessons and good formative feedback was observed in some copybooks. It was reported that differentiated testing and comment only marking have been introduced by some teachers. The introduction of a section in the journal where students can track their own progress is very positive but it was observed that this was only used in a small number of subjects. Management should ensure a whole-school approach to this and encourage teachers to extend these effective practices across all subjects.

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

Some aspects of the management and use of resources are very good; a core team of qualified special education teachers has been established over a number of years, the additional teaching hours are deployed solely for the support of students with identified special educational needs and deployment is according to the principle that the students with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.

A qualified co-ordinator supports management in planning for provision; in timetabling support lessons, in making information available to mainstream teachers and in liaising with parents and outside agencies. While significant steps have been made in the direction of becoming a truly inclusive

school, management and the co-ordinator acknowledge the need for current practice and thinking to evolve and develop in order to build greater understanding of students' additional needs and optimise inclusive learning experiences and outcomes for all.

In order to optimise the use of available resources and meet the needs of the students, there is a fundamental need for the special education team to engage in individualised planning which informs timetabling and the provision of supports. This planning should involve gathering relevant data, identifying the priority learning needs of individual students and setting targets which can be shared with teachers in a way that is accessible and useful to them in their lesson planning. This planning should be informed by input from parents and students. Neither the current information available on the online platform nor the summary sheets drawn up by some support teachers are fully meeting this need. It was observed and a number of students reported that support lessons provided are sometimes aligned to their needs and sometimes not. It is now time to systematically address how the deployment of resources is planned in a way that is optimally driven by the needs of the students. Putting this in place will require significant re-organisation and enhanced leadership, the co-ordinated work of the team, the co-operation of mainstream teachers, and perhaps some input from the special education support service.

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 the provision of inclusive educational experiences for students. The vision and mission statement for the school are currently under review, and management and staff have identified the need to promote inclusivity in this articulation of the school's purpose. A recent student-led initiative aimed at raising awareness of different experiences has been whole-heartedly welcomed by the school and has prompted consideration of how the school can become more inclusive. All programmes are currently on offer to all students, mixed ability grouping is prioritised and management understand that there may be a need to offer Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes to some students. In recent times, some staff have become aware of the need to consider barriers to full participation when planning trips or extra-curricular activities and are committed to maximising participation for all.

It was reported by parents that some teachers appear unaware of their son's additional needs at parent teacher meetings. Both parents and students reported that students' individual challenges are not widely understood by their teachers nor by their peers. Management and staff should consider what further initiatives are needed to promote understanding of difference and improve communications within the school community.

There is a significant number of SETs with suitable qualifications and attendance at regular relevant continuing professional development (CPD) is supported by management. Recent CPD on differentiation was well received by the whole staff and provided useful pointers on how to cater for various levels of ability and needs. CPD on co-teaching is scheduled for the SET in January 2020 and for the whole staff at a later date. This is an important development which has the potential to maximise the integration of supports.

Some parents reported and it was observed that there is a need for more interventions to support development of social skills, reduce social isolation, or deal with a sometimes overwhelming school environment. Recently a quiet room has been made available to students who need a break from

sensory input. Currently the Friends First programme is available to junior cycle students within the SPHE programme. In the summary sheets and planning documents observed the focus was on academic issues and there was a lack of emphasis on the holistic development of students. The SET should consider how interventions to support social and emotional development and promote understanding of individual differences can be incorporated into planning and practice.

There was evidence of some innovative practice; a technology class has been introduced for fifth-year students who do not study Irish nor a foreign language. This class is meeting individual needs in a variety of ways; all students have access to a sixth Leaving Certificate subject and for a significant number of these students the technology course is a high interest area. Within the lesson observed there was scope for further development of social, collaborative, planning and organisation skills to meet the additional needs of these students.

One of the support teachers reported that some support lessons have successfully taken place within the context of developing a wildflower garden and managing an allotment on the school grounds. This has opened up very good opportunities to support students in developing skills of self-regulation, planning and organisation. It enables learners to take responsibility and engage in meaningful collaborative work, as well as providing a context for valuable cross-curricular scientific, environmental and geographical work.

Management and staff are encouraged to support further developments in innovative areas and consider how the short course option for the new junior cycle might facilitate development of this work.

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;

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 of Presentation College Bray acknowledges the findings of this report and welcomes the positive observations made by the inspectors of areas of highly effective and effective practice noted. The report acknowledges the good practice observed in lessons, resulting in very good and good outcomes for the SEN students in terms of learning outcomes and learning experiences. The BOM also welcomes acknowledgement by the inspectors of the initiatives and innovations that are taking place in our school to support inclusion. The BOM also welcomes the affirmation that the management and use of resources is good overall

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

- The BOM acknowledges the areas for improvement outlined in the report
- An internal review of the planning and communication system currently in use in the terms of SEN students has commenced. The goal is to put in place a system that will enable all relevant stakeholders to be properly involved and informed. A system of communications will be an essential part of these structures and will enable effective identification and monitoring of the priority needs of the students. A member of the NCSE team has been invited to advise and give support in setting up this system and will engage with the school in early February 2020
- The review of our Mission Statement is ongoing and stakeholders in the school will be involved in this review. Inclusion will be an integral part of our new Mission Statement. The Umbrella Student Council are working on the promotion of diversity in the school community. A Diversity Day is being planned (Diversity has been chosen as the theme in the community for next year's Spirit of Pres week).
- Promotion of Diversity in the School Community has been proposed as a target for next year's School Improvement Plan
- A lunchtime board games club has been set up with the aim of including students who may be socially isolated during recreational times
- The Special Education & Inclusions Policy will be revised with an increased emphasis on inclusion and social development of students