

**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	Bush Post Primary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Riverstown Dundalk Co Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71750U

Date of inspection: 06-02-2020



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 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	3 rd , 4 th & 6 th February 2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Meeting with members of the 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

Bush Post-Primary School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB). There is a current enrolment of 647 students attending the school. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion and it offers the full range of curricular programmes. The school has a special education teaching (SET) allocation of 125.5 teaching hours per week.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of learning outcomes and experiences of students with special educational needs (SEN) was overall good in mainstream lessons although there is scope to develop aspects of inclusive practice in order to meet the identified needs of students more effectively.
- The current organisation of small group and one-to-one lessons impacts negatively on the quality of the outcomes and experiences of students with SEN as identified needs are not sufficiently targeted.
- The management and use of resources received to support students with SEN is satisfactory; some aspects of the use of the resources available to the school for SEN require immediate attention in order to develop the effectiveness of provision.
- The structures in place to foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of students with SEN are good.
- Aspects of the environment and the systems for management of students outside of lessons are not optimally supportive, particularly for students who respond best to a lower arousal environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The effective inclusive practices observed in some mainstream lessons should be shared and embedded across the school.
- The school should work collaboratively to examine how the Continuum of Support framework can be used in conjunction with the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools- Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools* (2017) to develop more effective provision that is closely aligned with the identified needs of students.
- Consideration should be given to improving the student management systems and the school environment to support the wellbeing of students with SEN further, especially during times of transition and at break times.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The quality of learning outcomes of students with SEN was overall good. There is scope to develop aspects of inclusive practice in mainstream lessons in order to meet the identified needs of students more effectively. Provision at the support for some or a few levels of the continuum of support requires review.

In most mainstream lessons, student outcomes were good, although there were some areas requiring improvement. In a significant minority of mainstream lessons observed, very high quality outcomes were achieved for all students including students with SEN through the provision of carefully planned learning activities. There is good scope to share these highly effective practices that support learners with diverse needs very well and senior management should create opportunities for teachers to work together to build capacity across the staff.

A key characteristic of the lessons where outcomes were of a very high quality for all learners, was the evident focus on actively engaging students through skilful and varied use of methodologies. There was also good promotion of student voice within these lessons and all students were enabled to contribute to participate. These strategies reflected a very evident shift from teacher-led learning to student-centred learning and should be shared and embedded across all lessons to ensure high quality outcomes for all.

Where expectations for learning were optimal, students demonstrated care and interest in their work; copies and project work were carefully maintained and students' valued their copies, notes and teachers' handouts as tools for learning and revision. There was a clear link between the extent of high quality feedback for written work and students' care with written work and homework. This link should be examined. Higher expectations for the maintenance of students' copies and folders should be set and supported through effective teacher feedback.

Teachers know the students well and are broadly aware of the needs of students with SEN; however, there was a need to adapt the learning activities to provide for a more differentiated response to individual needs in most lessons. An audit of continuing professional development needs should be undertaken in order to address any learning gaps that would support teachers to plan for and assess SEN more effectively. Teachers should use all available information regarding strategies and suitable targets for students with SEN, where required, to support them in meeting diverse needs appropriately.

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

The quality of learning experiences of students was overall good although there was scope particularly in support lessons to review the quality of the experiences of students with SEN.

In the highly effective lessons the student experience was of a very high quality and teachers planned for greater student participation. The students' voices were facilitated in meaningful ways and there was less emphasis on learning primarily through listening, reading or transcribing than in other

lessons. In most lessons there was scope to further develop student-centred approaches and students in a focus group affirmed these approaches to learning as optimally supportive of their learning.

In one-to-one or small group lessons, students' learning experiences are somewhat constrained due to the model of SET support used in the school. More than half of all teachers are timetabled for SET and work hard to provide meaningful support. However, the learning experiences were not always effective in targeting actual needs. In some support lessons, students were provided with support in an area that is not an identified priority need, while in other instances, support in a subject is provided by a teacher with a different specialism. SET should be reviewed to ensure it is skilful, responsive and aligned to students' needs.

In some lessons there was a need to set higher expectations for students. Highly effective lessons provided deeper learning experiences that extended students and enabled them to develop understanding through discussion, debate, and through well facilitated scaffolding of learning. In lessons where high expectations for learning were clearly communicated, students themselves had higher expectations for their own learning. Collectively, teachers should examine how expectations for learning might be improved for all students.

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

The management and use of resources received to support students with SEN is satisfactory; some aspects of the organisation of provision require immediate attention.

The school is a very close knit and caring community and evident care is taken with students. However, there is a need to develop a more skilful approach to meeting identified needs using the resources available to the school. There is scope to improve provision for SEN at all levels of the continuum of support (CoS). The school should work collaboratively to examine how the CoS framework can be used in conjunction with the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools- Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools* (2017) to establish how the SEN of students can be met more effectively.

At the support for all level, effective practice was evident in most lessons, with scope to improve the range of inclusive pedagogies. At the support for some and support for a few levels, there is significant need to refine the model of withdrawal teaching so as to ensure that identified needs are met effectively and responsively and so that learners with the greatest level of need receive the highest level of skilful support.

The school has two teachers who carry out co-ordination duties. Together with three other teachers, they form a small core team and all teachers have post-graduate qualifications in the area of SEN. At the time of the evaluation, one teacher from the team was on leave and other vacancies also existed. It was reported by the principal that the vacancies were unavoidable and impacted on the management of resources. The remaining SEN-trained team members are timetabled minimally for SET. The majority of mainstream teachers are timetabled to provide some SET and this is not the most effective response to meeting SEN and providing continuity for students. Deployment of teachers for SET requires reorganisation.

The school is now using an online platform and this provides a useful mechanism for the sharing of relevant information between teachers. Student support files have been developed for students with identified needs and these provide useful support to teachers. Some students with SEN have individual learning plans in place; however, there is a need to further develop the student support files and

individual learning plans for all students with identified needs in order to ensure that teachers are aware of the needs, strengths and targets for learning of all students.

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 structures in place to foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of all students with SEN are good.

All members of the school community who engaged in discussion with the inspection team indicated that the school is a welcoming and inclusive place. The school includes students with wide-ranging needs including complex medical and mobility needs.

Good care structures are in place; a care team meets weekly to discuss and plan for support interventions for students as needs arise. Overall, parents and students were of the view that the school provides a high level of care to students. Some very supportive strategies are in place that enable some students to function within the school with greater ease including the allocation of easier-accessed lockers and colour-coding of students' books and folders. The school should consider ways to build on this type of well-considered support to enhance students' inclusion.

There is a good range of sporting activities and clubs on offer and students in the focus group indicated that there is good access for all students. A lunchtime club is available for some students and is intended to provide a quieter space for those who prefer a calmer environment and respite from the very busy corridors and entrance ways. The school should explore how the general environment could be developed or systems put in place to reduce the level of noise and activity on corridors during times of transition especially for students who do not respond well to high arousal situations.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

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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 Board accepts the recommendations of the inspection report and acknowledges the fact that school management has already set in train measures to address the recommendations contained in the report. The Board also appreciates the acknowledgement by the Inspectorate that, '*Overall, parents and students were of the view that the school provides a high level of care to students*'. It is the board's opinion that this affirms the inclusive ethos that is the hallmark of Bush Post Primary School.

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;