EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN DETENTION AND CARE
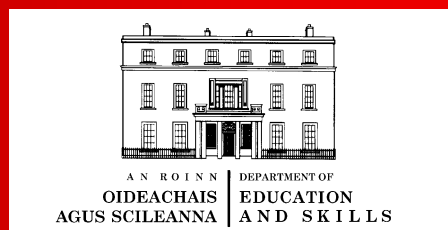
Schools at High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres

AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
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INSPECTORATE

A composite report based on evaluations conducted from 2013 to 2015

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Chapter 1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Educational provision for children in detention and care in Ireland

Currently there are seven schools and one special class attached to a mainstream school catering for children in detention and care in the state. These can be categorised as schools at Children Detention Centres (CDC), High Support Units (HSU), and Special Care Units (SCU). Schools at CDCs generally cater for children who have been convicted or placed on remand by the courts. Schools at HSUs are primarily for children with severe emotional and behavioural challenges and schools at SCUs cater for children who are the subject of special care orders granted by the courts. However these distinctions are not absolute and some of the schools cater for children from more than one of these categories. The majority of the children attending these schools are either in residential care in a centre on the same campus as the school or in relatively close proximity to it. Some are in a shared placement in a foster home and a small number live in their own homes with their parents or close relatives. All of the residential centres are inspected regularly by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and reports on these inspections are available on the HIQA web site.

Aside from the school at Oberstown campus, which had forty-one students enrolled in the 2016/2017 school year and a staffing of eleven full-time and fifteen part-time teachers, the number of students enrolled in these schools ranges between four and seventeen. On average there are four full-time and three part-time teachers employed in these schools[1].

In 2013, the Inspectorate committed to a programme of annual inspections of schools at HSUs, SCUs and CDCs in order to quality assure the education provided for the children and provide advice and support to the teachers, principals and management of the schools. The inspection approach used in evaluating provision in these schools is designed to address the particular circumstances in which they operate. The areas of enquiry which are central to the evaluation model take into account the varied personal, social, and educational experiences of the students prior to placement in the HSU, SCU or CDC, which may impact on their participation, achievement and progression in school.

Between 2013 and 2015, a total of 26 evaluations were conducted in the eight schools attached to HSUs, SCUs, and CDCs and each of these settings was evaluated at least twice in that period. This report is based on the published reports arising from the evaluations carried out in these eight schools.

1.2   Aim of this report

The inspection process is focused on providing clear information on the quality of provision in these schools and on facilitating change and improvement in schools. This report aims, therefore, to provide all interested stakeholders with clear, evidence-based information on the quality of education in schools for children in detention and care. It also seeks to highlight particular aspects of provision that these schools can focus upon in seeking to continually improve and develop the quality of their provision. The findings and recommendations

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[1] Appendix one contains full list of schools at HSUs, CDCs and SCUs

contained in the report may also be used by the relevant government departments and state agencies to promote improvement in the education provided to students in these schools.

1.3   Profile of the learners

In order to fully understand the unique contexts of these schools, a brief profile of the learners who are enrolled in them is provided.

Unique to these schools is the fact that the learners are not enrolled in them by their own or by parental choice. They are there as they require a more specialised service than mainstream schools can provide, or because they are the subject of special care orders granted by the courts or due to convictions or remand placements made by the courts. The vast majority of students attending these schools are of post-primary age, between thirteen and eighteen years.

Most learners have experienced severe educational disadvantage in that they have had fragmented and negative experiences of education and schooling generally over a prolonged period. Many come from a background of chronic social disadvantage including significant disruption of home and family experiences and, in some cases, exposure to substance misuse. While the Inspectorate's evaluations did not enquire directly into the prior educational history of the learners, research (Byrne, 2014) suggests that while many of them attended primary school, a significant minority had not attended any secondary school prior to enrolment in a school at a place of detention or care and, of those who had done so, a majority had been expelled or suspended at least once. Therefore almost all of the learners experienced failure or rejection at some stage in their educational history. Some also present with behaviours that challenge including severe withdrawal, aggression and bullying.

The period of time that learners spend in these schools can range from two weeks to four years. These shorter placements can be problematic in planning for and delivering an educational programme to the learners. For example, some learners may not have been enrolled in the school long enough for the school to assess their needs and plan for their learning. For other learners, short placements and multiple transfers between schools may impact on their ability to successfully complete Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQI) programmes. While some of the learners have attended mainstream schools prior to their placement in these schools and transfer back to mainstream schools, some come from or progress to Youthreach Centres (YR[2]) or Youth Encounter Project schools (YEP[3]). Thus while strong links with the learner's previous and future schools are important in providing continuity and progression in learning experiences, these links are not always established, leading to further fragmentation in their education.

Many learners in these schools also present with special educational needs and severe under-achievement in literacy and numeracy, some of which may be under diagnosed. These difficulties greatly impact on their ability to access the curriculum and to benefit adequately

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[2] The YR programme offers second-chance education and training to young people who have dropped out of school early. It is directed at young, unemployed, early school-leavers aged fifteen to twenty years and operates on a full-time, year-round basis. YR seeks to provide early school-leavers with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and to progress to further education, training, and employment.

[3] YEP schools are designed to provide non-residential community-based education to young people who have become alienated from mainstream education or who are at acute risk of leaving mainstream education.

from their learning experiences. They also contribute to related social and emotional difficulties and have wide implications for both establishing and maintaining relationships with teachers and fellow students.

The combination of factors leading to the students' placement in these school presents particular challenges. These include building positive, affirming relationships that will engender a sense of emotional security and well-being and fostering a favourable disposition towards learning. There are also challenges in developing individualised learning programmes based on real-life learning that address the needs of learners.

1.4 Overview of evaluation model

The framework for the evaluation of schools at HSUs, SCUs and CDCs underpins the inspection activity and forms the basis for the collection of evidence and for the published report. The evaluation framework has three main aspects:

- Teaching, learning and support for students
- School organisation and management
- School planning and school self-evaluation

Each of the three main aspects is further sub-divided as follows:

Teaching, learning and support for students	School organisation and management	School planning and school self-evaluation
Teaching, learning and attainment	General management and organisation of the school	Planning at whole-school, classroom and individual student level
Literacy and numeracy	Attendance and retention	
Life skills	Child protection	
Educational progression		

Table 1.1 The Evaluation Framework for the Evaluations of Schools at HSUs, CDCs and CDUs.

Evaluations are unannounced. Typically, they last for two days and are conducted by two inspectors. Evidence is gathered during a range of inspection activities that include the following.

- An initial meeting with the principal and/or deputy principal (or other teacher in charge) when the inspector or inspectors arrive in the school.
- A series of classroom visits
- Documentation review
- Meeting with the chairperson of the board of management/manager
- Group interview(s) with students
- Administration of teacher questionnaires
- Meeting with director of the residential centre
- Interview and feedback meeting with principal and/or deputy principal

Chapter 2   FINDINGS

2.1   Overview of findings

Inspectors found that the overall quality of provision in these schools was good or very good in most cases. For example, inspectors were positive about the quality of teaching in the vast majority of lessons observed. Classrooms were described as suitable and stimulating learning environments in most instances. Teachers' expectations were appropriate and it was generally observed that respectful relationships between teachers and students were encouraged. Teaching was pitched and paced at a level suitable to the range of student aptitudes and abilities.

Positive references were also made in the reports to the provision of a broad range of subject choices across the post-primary junior and senior cycle syllabuses. Inspectors expressed satisfaction with the extent to which students were enabled to pursue accreditation for their learning at Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied certification levels. Inspectors were equally complimentary about students' engagement with their learning. Reports regularly cited the use of active learning methodologies aimed at motivating students and promoting high levels of engagement and participation. Most reports referred to students being taught in small group settings, in pairs or individually; with the provision of programmes tailored to meet specific student needs. Inspectors were generally complimentary about the benefit of this approach in promoting independent learning.

In one of the schools, where a high support special class operated within a mainstream primary school, inspectors raised concerns about the appropriateness of the provision for learners who were placed in a special class on a full-time basis. In particular, they noted significant variance between the quality of provision for the pupils who were fully integrated into the mainstream school and those in the special class. The inspectors recommended therefore that the school's approach to the inclusion of learners from the special class be reviewed with a view to achieving full inclusion of all learners.

2.2   Main aspects for improvement

In order to highlight particular aspects of provision that these schools can focus upon, this report draws on a number of themes. These themes were consistent across all reports and were reflected in their main recommendations. These areas are as follows:

- Management structures
- Initial assessment of learners' needs
- Individualised planning and target setting
- Ongoing assessment of learners' needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- Attendance
- Whole-school planning

The following sections of this report examine each of these aspects of provision in turn and conclude with specific recommendations for improvement.

2.3   Management structures

Area	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
General organisation and management of the school	22	4

Table 2.1 Quality judgements about general organisation and management of the school.

While the general organisation and management of the school was satisfactory or better in most of the evaluations, the reports highlight a very high level of variance across these schools in terms of patronage and board of management structures. During the time that the evaluations were conducted, five of the schools were under the patronage of TUSLA and two schools were under the patronage of religious authorities. One of the schools has not yet been granted official recognition by the Department of Education and Skills, and as such does not have a patron or board of management under the terms of the Education Act (1998). At the time of writing, the patronage structure of the schools remains unaltered.

This variance in patronage and management resulted in some inconsistencies in the compliance of these schools with some regulations of the Department of Education and Skills. In the initial two years of these evaluations, reports on almost half of the schools noted that the school was not fully compliant with child protection procedures. By 2015 all schools were fully compliant with these procedures.

Other issues that arose regarding the function of the board was the need for boards to be properly constituted, to meet at least five times per year and to comply with routine Department of Education and Skills regulations such as maintaining attendance records in a manner stipulated by the Department. In half of the schools, the issue of continuing professional development (CPD) for staff arose. In these cases inspectors recommended that school management prioritise this issue for their staff, particularly in light of the diversity of learning needs among students. Areas for focused CPD included literacy, the management of challenging behaviour and individualised planning. In another school the practice of conducting an audit and maintaining a register of staff CPD was recommended in order to tap into the expertise of staff.

2.4   Initial assessment of learner needs

The evaluation reports on schools for children in detention and care raised some concerns about assessment practices when learners are enrolled into these schools. For example a main recommendation for one school was as follows.

> 'An appropriate range of assessment procedures should be carried out on each pupil on entry to the school to establish their learning attainments, needs and interests, with a view to putting in place a suitable learning programme for each child.'

Data from the teacher questionnaires administered during these evaluations, contained in table 1.3, also highlighted the issue of assessment on enrolment as a particular challenge.

Question N = 206	SA[4]	A	DK	D	SD
I am well informed about new students' needs and educational background when they join this school	30.9%	43.8%	7.2%	15.5%	2.6%
The initial assessment of a student's needs informs the programme provided to him / her	39.7%	52.1%	3.6%	4.1%	0.5%

Table 2.2 Percentage responses to two items on the teacher questionnaire relevant to initial assessment of students' needs

These figures indicate that a quarter of teacher respondents did not feel they were well informed about new students' needs and educational background when they join the school. Equally, almost five percent of respondents disagreed that the initial assessment of a student's needs informed the programme provided to him/her while a further four percent selected 'don't know' as their response to this item.

Inspectors' comments supported teachers' opinions that poor communication with learners' previous schools and a lack of transfer of educational records was a particular challenge. In one inspection report, as a means of addressing this issue, the school was advised to create a template to support requests for the specific information required from previous placements. It was also suggested that the school seek the results of standardised testing and past school report cards as well as previous individual education and behaviour plans.

2.5   Individualised planning and target setting

Individualised planning involves planning to ensure that the curriculum and teaching methods are tailored to meet the needs of the individual learner so that he/she can participate meaningfully in the learning activities, progress as a learner and achieve good quality outcomes. Target setting is a critical part of effective individualised planning and involves establishing learning targets that are clear, realistic, measureable and not too narrowly focused. (NCSE, 2014)

The quality data recorded by inspectors, contained in table 1.4, indicates that planning for individual students was less than satisfactory in nine of the twenty six evaluations conducted.

Area	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
Classroom planning for individual students	17	9

Table 2.3 Quality judgements about classroom planning for individual students.

Reflecting this concern, individualised planning and target setting for learning was highlighted as a main recommendation in all schools in at least two of the three inspection reports they received over the 2013-15 period.

The recommendations on individualised planning focused on the need for targets to be specific, realistic, attainable and measurable. Where these recommendations were made, existing plans were often criticised for containing general strategies and content as opposed to specific learning targets. For example, one report made the following recommendation.

> 'There is scope to improve the clarity and purpose of some targets in the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students by using more specific and measurable language

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[4] SA = Strongly Agree, A= Agree, DK= Don't Know, D= Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

to describe the intended learning outcomes for the students and to guide implementation at classroom level.'

Recommendations on individualised planning also emphasised the need for the assessment of priority learning needs to take a holistic view of learning and of the learner and to ensure that students' social and personal skills were developed alongside their educational and functional learning. Another report made the following recommendation.

> 'In addition to academic targets, the students' Individualised Education Plans should also address priority areas in relation to social development, emotional and behavioural issues.'

Adopting a holistic view of the learner's priority needs is an important requisite for effective provision in these schools. Many reports referred to the need for individualised planning documents to contain targets relevant to self-management, social skills, behavioural and emotional issues. Reports frequently referred to the particular relevance of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum in informing appropriate learning targets for learners in these schools.

Recommendations around individualised planning were made for two main reasons. Many reports see individualised planning documents as a practical guide for teaching and learning in the classrooms. In one school, where practice in this area was very effective, inspectors saw a clear link between individualised planning documents and teachers' short-term planning, which in turn informed classroom practice. In other schools, however, teachers were advised to utilise individualised educational plans daily within the classrooms as practical frameworks for educational and social skills development and were encouraged to use individualised planning documents as a basis to clearly describe learning objectives and the activities in which learners will engage during lessons. Given their importance as a guide for teaching and learning, some inspectors expressed concern that individualised planning documents had not been prepared for students at the time of the evaluation. In these cases inspectors advised developing a system that would facilitate the prompt provision of individualised planning for students.

Reports also referred to individualised planning as a means of facilitating the tracking of students' progress in identified areas of development. Some reports referred to the need for these schools to track students' progress more extensively and to ensure that they were monitoring all aspects of student development.

Given the importance attributed to individualised planning for students in schools for children in detention and care, inspectors frequently commended schools that had adopted a consistent approach to individualised planning. Equally, schools where approaches to individualised planning were inconsistent were advised to adopt an agreed whole-school approach that would provide consistency at whole-school, classroom and individual student level. Inspectors also commended the practice of facilitating student involvement in devising their own learning plan and ensuring close alignment between the school's personal planning documents and the behaviour management plan devised and implement in the associated care unit.

2.6   Ongoing assessment of learners' needs

Overall the data in table 1.5 below, drawn from the responses to the teacher questionnaires administered during these evaluations, indicates that the vast majority of teachers agree or strongly agree that learning outcomes are regularly assessed.

Question N = 206	SA[5]	A	DK	D	SD
Students' learning outcomes are assessed regularly	47.8%	48.4%	2.9%	0.9%	0.0%

Table 2.4 Percentage responses to one statement on the teacher questionnaire relevant to ongoing assessment of students' needs

Nevertheless, the on-going use of assessment surfaced as a main recommendation in four of the eight schools visited and assessment practices were commented on in all reports. Inspectors saw a particular value in assessment as it facilitates building an accurate and holistic profile of each learner and enables teachers to track their progress and learning. However, inspectors frequently recommended that a broader range of assessment tools be employed in these schools.

When describing current assessment practices, inspectors generally commented favourably on the summative assessment or assessment of learning strategies that were in place. However, in many cases, they saw a need for teachers to balance this form of assessment with formative assessment, or assessment for learning. A clear recommendation arising from many reports was the need to embed formative assessment practices into everyday classroom planning and practice. For example, in one school inspectors saw

> 'Room for improvement in many lessons. Often teachers did not share learning objectives with the students but simply stated the planned lesson activities. Few teachers effectively summarised the learning at the end of the lesson or engaged students in reflecting on what they had learned.'

In making their recommendations regarding assessment for learning, inspectors asserted that a greater emphasis on this form of assessment would encourage students to think more about their own learning and encourage a greater sense of personal responsibility in students. This is particularly important for children in detention and care settings.

The second issue relating to on-going assessment practices is the need for a consistent, whole-school approach to assessment. Overall, while inspectors saw examples of good practice in student assessment, there was variation in practice within schools. Where this variation occurred, inspectors recommended greater consistency in regard to the assessment of students' progress and well-being. For this reason some schools were advised to devise and implement an agreed whole-school policy on assessment, to include both assessment of learning and assessment for learning. In cases where a whole-school review of assessment policy and practices had occurred, inspectors noted that it contributed beneficially to the school's individualised planning process and the monitoring of student progress.

2.7   Literacy and Numeracy

The quality data recorded by inspectors, contained in table 1.6, indicates that literacy and numeracy practices were judged to be satisfactory or better in twenty two of the 26 evaluations.

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[5] SA = Strongly Agree, A= Agree, DK= Don't Know, D= Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Area	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
Literacy	22	4
Numeracy	22	4

Table 2.5 Quality judgements about literacy and numeracy practices

However over half of the eight schools received at least one main recommendation relevant to literacy and numeracy over the three-year period and advice regarding improving literacy and numeracy practices also surfaced in many reports.

Inspectors praised whole-school approaches to literacy and numeracy where good practice was identified. Many schools were commended when agreed, whole-school approaches to literacy, such as '*Drop everything and read'* or to numeracy, such as a clear emphasis on functional mathematics, were evident in classes.

Given the fact that many of the learners in these schools presented with significant literacy and numeracy difficulties, inspectors frequently recommended that agreed whole-school approaches be utilised to address the specific learning needs of the students.

Inspectors also make the point that the most important aspect of whole-school approaches relates to how they are implemented in learning settings. For example, in two schools the inspectors made the following observation.

> 'More focused attention within and across lessons is required for the literacy plan to be implemented effectively.'

In a third school the inspector made the following recommendation.

> 'The effective literacy and numeracy practices documented in the whole-school plan should be implemented.'

In a number of reports the issue of teachers discussing their practice with their colleagues was advised as a means of developing whole-school approaches and as a means of promoting consistency in practice. In two schools, for example, teachers were encouraged to engage in professional discussion on agreed instructional practices as a means of developing and implementing the whole-school policy on literacy and numeracy.

Inspectors found that self-evaluation was being used in most of the schools and that it was having a positive impact on students' learning. In these cases, inspectors' recommendations focused on how their self-evaluation practice could be extended or strengthened. For example, in one school the inspector(s) made the following main recommendation.

> 'As a next step in school self-evaluation, focus groups, interviews and reflection sheets should be utilised with teachers and students to explore emerging themes in greater depth.'

Another school was encouraged to afford greater weight to students' voice in the self-evaluation process.

However, in at least two of the eight settings inspectors had to advise the school to engage in the self-evaluation process as a means of improving learning outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

In evaluating classroom practice in literacy and numeracy, many reports referred to individual features of good practice. In many of the schools, inspectors' believed that a particular emphasis needed to be placed on the development of learners' functional skills in literacy and numeracy, to develop their abilities to use and apply their knowledge in real life and cross-

curricular contexts and to the teaching of skills that are of relevance to the future needs of students.

A variety of practice was reported in relation to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and many reports suggested that the potential of ICT to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills had not been fully exploited. In one school the following recommendation was made.

> 'Greater use should be made of information and communication technologies to enhance pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in a structured and motivating way.'

This type of recommendation was reflected in other reports. For example, one school was advised to consider the use of digital technology to promote reading in all classrooms and another was recommended to make greater use of ICT to reinforce concepts and skills in numeracy.

2.8   Attendance

Main recommendations on maximising student attendance featured in eight of the twenty six reports published and attendance and retention[6] was judged as less than satisfactory in six of the twenty six evaluations.

Area	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
Attendance and retention	20	6

Table 2.6 Quality judgements about attendance and retention.

In some schools where a main recommendation regarding student attendance was made, inspectors found that attendance varied among the students. However in other schools, the issue was more serious, with inspectors commenting that poor attendance was a significant cause for concern. In these schools the issue of students' challenging behaviour was sometimes associated with attendance. When this occurred, some students were spending part of the normal school day under the supervision of the care staff due to restrictions imposed arising from their challenging behaviour in the school. In other cases, difficulties regarding transitioning procedures between residential homes/care facilities and the school were impacting negatively on students' attendance and punctuality.

In all cases where student attendance was a cause for concern, the school was advised to reflect on its existing strategies to promote student attendance and to devise or update an agreed whole-school approach to student attendance. The impact of such an agreed policy was noted in one school where a recommendation on attendance was made in an inspection. In the published report the following year, the inspectors commented that

> 'A newly-developed and highly collaborative attendance strategy is currently being implemented with very positive results.'

Reports on schools where attendance levels were good or very good provide very useful insights into successful whole-school approaches. In many of these cases inspectors noted that teachers invested considerable time into ensuring that school was an affirming experience

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[6] While the quality judgements are recorded for attendance and retention, reports generally focus on attendance and do not comment unfavourably on retention

for students so that they were motivated to attend. For example, in one school inspectors noted that

> 'Students clearly want to come to school and appreciate the routines associated with school.'

The use of rewards to promote attendance was also a feature of good practice in many schools. In one school a key element of the approach to attendance was a points system, whereby a student earned points for attendance, good behaviour and completing work. In a second school, the practice of rewards was formalised in a structured scheme which involved triple evaluation with incremental awards for work, behaviour and attitude. This particular school was commended for its selection of rewards, which were considered to be appropriate, worthwhile, fair and consistent by all involved.

Close collaboration with a variety of relevant partners also contributed to maximising attendance. Where feasible, linkages with parents were an important factor. One school in particular was commended for its practices in this area, where 'parents are routinely invited to attend lessons and this contributes positively to increased student participation.' This option is not, of course, applicable in all schools for children in detention and care.

Of equal importance, however, is collaboration with staff in care centres, and most of the schools with effective practices had policies that were developed collaboratively with care staff and successfully implemented in both settings. Reports also made reference to schools working successfully with both TUSLA and with the Department of Education and Skills to improve the attendance of some pupils who were on a reduced school day.

Some schools were praised for including attendance-related targets in students' individualised planning documents and for carefully monitoring students' progress in attaining them. Finally, in one school, a 'no-suspension, no-expulsion' policy was commended for its positive impact on attendance.

2.9   Whole-school planning

Inspectors judged the quality of whole-school planning to be satisfactory or better in twenty of the twenty six evaluation reports:

Area	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
Whole-school planning for individual students	20	6

Table 2.7 Quality judgements about whole-school planning.

Whole-school planning is considered by inspectors in the context of the school's engagement with the self-evaluation process. In almost all schools, inspectors found that they had 'engaged productively' with the self-evaluation process.' In some cases the process was 'highly commended.' In examining aspects of whole-school planning, inspectors distinguished between administrative planning and curriculum planning. Administrative planning refers to planning for routine administrative and management tasks while curriculum planning refers to planning for the delivery of the curriculum.

Overall, inspectors found the quality of administrative planning to be good. Where recommendations were made they involved developing or reviewing policies in areas of particular importance to these schools. These areas included attendance, drug and substance

abuse, transition processes, behavioural management and continuing professional development for staff members.

The recommendation that schools develop a robust anti-bullying policy also surfaced in a small number of reports. This was reinforced by data from teacher questionnaires which indicated that over ten percent of respondents either did not know about or disagreed that there was an agreed anti-bullying policy and procedures for action in the school.

Question N = 206	SA	A	DK	D	SD
There is an agreed anti-bullying policy and procedures for action in this school	53.1%	35.1%	8.8%	2.6%	0.5%
Incidents of bullying are dealt with well in this school	56.4%	34.9%	7.2%	1.5%	0.0%
The behaviour of students is generally good in this school	12.8%	45.1%	11.8%	21.5%	8.7%

Table 2.8 Percentage responses to two items on the teacher questionnaire relevant to the school's anti-bullying policy.

Inspectors, however, were somewhat more critical of whole-school curriculum planning. A main recommendation on curriculum planning at whole-school level was made in three of the schools evaluated, and most schools received at least one recommendation relevant to curriculum planning in the main body of the reports.

The rationale and purpose of whole-school curriculum planning in schools for children in detention and care was explicitly set out in one report as follows.

> 'However, all of the learners in this school present with special educational needs which may relate to communication, literacy, and social skills, and to limited prior educational opportunities. Consequently, programme planning at whole-school level, should now focus on planning for the various subjects'

Reflecting this point and implicit in many reports was the need for whole-school curriculum planning in these schools to meet the unique needs of the learners, including any special educational needs they may have had. In a small number of cases, inspectors also pointed to the need for whole-school planning to capture and document existing good practice in individual learning settings. This was advocated in order to ensure that good practice was a function of agreed procedures and practices and not as a result of individual teaching styles. In one school, for example, inspectors noted that 'currently, good practice by individual teachers is running ahead of whole-school approaches' and another school was encouraged to 'review its planning processes to ensure that current practice is acknowledged.'

Inspectors advised schools to consider a number of aspects to whole-school curriculum planning. The first was the need for plans to facilitate learners' access to a broad range of experiences in the academic, aesthetic, social and physical aspects of curriculum. As reflected previously, inspectors also advised that particular attention be paid to developing literacy and numeracy skills. For example one school was advised to:

> 'Explicitly record subject-specific language, and to clearly identify and record the areas within their subjects where literacy and numeracy skills can be incorporated.'

Finally some schools were encouraged to use the self-evaluation process to implement an agreed whole-school approach to teaching and learning. These reports recommended that schools support 'a collective focus on instructional practice through the self-evaluation process.'

2.10 Summary

Given the profile and needs of the students who attend these schools, there is likely to be an ongoing need for specialist provision for children in detention and care.

The evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate found that while existing provision has many strengths, there are inherent weaknesses in it that are related to the disparate management structures of the schools; and their relationship with relevant agencies and support services. In particular the lack of a single patron body for these schools and the lack of a way of tracking students' progress as they move between these schools or from mainstream school to one of these schools is a cause for concern.

In regard to the strengths in the existing provision inspectors made positive findings about the quality of teaching in the vast majority of lessons observed: the quality of classroom environments; teachers' expectations for learners; and the fostering of respectful relationships between teachers and students. Positive references were also made in the reports to the provision of a broad range of subject choices; the opportunities for students to pursue accreditation; students' engagement with their learning; and the opportunities they receive for active learning.

The evaluations also highlighted a number of areas for improvement. The effectiveness of schools' assessment practices in providing a clear picture of the learner's educational needs on enrolment and in monitoring progress and achievements over time was queried in many of these reports. In this context, it is relevant that while some of the schools have access to psychologists through the Education and Training Boards (ETB), TUSLA – the Child and Family Agency, and the Health Service Executive (HSE), currently the vast majority of these schools do not have access to the services of the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS[7]) and none of them has access to the National Council for Special Education services (NCSE).

Closely linked to developing robust assessment practices is the need for individualised planning and clear target setting. The reports indicated the need for improvement in both the process of individual planning for the learner's needs and in the setting of clear, measurable, realistic and holistic targets for learners.

Given the unique profile of the learners at these schools, the reports emphasised the importance of developing necessary literacy and numeracy skills and queried the extent to which these schools have whole-school approaches that ensure consistency and coherence in the learners' experiences. A second area where a whole-school approach was advocated is attendance. While instances of successful whole-school initiatives in the area of attendance were reported on, all schools were advised to develop such approaches.

The impact of whole-school planning for teaching and learning was also raised in a number of reports. This was situated in the context of effective self-evaluation and whole-school curriculum planning. Both of these processes are important in guiding teaching and learning, in ensuring consistency in approaches and in facilitating learners' access to a broad range of learning experiences.

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[7] One school, St. Canice's, has an assigned NEPS psychologist

Chapter 3   RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1   Developing the management structures of schools for children in detention and care

Given the fact that schools at HSUs, CDC, and SCUs serve a common core function – to meet the educational and care needs of some of our most vulnerable children, the structures of these schools and their relationship with relevant government departments and agencies (primarily the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla – The Child and Family agency) should be rationalised. Serious consideration should be afforded to placing all of these schools under one patron body. Doing so would provide the necessary clarity with regard to the structure and role of the schools and their governance and relationship with relevant agencies and support services.

Given the similarities in the student cohorts across schools at HSUs, YR centres and YEP schools there are many potential benefits to enhancing co-operation and collaboration between teachers, resource persons, co-ordinators and leaders in these three sectors. This is in line with and builds on a recommendation contained in a Department of Education and Skills Review of the YEP schools. This review recommended that YEP schools 'be renamed Community-Based High Support Schools' and that 'formal inter-YEP school communication channels be established to identify and disseminate best practice' (Department of Education 2006 pp. 17, 18).

Thus any future rationalisation of the management structures of schools at CDCs, HSUs and SCUs should include the YEP schools and consider the inclusion of YR centres. A facility for all of these schools to build and maintain productive relationships with each other and to share best practice in teaching and learning for children in detention and care should be included in the rationalisation programme.

The domain of teachers' collective/collaborative practice in *Looking at Our School – 2016 A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Skills 2016) also highlights further areas for the sharing of expertise between the three sectors:

- Engaging in professional development and professional collaboration
- Devising suitable learning opportunities for learners both across and beyond the curriculum
- Devising consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices
- Capacity building through sharing of expertise

The main recommendations of this composite report highlight some of areas that teachers, resource persons, co-ordinators and leaders in these three sectors might collaborate on:

- Initial assessment of learner's needs
- Individualised planning and target setting
- On-going assessment of learners' needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- Attendance
- Whole-school planning

A priority for the management authorities of these schools is establishing a robust system that will ensure continuity of learning for children in detention and care. This requires a centralised tracking system for each student and an effective means of transferring relevant data between mainstream schools and schools for children in detention and care.

Ensuring that all schools for children in detention and care have access to NEPS and the NCSE should also be prioritised.

Currently there is one special class that caters for children in detention and care which is attached to a mainstream school. The Department, in conjunction with the school and its patron should consider the appropriateness of the special class as a model for the provision of education for children in residential care. All of the children currently enrolled in this special class should be fully integrated into the mainstream school.

3.2 Literacy and numeracy

Focusing on the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills should be a main priority for schools for children in detention and care. Each of these schools should develop an integrated whole-school approach to literacy and numeracy that focuses on 'SMART' target setting, dependable assessment and robust self-evaluation processes. It is also essential that the school's numeracy and literacy policy facilitates a cross-curricular approach that is relevant, challenging and imaginative. Teaching should situate literacy and numeracy skills and concepts in the context of the learner's life experience and personal interests, thereby enabling him/her to see the relevance of literacy and numeracy skills to everyday life. All of these recommendations are consistent with the Government's *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020.*

3.3 Individualised planning and target setting

An effective system for tracking children's learning, for effecting a smooth transfer of vital information on the learner and for managing transitions between schools and to other settings is required given the particular profile of the learners attending these schools. A recognition that education is only one of a range of supports that children in detention and care need and a co-ordinated interagency approach where all relevant partners work together to provide sustained integrated support to children in detention and care are also essential.

A comprehensive, individualised education and care plan that adheres to the 'one child, one plan' principle is therefore central to meeting the needs of these learners and to improving their learning outcomes. Thus, the development of a fully integrated individualised plan which facilitates a unified approach to the individualised learning and care needs of the student should be prioritised. The development of this fully integrated plan is best facilitated by a single patron for these schools.

The education and care plan should be the vehicle through which the child's needs are met. It should contain clear targets based on consistent and dependable assessment and should record their learning, track their progression and be used to regularly revise targets. It should have the facility to record prior learning, including previously completed qualifications, work experiences and life experiences. It should be transferable across all settings and have a significance for all stakeholders in the child's education and care, including parents and, where relevant, the judicial system.

In engaging with the process of individualised planning within schools, teachers are advised to use the student's individualised planning document as the primary guide for his/her learning. They should ensure that these plans contain clear and specific targets, which take a broad and holistic view of learning and the learner. Targets should be informed by dependable assessment data and be regularly updated to reflect the learner's progress. Schools are encouraged to have an agreed whole-school approach to individualised planning. This

approach should be closely aligned to any behaviour management plan that the associated residential or care facility may have in place and should involve the learner in setting and monitoring targets.

In implementing these recommendations schools are encouraged to consider utilising the NEPS-developed *Student Support File*, particularly in cases where the learner's previous school had utilised the *Student Support File*. The *Student Support File* enables teachers to document a learner's progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to learners, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support. The *Student Support File* can be accessed on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

3.4   Assessment

All schools for children in detention and care are advised to have robust and dependable procedures for assessing learners' needs on enrolment and to use data garnered from this assessment to inform future planning for teaching and learning. In order to effect this, schools should ensure that they have access to assessment and relevant educational data from previous schools, which may be available from the *Student Support File*. On an on-going basis, schools are advised to ensure that they have an agreed whole-school approach to assessment in place that provides a holistic profile of each learner. In developing and reviewing the whole-school approach, particular attention should be paid to assessment for learning or formative assessment.

3.5   Attendance

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act[8] all schools are required to develop a statement of 'the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending the school and encouraging regular attendance at school'. Given the unique context of these schools, this should be a key priority for the management authorities of these schools. Thus, all schools are advised to have an effective attendance strategy, which is developed collaboratively with all relevant partners and implemented consistently in both the school and the residential setting. Central to this policy should be a determination to make school a positive, motivating and rewarding experience for students and thus reduce the likelihood of a student missing lessons due to behaviour that challenges. Consideration should be afforded to the use of carefully selected and appropriate rewards for attendance. Inspectors also advise schools to include attendance-related targets in students' individualised planning documents, when relevant, and to carefully monitor these targets.

3.6   Whole-school planning

Inspectors advise schools for children in detention and care to ensure that their curriculum plans meet the unique needs of their students and recognise existing good practice in learning settings. They advise that curriculum plans both facilitate access to a broad range of subjects and place a particular importance on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Given the profile

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[8] Government of Ireland 2000, Section 22 (1)

of the learners attending these schools, well-being should also be integral to the curriculum they deliver. Schools may find the *'Well-being Guidelines for Post Primary Schools'* (Department of Education and Skills 2013) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's *'Draft Guidelines on Well-being in Junior Cycle'* (NCCA 2016) particularly helpful in developing a suitable programme to promote wellbeing. Inspectors further advise that schools utilise the self-evaluation process to inform their whole-school planning.

APPENDIX 1:
Educational Provision for Children in Detention and Care – April 2016

Name	Patron Body	Category of provision	Authorised Staffing	Co-operation Hours[9]
St. Josephs, Ferryhouse, Clonmel 42694A	Education and Training Board	Special School for children in residential care. Not recognised as a school by Dept. of Education and Skills	n/a	15043
Oberstown Detention Centre 42693V	No patron body	A child detention school. Not recognised as a school by Dept. of Education and Skills	n/a	23,607 + 941.22 for summer provision
Ballydowd 20390E	TUSLA	A recognised school in a special care unit 20390E	Principal +2 full-time teachers and 10 part-time hours per week	2,586
Crannog Nua 20136N	TUSLA	Currently a recognised school at a HSU. From September 2016 it will cater for children in special care only	Principal +3 full-time teachers and 15 part-time hours per week	0
St Canice's 20117J	TUSLA	High Support Unit and Special Care Unit	Principal +4 full-time teachers and 23.5 part-time hours per week	800
The High Support Special School 20132F	Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel and Ossory and Catholic Bishop of Ossory.	High Support Only	Principal +3 and 42.5 part-time hours per week	*1110 - 555 to Kilkenny & Carlow ETB and 555 to Waterford & Wexford ETB
Coláiste Ard Álainn 42695C	TUSLA	An educational facility under remit of ETB Cork for High Support and Special Care. Not recognised as a school by Dept. of Education and Skills	n/a	5,210
Holy Trinity NS 20355C	Archbishop of Cashel and Emly	Recognised Primary School – with special class for High Support Unit in Fethard	1 special class teacher	

Table 1.10 Schools for children in detention and care.

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[9] Hours allocated to Education and Training Boards by the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that these schools have capacity to provide a broad range of post-primary subjects. They are commonly used to provide tuition in specialised subjects such as woodwork, home economics etc.

APPENDIX 2: Bibliography

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