An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Crannog Nua Special School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	St Ita's Hospital Portrane Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20136N

Date of Inspection: 27-11-2019

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EVALUATION OF SCHOOLS ATTACHED TO SPECIAL CARE UNITS

The Inspectorate carries out a programme of annual inspections of schools attached to Special Care Units (SCU) and Children Detention Centres (CDCs). Schools at SCUs and CDCs cater for children with severe emotional and behavioural challenges, for children who are the subject of special care orders granted by the courts or for children who have been convicted or placed on remand by the courts. The inspection approach used in evaluating provision in these schools is designed to address the particular circumstances in which they operate.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching and support for students
2. School organisation and management
3. School planning and school self-evaluation

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; a response was not received from the board.

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 mandated persons.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe and RSE).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school did not meet the requirements in relation to number 7 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken.

EVALUATION OF SCHOOLS ATTACHED TO SPECIAL CARE UNITS AND CHILDREN DETENTION CENTRES

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection: 27 November 2019	
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Meeting with management of school and of residential centre • Review of relevant documents	• Analysis of teacher questionnaires • Student focus-group interview • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Crannóg Nua provides on-site education to the young people committed under a special care order to the Crannóg Nua Special Care Unit, Portrane, Co Dublin. Students are typically aged from twelve to seventeen years. The school is under the patronage of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. At the time of the evaluation six students were enrolled. The Inspectorate at the Department of Education and Skills conducted an evaluation of Crannóg Nua School in November 2019; the inspection was unannounced.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of learning and teaching ranged from good to very good, with scope for teachers to develop higher expectations of students in terms of their learning outcomes and to provide for peer learning.
- Student-teacher rapport was excellent in the lessons observed.
- The quality of support for students is good; incorporating student voice into all aspects of schooling is an area for significant development.
- Policies for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) have yet to be developed.
- The quality of individualised planning was very good in most instances.
- The quality of leadership of learning and teaching is good and the quality of school management is very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should provide a more differentiated approach to lesson content and tasks and facilitate sufficient challenge to learners to ensure that they reach their potential.
- Lessons should be organised in such a manner that students get increased opportunities to work together.
- All staff should work collaboratively with students to develop a strong and meaningful student voice in the school.
- SPHE and RSE policies and plans should be developed as soon as possible and be ratified by the board; students must receive the appropriate education in relation to both SPHE and RSE in line with circulars, Department policy and Child Protection Guidelines.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING, TEACHING AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

1.1 THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

- The overall quality of student learning in the lessons visited ranged from good to very good. In the best lessons, students were highly motivated and this was linked to their sense of making very good progress in their learning.
- Student learning was seen to progress through their interaction and dialogue with teachers. Highly effective learning was evident in lessons where students made independent choices about activities and materials that supported learning. This learner-centred approach gave students very meaningful ownership over their learning.
- In very effective lessons, students developed a range of skills appropriate to their age and stage of learning. However, in a number of lessons students did not have the opportunity to work with their peers due to the arrangement of classes which are in the main provided for individual students. It is recommended that greater consideration be given to ensuring that classes are arranged so that students can develop the key skill of "working together" which is an integral part of the Junior Cycle Framework
- Student learning was notably enhanced in all lessons through respectful and positive interactions. The relationships between students and teachers in classrooms supported a productive learning environment.
- High quality student learning was facilitated in many lessons through the use of visuals and appropriate attention to the development of oral language. Students' verbal contributions to lessons demonstrated the development of their verbal reasoning skills.
- Student learning took place across a range of subject areas with very good emphasis on the development of the key skills of literacy and numeracy evident. However, students themselves expressed the desire to have more access to physical education. This is an important area for consideration in terms of student wellbeing and development.

1.2 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching ranged from good to very good in the lessons visited. Teacher preparation was very good and the necessary materials for lessons were well prepared in advance.
- Teachers displayed very good subject knowledge and demonstrated a range of competencies and proficiency in the skills of their subject areas. Teachers also displayed enthusiasm and interest in lesson content which served to motivate and engage the learners.
- It was evident that teachers had high expectations in terms of student behaviour. Learners responded well to this in the course of the evaluation. However, there is a need now for teachers to raise expectations in terms of students' work and capabilities. This should be done by ensuring that materials and tasks are provided that challenge learners more, so as to ensure learners achieve their potential.
- Good attention was paid to developing students' literacy skills in many lessons and this is very positive. Teachers could use more opportunities to encourage learners to read materials in subject matter which is of interest to them.
- Student-teacher rapport was excellent. It was evident that a respectful atmosphere prevailed and teacher interactions were firm but fair. Teachers have made very good efforts to get to know their students. This was most positive and conducive to productive learning.

- Teachers established good learning environments in classrooms. Bright and colourful learning materials were on display. Some teachers strategically placed materials that matched the particular interests of individual students on walls. This is excellent practice as it gives the learners an increased sense of ownership of the learning environment and provides for a very student-centred approach.
- Teachers have availed of continuous professional development (CPD) for the new Junior Cycle programme from Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT). This is a very positive step. It would now be beneficial for teachers to engage in increased peer collaboration. Teachers would benefit from sharing good practice across subject areas about how they enable their students to develop the key skills and use the language of learning in lessons. The materials provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment would provide good support for this.
- Teachers engage in CPD through availing of summer courses and a variety of other courses. Given the challenges posed by providing education to students who are typically on short-term placements, it is vital that teachers upskill in areas that match the needs of the students. It would be very useful for staff to discuss what CPD best suits their needs and the learners' needs and for them to target these CPD areas for future professional development.

1.3 THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- The quality of support for students is good with scope to develop the area of student voice. There was clear evidence of a caring and supportive approach by staff to their students Teachers displayed empathy for the learners and this translated into positive relationships in the classrooms.
- A "check and connect" programme is run weekly to promote students' positive wellbeing and good behaviour. The programme is very well structured and enables students to develop the skills of target setting, reflection and self-management of their learning and behaviour.
- While active student voice was evident in some aspects of classroom practice, it is an area for significant development. Students should be consulted in a meaningful way about their learning; how their learning works best for them and what further supports would help them learn better. To progress the understanding of how student voice can be meaningfully incorporated into learning, it is recommended that staff consider using the student voice toolkit available at www.ourvoiceourschools.ie. The principal should actively promote student voice and student leadership in the school and consideration should be given to setting up a student council.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 LEADERSHIP OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

- The quality of leadership of learning and teaching is overall good with some areas requiring review and improvement. In-school communication is very good and staff expressed very high levels of satisfaction with how well the school is led. Regular staff meetings are held.
- The daily timetable is created collaboratively with input from principal, teachers and informed by updates from care staff. Typically, the ratio is one teacher to one student. This should be reviewed. Every effort should be made to increase the number of students in lessons where possible and to incorporate more team teaching. Student voice needs to be incorporated into planning the daily timetable.

- The principal has shown very good leadership by overseeing the development of a CPD policy for staff. In order to implement the policy fully, teachers should record their professional learning in the learning log as per the policy. This would give the principal a good overview of the existing skill set of staff and, will help to ensure that staff undertake future CPD that is most relevant to the needs of the learners.

2.2 MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

- The quality of school management is very good. The school building and the classrooms are maintained to a very high standard which positively supports a culture of learning. The school is well managed on a day-to-day basis and an orderly atmosphere prevails.
- There are many relevant policies in place. However, there is an urgent need to develop a whole-school policy for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in line with the requirements of the Child Protections Guidelines. It is vital that a whole-school and cross-curricular approach be adopted to the delivery of SPHE. Staff need upskilling in this area and this should be provided as a matter of priority.
- The code of behaviour should be reviewed, especially in light of questionnaire data from teachers' which provide evidence that student behaviour is not optimal. In the review it would be beneficial to incorporate student voice, to use positive language and to make the policy more visual.
- Some good developments have taken place in relation to improving student attendance such as improvements in recording and analysing data. This combined with very positive working relationships between the principal, and management and staff in the residential unit have brought about improved outcomes for students.
- Notwithstanding the progress since the last evaluation, partial daily attendance remains a significant issue. The manner in which this subset of data is analysed needs further refinement so that all absences that occur within the course of school days are counted and collated. The rationale for improved attendance in terms of the enormous value and opportunity that the school is providing for their learners needs to be reflected upon and promoted at every opportunity by all staff.

3. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

A. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

- The quality of individualised planning is very good in most instances. Priority learning needs for the students are outlined. Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART) targets and appropriate strategies to achieve the targets are outlined very well.
- At a whole-school level, teachers make fortnightly plans with learning objectives, methodologies, resources and differentiation strategies identified for each student. The review section of these plans is completed by most teachers, and it is recommended that a consistent approach to this be adopted by all teachers.
- In one instance the result of excellent planning for differentiation was seen to translate into very high levels of student engagement and strong learning outcomes for students. However, overall, there was a need for greater consistency when planning for differentiation.
- In order to achieve a more consistent whole-school approach teachers should consider planning collaboratively for student learning outcomes. In this collaboration teachers could

share best practice in terms of successful planning, leading to successful outcomes for individual students.

- The school has moved from relying on programmes based on the Quality and Qualifications Ireland framework to using the Junior Cycle Framework (JCF). Teachers have made a good start on using the JCF to inform planning. It would be very useful for teachers to plan for other areas of learning that could be supported through the Level Two Learning Programme (L2LP). It was evident in the course of the evaluation that some students would benefit from the Personal Care L2LP in terms of progressing their education in regard to self-care.

B. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has engaged very well with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. A comprehensive SSE report based on the school's School Improvement Plan (SIP) has been developed. Both the report and the SIP are based on good collection and analysis of data.
- The principal and teachers have engaged in implementing most of the recommendations made in previous evaluations and progress is ongoing.
- Leadership capacity is being built in the school in some cases through advanced studies. To build on the existing good practice, there is a need for all teachers to build their own leadership capacity.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of 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 pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a *very good* 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 pupils' 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;