An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Evaluation of Schools at High Support Units, Special Care Units, and Child Detention Centres

REPORT

St. Canice's School,
Coovagh House,
Mulgrave St. '
Limerick
Roll Number: 20117J

Date of evaluation: 13 December 2013

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Introduction

An inspection of St. Canice's school was undertaken by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills in December 2013. The school is situated on the grounds of St. Joseph's hospital in Limerick City centre. The school currently caters for students from a range of settings that are supported by the Health Service Executive. These settings include students who reside in high support residential or in secure settings as well as a number who come directly from home. The school has nineteen students on roll. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The school is well served by a supportive and informed board of management.
- The quality of teaching observed is good and very good in many cases. The teachers enjoy a good rapport with students and employ effective management strategies.
- The principal displays effective leadership skills. He is well supported by a diligent and conscientious in-school management team. Other members of staff contribute productively and professionally to school life.
- The students are positive about school life and they value the attention and tuition they receive from teachers.
- The students' educational progression is carefully documented. All students are afforded the opportunity to achieve national certification.
- Very good communication is maintained between the school and parents and/or care personnel.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that management develop a number of organisational and curricular policies as outlined in the report. Priority should be given to developing enrolment and attendance policies.
- The board is reminded to ensure all policies are signed and dated.
- Staff is advised to revise the current individual education plan template.

1. The quality of teaching, learning and support for students

1.1 Teaching, learning and attainment

- The quality of teaching observed is good and very good in many cases. Lessons observed are well prepared by teachers and suitably differentiated in accordance with the ability levels of students. Staff is complemented on the wide range of subjects taught to students, which encompasses: literacy, numeracy, technology and social skill development. All students are afforded the opportunity to achieve certification at Junior Certificate, and at Leaving Certificate level. Collaborative learning through project work is exploited at a number of levels and enables students to gain accreditation through the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP). The teachers enjoy a good rapport with students and employ effective management

strategies. They in turn respond with creditable levels of interest and participation. There is a very good emphasis on skill development during lesson activity with students regularly asked to plan and document the various stages of their learning. Information communication technology is used productively to complement student learning. Responses from the interview schedules indicate that students are positive about school life and they value the attention and tuition they receive from teachers in the small class settings.

1.2 Literacy and numeracy

- On attendance, all students are assessed in both literacy and numeracy utilising standardised tests. Literacy and numeracy policies were devised following the staff's engagement in school self-evaluation. There is an emphasis on promoting literacy across the curriculum and worthwhile initiatives, including Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), are utilised daily in an effort to promote reading as a pleasurable and worthwhile activity. Mathematical skills are developed effectively and are linked to practical activity and to the students' own experiences. Students are obliged to plan and budget for activities and trips outside of school and this is very good practice. Students in Coovagh House have the opportunity to develop their skills in numeracy in real life situations such as budgeting for activities and social outings.

1.3 Life skills

- The staff makes a concerted effort to address the pastoral needs of students. To this end social skill development receives careful attention in real life situations, both in school and through organised activity in the community. Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is taught by the principal and a school based programme on anger management and emotional literacy is available to students. A whole-school policy should now be developed that documents this very good practice to ensure continuity and progression into the future.

1.4 Educational progression

- The students' educational progression is carefully documented. Informative assessment data is recorded in individual student files. The information resulting from standardised testing is shared by staff and used subsequently to inform future programme selection. Each teacher contributes to a daily log, recording the progress of students both academically and socially. This data then forms the basis for a monthly report in tracking the progress of students. Parents are routinely kept informed of student progress by means of an annual report.
- Staff devote considerable effort in placing students in further education on leaving St. Canices. They succeed in returning a number of students to mainstream education, while others progress to centres of education such as Youthreach. The development of a policy on the transition of students is recommended to facilitate this process.

2. The quality of school organisation and management

2.1 General management and operation of the school

- The school is well served by a supportive and informed board of management. The chairperson maintains regular contact with the principal and speaks highly of his contribution to the school. Financial accounts are audited annually. The board is reminded to ensure all policies are signed and dated.
- The principal displays effective leadership skills. He is a caring professional who gives clear direction to the school. He is well supported by a diligent and conscientious in-school management team (ISM). Other members of staff contribute productively and professionally to school life by undertaking additional duties. Management should consider commissioning an audit of in-service courses completed by staff to establish the skill base in the school.

2.2 Attendance and retention

- The very good communication, maintained by the school with parents and care personnel, ensures satisfactory levels of attendance and retention in school. Of the

nineteen students on roll, fifteen are currently in attendance. In this context, management is advised to draft an enrolment policy and a school attendance policy in line with established Department of Education and Skills (DES) practices. Parents are routinely invited to attend lessons and this contributes positively to increased student participation. Staff are supported in their duties of care with regular assistance forthcoming from external professionals.

2.3 Child protection

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* and that the school is compliant in general, with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*
- The principal has stated that on the advice of the Health Service Executive he doesn't teach the Relationship and Sexuality Education and the Stay Safe aspects of the SPHE programme.

3. The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation

3.1 Planning at whole-school, classroom and individual student levels

- The quality of short-term planning is good overall with clear objectives set, appropriate methodologies and resources identified. Individual education plans are characterised with relevant detail. Staff is advised to revise the current template and identify clear aims/objectives and appropriate strategies for implementation.
- There is scope for development in planning at whole-school level. It is recommended that a number of organisational and curricular policies be developed (enrolment, attendance, SPHE, transition processes students and the management of behaviour). There are some excellent programmes and practices in operation in the school and these now need to be documented to inform current and future good practices. Currently, good practice by individual teachers is running ahead of a whole-school approach to documentation.

3.2 The school's capacity for self-evaluation and improvement

- The teachers have engaged productively in school self-evaluation and have developed informative literacy and numeracy policies. Staff and management have addressed the recommendations made in previous reports and good progress has been made to date. The messages emanating from the teachers' questionnaires are positive with regard to organisation, teaching and learning. A range of opinion was expressed with regard to the behaviour of students and this issue should be explored further by staff and at management level.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

- The Board of Management of St. Canice's School wish to acknowledge the positive and affirming report following the recent inspection of our school.
- The Board wishes to commend the positive comments on the effectiveness of the Management and Leadership of our School and acknowledges the positive nature of the report on the standard of Teaching and Learning in St. Canice's.
- The Board is pleased to note the recognition by the report of the caring and welcoming environment that is in place to support all students with whom teachers enjoy a good rapport and employ effective management strategies.
- We are pleased that the report recognises and endorses the very good communication between our school, parents and care team personnel.
- We also affirm the finding that students are positive about school life in St. Cancies' and that they value the attention and tuition they receive from the teachers.
- The Board commends the active role that parents and carers take when invited to attend and participate in lessons. This is a major factor influencing increased student participation, attendance and retention.
- We acknowledge that recommendations made in previous inspection reports have been addressed immediately and that good progress has been made to date.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

- A number of policy documents have been brought to the Board of Management for discussion, debate and approval. This process will continue. Priority has been given to complete a comprehensive review our enrolment, attendance, pupil transition and SPHE policy documents.
- Management have begun a process to ensure all policy documents are signed and dated.
- St. Canice's will continue its development of a Behaviour Support Framework that is relevant and accessible to all pupils. Management and staff will explore ideas which encompass our mission statement and ethos.
- The Individual Education Plan template has been revised and further developed by the school staff. Recommendations made by the inspectorate have been fully implemented and a further review of the I.E.P. template will take place before the end of the 2013/14 school year.
- Management will undertake a comprehensive review of in-service courses and additional learning completed by staff to establish additional skills available to the school.
- Management will review cooperation between school, Special Care Unit and our 4/5 other Regional HSE Residential Units in delivering R.S.E. and Stay Safe aspects of SPHE programme that are relevant to teenagers attending school. Management are mindful of potential repetition as many students are supported by ACTS, CAMHS and other courses provided internally by HSE care teams dealing with aspects of R.S.E. and Stay Safe.