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	St. Canice's Special School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Coovagh House St. Joseph's Grounds Mulgrave Street Limerick
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20117J

Date of Inspection: 07-11-2019

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as 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 PostPrimary 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, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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

Date of inspection:	07 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

St. Canice's Special School is attached to Coovagh House residential centre, located in the grounds of St. Joseph's Hospital, Limerick. The school is under the patronage of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Staffing consists of one administrative principal, four full-time teachers and three part-time teachers. At the time of this evaluation, there were eleven students enrolled, including three students who were residing in Coovagh House. Students' attendance levels are generally good. Junior Cycle subjects, the Junior Cycle Schools' Programme (JCSP) and subjects to Leaving Certificate level are provided to students. The school has established very good links with the community.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The students have good learning experiences, particularly through their participation in community projects and local initiatives.
- Teaching is of a good standard overall; lessons would benefit from the provision of more opportunities for students to express their opinions.
- The school provides a nurturing environment and teacher-student interactions are mutually respectful.
- High-quality leadership of learning and teaching is evident.
- The quality of school planning for students' learning is good; in the area of individual teacher planning, school practice would benefit from the further development of planning for students' skills development.
- School self-evaluation and school improvement approaches are highly commendable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should promote the student voice during lessons by creating more opportunities for students to express their opinions and to develop their higher-order thinking skills.
- All teachers' individual planning should contain a greater focus on teaching the skills necessary for life-long learning, through incorporating the junior-cycle key skills into the short-term planning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1.1 THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

- The quality of learning is good. Teacher-student rapport was positive and interactions were respectful in the lessons observed. During these lessons, a climate of mutual respect, which was appropriate to the setting, was fostered.
- Students are facilitated to continue participating in the learning programmes that they had been studying prior to their enrolment in St. Canice's Special School.
- Students are given opportunities to access an appropriate range of subjects in order to provide continuity of learning and to prepare them for transitioning back to mainstream schools, as appropriate. The school provides the JCSP and students are enabled to undertake Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations in some subjects.
- Most students observed responded well to teacher encouragement. Very good practice was noted where students were affirmed for their achievements. Learning could be further enhanced on a whole-school level by creating more opportunities for students to express their opinions during lessons.

1.2 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers' knowledge of their students aids purposeful lesson planning. All teachers were well prepared for teaching and there were clear learning intentions for the lessons observed.
- Where there was explicit attention to literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, it was effective. There is scope to use subject-specific terms and key vocabulary more effectively across subjects and to extend students' vocabulary across the curriculum.
- The school is well resourced with literacy and numeracy-related games and books, which were well utilised by the students during the inspection.
- Students assessed their individual progress through self-assessment and student profiling aspects of the JCSP statements. While teachers use good assessment practices with regard to assessing student behaviour and socialisation, the development of formative assessment and the provision of written formative feedback regarding students' learning are areas for improvement.
- Students displayed a good ability to recall information. In order to develop students' higher order thinking skills, teachers are advised to create more opportunities for students to express their opinions about lessons.

1.3 THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- The quality of support for students is commendable. Building positive relationships with students is central to the support offered to individual students. Staff take time and care in getting to know their students, which is particularly evident in the thought and effort given to organising affirming social experiences and educational outings. Commendable efforts are made, through the use of co-operative hours, to make extra subjects available in the school in order to meet the curricular needs of students.

- The school has made good progress in establishing the continuum of support process to address the learning needs of the students. All students have a personal education plan outlining their strengths and needs, and this plan is reviewed regularly. Learning targets and strategies are in place to assist students to achieve the identified targets. There is a wholeschool approach to differentiation for each student.
- The school has structures in place to seek information on students when they transfer from another educational setting. Upon enrolment, the principal and teachers carefully consider summaries from the students' previous educational setting, if available. Furthermore, all students are assessed in order to obtain base-line data in literacy and numeracy skills. The information provided in these assessments informs planning to support students.
- The importance of healthy eating and engagement in regular physical activity by students is promoted and students have access to on-site gymnasium facilities. Students are also encouraged to undertake a variety of supervised extra-curricular activities such as library and museum visits.
- During the focus group interview, the students who participated spoke very positively about the enjoyable learning experiences in the school. Students reported that they like the classroom-based achievement (CBA) aspect of the JCSP. Some students spoke of the weekly trips out to the local church and described their growing awareness of the benefits of this quiet space and time for reflection.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 LEADERSHIP OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

- Leadership of learning and teaching is of a high quality. The skills of the teachers are utilised to ensure as broad a curriculum as possible is provided to students. Staff members meet with the principal regularly to discuss students' participation, behaviour, wellbeing and learning.
- A well-structured, orderly learning environment is provided. The principal and staff have established a very positive school atmosphere and good working relationships are in place between the school and the other professionals involved in the care of the students.

2.2 MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

- Overall management of the organisation is of a good standard. There is evidence of good distributed leadership and effective in-school communication. In the Inspectorate survey of teachers, there was very favourable response with regard to management processes in the school, and teachers agreed that their opinions were valued in the decision-making processes in the school.
- The board is highly committed to the school. It supports the teachers and their work by providing access to relevant continuous professional development (CPD) and by demonstrating an interest in students' progress. Board members visit the school regularly and are open to ideas that bring about school improvement.
- The school provides for a range of students with varying social needs. However, the admission policy does not clearly outline who is eligible to attend the school. Therefore, a review of the admissions policy is advised, in order to describe the criteria to be used when considering enrolment and admission of students to this school.
- The learning environment is bright and a commendable range of students' work and achievements is displayed.
- Very good procedures are in place to monitor and record attendance. The principal communicates with parents and with care personnel to ensure good levels of attendance and retention.

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

3.1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

- A good range of subjects is provided and whole-school planning is available for the learning programmes. Regular whole-school meetings are held to discuss and review student plans within the framework of the *continuum of support*. The timetable is amended daily to ensure that students access a definite range of subjects.
- The quality of individualised planning for students' learning is good. Fortnightly plans are developed and student progress is recorded on a monthly basis. Teachers also maintain logs and daily records for each student detailing aspects of progress, attendance, behaviour, social and educational concerns. In order to focus more on the development of students' academic skills, teachers are advised to link the learning intentions contained currently in their shortterm planning with the learning intentions of the eight key skills for the junior cycle. This information should also be shared with the students.

3.2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- School self-evaluation and school improvement processes are highly commendable. There is evidence of a whole-school approach to implementing improvements in literacy and numeracy in every classroom. The principal and teachers also recognise the importance of promoting attendance and, as part of the SSE process, they are analysing, tracking and correlating attendance records with the students' examination performance results. The school is committed to delivering formative feedback to the students based on information gathered from the ongoing exploration of the link between student achievement and attendance.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the report and notes the positive findings detailed throughout. The management and staff of St. Canice's School will continue the good practice identified in the inspection report.

The management and staff will continue to develop the effective processes highlighted by the Inspectorate. The Board acknowledges the importance of the positive relationship between our students and staff. We are encouraged by the affirmation of the highly effective practices identified in our school and we acknowledge the very positive relationship between our students and staff.

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 of Management will ensure that all staff avail of further CPD to improve classroom planning during the current academic year.

Through in-service and whole school planning teachers will devise subject specific strategies to promote the student voice during lessons.

Teachers' individual planning will contain a greater focus on teaching the skills necessary for life-long learning by incorporating the junior-cycle key skills into the short-term planning.

A review of the admissions policy has begun and when completed will describe the criteria to be used when considering enrolment and admission of students to St. Canice's School. All stakeholders will be consulted as part of this process.

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 wholeschool 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;