

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Special Educational Needs (SEN)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Lusk Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Raheny Lane Rathmore Road Lusk, County Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76213T

Date of Inspection: 10-01-2018



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Special Educational Needs (SEN) under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	9 and 10 January 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Discussion with special needs assistants (SNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Interaction with students• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Lusk Community College is a co-educational secondary school with an enrolment of 614: 326 boys and 288 girls. The school offers an optional Transition Year Programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVA) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme in addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs (SEN) was good; examples of highly effective practice were also noted within individual lessons.
- Innovative practices to support differentiation and inclusion are a current development focus and there was evidence of these across most lessons.
- Provision and whole-school support for students with SEN are good with scope to develop the expertise at 'support for some' and 'support for a few' levels.
- Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are provided with a high level of support and are included in lessons, social activities and school events commensurate with their needs.
- Planning and preparation for SEN are very good, it is timely that the school is developing access to the Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) for students, where appropriate.

Recommendations

- Strategies to support differentiation should be further embedded across all lessons.
- The school should provide supports to students with the greatest level of need using the most expert teachers.
- The introduction of Junior Cycle L2LPs should be progressed as a priority.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning for students with SEN was good. Examples of highly effective practice were also noted within individual lessons. A range of learning contexts was observed including small-group withdrawal lessons, whole-class lessons and a class for students with ASD.
- The school is working towards the greater use of co-operative teaching. Teachers worked together in two of the observed lessons. Teachers' commitment to collaborating in this way is commendable. However, this strategy worked best where it was evident that teachers had planned together and where the needs of the students requiring support were identified and targeted. Teachers should plan for and implement co-operative teaching so as to maximise outcomes from this use of resources.
- The focus on meeting the wide range of learning needs in whole-class groups using differentiated practices was evident in most lessons. This approach was most effective when methodologies were selected to support active learning for all. Good differentiation practice was characterised by the use of purposeful group or paired activities, differentiated materials and tasks, and astute teacher assessment of learning. Further use of such strategies is recommended.
- In a few lessons, students were over-supported; teachers provided answers or explained concepts too readily without allowing students sufficient opportunities to estimate or hypothesise and develop thinking skills. Additionally, in these lessons, there was scope to improve the balance of teacher and student voice.
- A highly effective example of the innovative use of information communication technology (ICT) in the form of a 'flipped classroom' approach was observed. In this lesson, students were noted to work in a highly motivated manner at their own pace and also co-operatively with peers. There was a keen awareness of the need to balance this approach with other strategies drawing on teacher-student interaction and application of knowledge acquired through digital media. This practice should be shared and further developed.
- It is very positive that the school emphasises the concept of *Blooms Taxonomy* as an effective model to support differentiated learning and questioning, and that reference is made to this on posters on classroom walls. In some lessons, there was scope to develop questioning further as an effective tool to promote deeper learning.

2. PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT SEN

- Provision and whole-school support for students with SEN are good. All students are enabled to access a broad and balanced curriculum. The provision of mixed-ability classes in the junior cycle is a measure of the school's commitment to inclusive practice.
- The senior management team is highly committed to promoting effective and innovative practices in teaching with an emphasis on improving learning outcomes for all learners. The school development plan outlines comprehensively a wide range of school initiatives in relation to developing inclusion and SEN provision.
- A core SEN team has been established and is led dynamically by a co-ordinator who has a post-graduate qualification in SEN. Within the team, distinct responsibilities have been assigned and very good collaboration is occurring.

- The core team is timetabled to provide some supports to students with SEN. However, the majority of teachers in the school are also involved in the provision of withdrawal and small-group SEN lessons. While continuing to develop the capacity of all subject teachers to meet diverse needs in their own classrooms, students with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.
- There are two classes to meet the specific needs of students with ASD which benefit from the dedicated work of a co-ordinator. Students are provided with a high level of support and are included in lessons, social activities and school events commensurate with their needs. In discussions with the inspector, students from the senior class reported high levels of satisfaction with their school experience.
- It is highly commendable that whole-school continuing professional development (CPD) has taken place to give all staff a greater understanding of the needs of students with ASD and that a disability awareness week and other initiatives such as presentations from guest speakers have taken place.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation for SEN are very good. School management have strategically developed the core SEN team, empowering the leadership roles of the teachers involved. They also promote CPD actively for teachers with a clear focus in recent times on student-centred learning.
- It is good practice that students' needs are communicated to teachers at the beginning of the school year and that information is available to teachers on the school's digital platform. Commendably, SEN is an item on the agenda for all staff meetings.
- It is good that teachers can access information about students' priority learning needs and strengths. Pupil information also includes useful strategies for teaching and targets for pupils learning. However, there was scope for further development of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) targets in some of the documentation.
- The SEN co-ordinator plans for incoming students following consultation with feeder primary schools, parents, students and teachers. Information from standardised tests, psychological reports and teacher reports is used to establish support needs. Supports are provided in a flexible manner allowing for changing needs throughout the year.
- It is very good that a new student tracking system is being developed. It is intended that results from standardised tests will be collated for this purpose. It is recommended that this be extended to include information from other sources to provide more reliable information so that interventions for students with SEN can be evaluated and those who require intervention can be readily identified.
- The school is to be commended for identifying alternative programmes for a small number of learners who could not engage with the established Junior Certificate Programme. It is timely that the school is developing access to the Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes for this group of students, and it is recommended that the school progress this as a priority.
- Effective processes are in place to enable teachers to refer a student for SEN support where issues arise. It is very good practice that the SEN co-ordinator collaborates with the subject teacher to establish the supports that can be put in place to enable students' needs to be met in the classroom prior to planning for withdrawal interventions.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to 1, 2 and 3 above but did not meet the requirements in relation to 4. At the time of the evaluation, not all teachers were aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard; this should be addressed as a matter of priority.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and SEN co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Lusk Community College welcomes the many positive observations made by the Inspector during the recent SEN inspection. In particular, it was pleased with the quality of teaching and learning and the provision and whole school support for students with SEN. The Board also notes the high level of support and inclusion practices commented on by the inspector in relation to students with autism spectrum disorder. The Board commends the teachers' use of differentiated practices in meeting the wide range of learning needs in whole class groups and looks forward to these practices being further embedded. It also commends the innovative use of ICT in delivering lessons that encourage motivation and peer cooperative learning. Finally, the Board commends the collaboration of the Core Team.

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 welcomes the recommendations of the inspector to support the school's improvement plans. The school is committed to embedding differentiation across all lessons as part of its current development plan and welcomes the suggestion to further utilise Bloom's Taxonomy as an effective tool to improve the use of questioning.

In relation to the recommendation regarding cooperative teaching, the school plans to provide time for CPD in this area and encourage its development during staff meetings and teach meets.

The Board understands that the school is currently investigating the efficacy and possibility of enhancing the current tracking system by including other sources as recommended by the inspector.

The Board of Management recognises the importance of the L2LPs as part of the new junior cycle. Students currently studying QQ1 level 2 skills for life will complete their current programme and incoming First Years will study for L2LPs where appropriate in keeping with Junior Cycle reform.

In keeping with the recommendation regarding the revised child protection procedures, the Board of Management is satisfied that all staff have been fully updated on their responsibilities as mandated persons. Furthermore staff have engaged in relevant certified CPD during the time allocated to schools by the Department of Education and Skills for this purpose.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on 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;