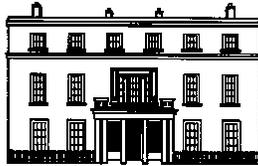


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Special Education
REPORT

Tarbert Comprehensive School
County Kerry
Roll number: 81006S

Date of inspection: 2 March, 2016



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	1 and 2 March, 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal, Special Educational Needs (SEN) team, teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs)• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during nine class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good, with many examples of excellent practice.
- A calm, supportive and respectful atmosphere is a characteristic of the school.
- An enthusiastic and dedicated senior management and SEN team lead whole-school inclusive practices.
- High quality individual education plans (IEPs) are developed for each student with identified SEN.
- All of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) additional teaching resources are used appropriately and flexibly to meet the identified needs of students with SEN.
- Planning and preparation for SEN provision is excellent.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Purposeful and structured collaborative activities should be incorporated into lessons, where appropriate, to encourage more active student participation and engagement in their learning.
 - Student-support files should be developed to record additional supports provision for students with SEN, and to monitor, record and track progress and needs over time.
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INTRODUCTION

Tarbert Comprehensive School is a stand-alone co-educational school under the patronage of the diocese of Kerry. The school serves a wide catchment area of rural north Kerry and west Limerick with a current enrolment of 588 students. After Junior Certificate, senior cycle programmes include the established Leaving Certificate, with options of Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good with many examples of excellent practice. This included very good use of information communications technology (ICT) and visuals to support learning. Lessons were paced appropriately and student-centred approaches were characteristic of most lessons where structured activities were positively used to support student learning.
- Classes ranged in size from individual and small-group withdrawal to whole-class groups and groups that were provided with team teaching. Lessons focused on a range of learning outcomes including the development of literacy and numeracy skills and personal development, and a range of curriculum areas including English, Mathematics and Geography. Most of the lessons observed promoted the very good practice of differentiated and personalised learning using a variety of scaffolded tasks.
- The learning intentions were shared in almost all lessons which is very good practice. These were revisited in most lessons by the teacher during or at the end of lessons. This good practice should be developed further to allow students to assess their own learning either independently or collaboratively using Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies that are currently being developed in the school.
- Teachers demonstrated very good knowledge of their students and their learning. Interactions between students and their teachers were respectful and students were comfortable asking questions. Student contributions were affirmed appropriately. This led to a very positive and supportive atmosphere. A calm and respectful atmosphere is a characteristic of the school.
- Whilst there were many opportunities for students to work independently and apply their learning individually, more purposeful and structured peer collaborative activities should be incorporated into lessons where appropriate, to engage students and promote more active participation in their learning.
- The holistic needs of students are met through skills development being incorporated into lessons as well as through very good pastoral care practices, social skills classes, lunchtime clubs and through a very well developed Friends for Life programme delivered by trained and enthusiastic teachers. This is very positive. All lessons concentrated appropriately on literacy development and on subject-specific terms as well as numeracy, where appropriate.
- Formal and informal assessment of learning outcomes occurs which includes a high level of tracking of student progress within subject areas. This information is compared with diagnostic assessment results and used to plan for SEN provision. This is well established and very good practice.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support was very good with an enthusiastic and dedicated senior management and SEN team leading whole-school inclusive practices. A new dedicated classroom has been built and will positively add to the current accommodation for support classes.
- The SEN co-ordinator, through the school's intranet system and through formal and informal meetings with teachers, facilitates the sharing of information, IEPs and good practices, ably supported by the SEN core team and senior management.
- Students have access to the full curriculum and, depending on individual learning needs, may follow a reduced curriculum, receiving additional teaching supports during withdrawal lessons, individually or in small groups. Co-operative and team-teaching support is also provided in mainstream lessons, which is very good practice, and is used flexibly to meet the needs of students as they emerge.
- Collaboration between teachers is of a high standard. A very good formal in-school referral system is in operation to ensure that students who need additional supports, receive appropriate supports. Formal diagnostic assessments, class tests and other observations are consulted, progress monitored, and programmes put in place in consultation with parents/guardians, the student, teachers and the SEN team. The continuum of support is established practice in the school which reflects very good practice.
- School management encourages continuous professional development (CPD) for all teachers in the areas of SEN and inclusive practices. The core SEN team of teachers hold Post-Graduate Diplomas in SEN and are providing very effective and organised approaches to SEN provision. Induction and mentoring of new staff takes place and the school has been involved with many whole-school CPD events on inclusive practices.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Very high levels of department planning and preparation for SEN provision are evident. All of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) additional teaching resources are used appropriately and flexibly to meet the identified needs of students with SEN and IEPs are devised for all students who are receiving additional supports. These are shared on the school's intranet system for all teachers to access in order to plan to meet the needs of the students in their own subject areas.
- Priority timetabling of all known NCSE teaching resources, informed by high levels of preparation and planning, ensures that a core team of appropriately qualified and interested teachers provides most of the teaching support. This is excellent practice, thus allowing for continuity and optimal use of the resources. Planning should be extended to ensure that senior cycle students with SEN are provided with appropriate additional supports on all available opportunities on their timetables, where possible.
- The LCA programme is provided for students whose strengths and needs are best suited to experiential and applied learning and who may not otherwise succeed at accessing a Leaving Certificate curriculum. This is very good inclusive practice.
- Gathering of relevant information on incoming first-year students is very well coordinated and embedded in school practice. A period of settling in is allowed in September where students are monitored. If support is necessary, additional supports are

then put in place following the aforementioned consultation processes. This is very good practice in relation to transition from primary school.

- SNA support is very well deployed to support the needs of students who have been assigned access to SNA support. It is very good practice that students who have significant care needs, and who have not been granted SNA access, receive SNA support where possible, based on school-assessed levels of need.
- Very good formal and informal assessment occurs and student progress tracked. This should be extended to develop more formal structures including time-bound monitoring and reviewing of student progress relative to the targets set in their IEPs. Student-support files should also be developed to suit the school context and be used to track and record individual student supports, interventions and outcomes as advised by the National Educational Psychological Service and Circular Letter 0070/2014.
- The school should develop an assessment policy to detail current good practices and their development of practice regarding assessment.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and SEN core team at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board wishes to acknowledge the very positive findings of this SEN Inspection. In particular the Board is very satisfied to note the

- examples of very good and excellent practice observed in teaching and learning
- calm, supportive and respectful atmosphere of the school
- enthusiastic and dedicated senior management and SEN team who lead whole-school inclusive practices
- High quality individual education plans (IEPs) that are developed for each student with identified SEN
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) additional teaching resources are used appropriately and flexibly to meet the identified needs of students with SEN
- Planning and preparation for SEN provision is excellent

Area 2 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 Tarbert Comprehensive School acknowledges the recommendations of this report.

- The Board affirms the School's commitment to encouraging the use of structured collaborative activities within lessons. Whole staff CPD in the area is ongoing. Further expansion is planned with the formation of the SIP in the area of Assessment for Learning (Formative Assessment) – this plan will seek to encourage the use of strategies that will foster more active student participation and engagement in their learning.
- The Board affirms that the School already has Student Support files in place and has already begun the process to further expand these student files as recommended in this inspection report