

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Special Educational Needs
REPORT**

**Maryfield College,
Glandore Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.
Roll number: 60840K**

Date of inspection: 4 March 2014



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

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL
NEEDS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	3 March and 4 March 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and special educational needs teachers • Discussion with special-needs assistant • Interaction with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and special educational needs co-ordinators

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with some very good practice witnessed.
- The transition process for new students and the information gathered at entry helps to identify students with additional needs and to inform planning.
- Some teachers successfully involved their students in the process of assessment but there is scope for further use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies.
- The school has actively engaged in a range of good practices to promote literacy and plans to promote similar practices in the promotion of numeracy skills.
- The school's written admissions policy does not fully reflect the school's commitment to inclusive practices; however, this policy is currently under review.
- The school has engaged successfully with an individual planning process.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should further extend and develop team-teaching as an alternative model of support for students with additional needs.
- The school should ensure that AfL strategies be integrated further into lessons.
- The school should develop a policy regarding the monitoring and support of gifted and talented students.
- The school should during the current review process, revise the admissions policy in order to better reflect the school's commitment to inclusion as witnessed during the course of the inspection.

INTRODUCTION

Maryfield College is a voluntary, secondary school for girls, under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust. It has an enrolment of 665. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme as well as the Transition Year programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with some very good practice witnessed. Teachers' knowledge of their students, and of the lesson content, contributed to the quality of the learning experienced by students.
- Teachers were well prepared for their lessons with some ensuring differentiated learning through a variety of appropriately set tasks and questioning. A renewed focus on differentiation for all students, including exceptionally able and gifted students, merits attention.
- Lessons were purposeful and conducted in an orderly manner. There was an effective use of repetition to enable comprehension and to reinforce learning. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as witnessed in four lessons is commended and further use of such a resource to enhance learning will prove useful.
- Team-teaching was employed successfully in a mathematics class. Roles were well co-ordinated and there were good transitions between activities. The school should further extend and develop team-teaching as an alternative model of support for students with additional needs.
- Some teachers began lessons by clearly stating the expected learning outcomes. A minority of teachers used the outcomes to summarise the learning at the end of the lesson and promote student involvement in the process of assessment with direct questions. The school should ensure that AFL be integrated further into lessons.
- The school is commended for its efforts to progress the development of literacy skills across the school. Practice is guided by detailed planning documents developed by a working group. The school plans to promote similar practices in the promotion of numeracy skills.
- Standardised measurements of reading, numeracy and cognitive ability are used to assess and track enrolling students' progress. The school plans to re-assess first-year students in literacy skills and to progressively extend the testing and re-testing process. This evolving good practice will contribute to the school's efforts to monitor progress and evaluate interventions.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- A comprehensive transfer programme assists the induction of incoming students and their parents. Information derived from direct contact with parents, students and the feeder schools helps identify students with additional needs and ensures appropriate preparations are made. Relevant information on students is disseminated to mainstream staff and resource teachers on a need-to-know basis.

- Students remain in mixed ability groups in junior cycle and have access to a full and balanced curriculum. Setting occurs for Irish and Mathematics in second year.
- The college does not have a policy in place to support students who are academically gifted or exceptionally talented. The school should now develop a policy outlining the processes used to monitor and support these students to ensure that they achieve their potential.
- The school's resource teaching and learning support allocation of hours is utilised for the purposes intended. Students who are exempt from the study of Irish attend learning support lessons instead of Irish. Commendably, some students entitled to exemptions from Irish choose to continue their study of the language.
- A well-equipped specialist classroom provides a range of resources to augment teaching and learning. These include ICT and a suitable collection of modified teaching materials and workbooks.
- The special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinator plays a significant role in organising, planning and co-ordinating the provision for students with SEN or requiring learning support. A SEN team consisting of the principal, deputy principal, SEN co-ordinator and the school's guidance counsellor meets weekly. There is evidence of good collaborative practice in planning and overseeing the provision.
- The school's ethos and declared vision supports inclusion. However, the school should review the admissions policy in order to better reflect the school's commitment to inclusion as witnessed during the course of the inspection.
- The SEN policy provides a comprehensive overview of the organisation of the provision. When next reviewed, the role of mainstream teachers in planning for differentiation, and the role and work of the special-needs assistant (SNA) should be detailed.
- One student in mainstream lessons is supported by an SNA who plays a significant role in supporting curriculum access and promoting independent.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The SEN co-ordinator is commended for the quality of planning and preparation undertaken. In consultation with parents, students and teachers, individualised education plans (IEPs) summarising students' strengths, prioritised learning needs and learning goals are created. In the interests of best practice, targets should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.
- Teachers allocated resource teaching hours plan their work using the information and schemes of work provided by the SEN co-ordinator and in consultation with the students and their subject teachers. Teachers provide an evaluation of each student's progress annually to the co-ordinator. A termly review merits consideration.

- Appropriate assessments are used to inform decisions relating to students identified with special educational needs. The school's focus on literacy development will be informed by these and other standardised tests.
- In line with good practice, the school maintains a SEN register which details the strengths, needs and suggested methodologies to use with students with high and low-incidence disabilities. The school is encouraged to further develop this register to include the allocated resource teaching hours, the manner in which these hours are used, the accommodations provided to meet the specific needs and the teaching and non-teaching staff involved.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, and co-ordinating SEN teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.