



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs in post-primary schools

## Report

### REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Patrician Academy
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Mallow Co Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62330U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	13/03/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	17/06/2024

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# What is an evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs?

The Evaluation of Inclusive Practices and Provision for Children with Special and Additional Educational Needs is a focused evaluation of provision for students with special and additional educational needs in mainstream post-primary schools. As this inspection model places a particular emphasis on the quality of learner outcomes for students with special and additional educational needs, most of the time spent in the school by inspectors is given to visits to mainstream classes and support settings.

## How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated provision for students with special and additional educational needs under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. The quality of learning outcomes of students with special and additional educational needs
2. The quality of learning experiences of students with special and additional educational needs
3. The quality of the management and use of resources received by the school to support students with special and additional educational needs
4. The quality of the structures in place to foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of all students with special and additional educational needs

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.

## Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li><li>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</li></ol>

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

## Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs

<b>Date of inspection</b>	13/03/2024
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Meeting with SEN team</li><li>• Meeting with parents of students with special and additional educational needs</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Student group discussion</li><li>• Meeting with special needs assistants</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

### School context

Patrician Academy is an all-boys' Catholic voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Cloyne. At the time of the evaluation 556 boys were enrolled. The school offered the Junior Cycle programme including the Level 1 Learning Programme (L1LP) and the Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP); a compulsory Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school had an additional special education teaching allocation of 167.64 hours, plus 4.18 teaching hours for teaching English as an additional language. It had an allocation of four special classes: two to support students with autism, one to support students identified with mild general learning disabilities (MGLD) and one to support students with moderate general learning disabilities (ModGLD). In total the school had a special education teaching allocation of 321.83 hours or 14.83 whole-time teacher equivalents (WTE). This included a legacy resource teacher post of 22 hours.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The quality of learning outcomes was good overall with some examples of very good learning observed: in a few lessons some possibilities for improvement existed.
- Learning experiences were very good and in some lessons experiences for students were excellent.
- The management and use of resources received to support students with special educational needs was good overall.
- Some very good strategic planning was undertaken by the senior leadership team in conjunction with the special educational needs and special class co-ordinating teachers.
- Effective structures were in place to support inclusion, equality and holistic development of students with special educational needs and the principal provided exceptionally high quality leadership of, and a vision for, educational inclusion in the school.
- It was very evident that the principal, deputy principal and special education teachers were very committed to proactively providing students with an appropriate inclusive educational experience based on the principle that those with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of support.

#### Recommendations

- Opportunities existed to develop the type and level of support provided during support lessons. Targeted interventions to support individual student's identified special educational needs should be the focus of these lessons and students should be supported to develop transferrable skills to support them to access the curriculum and progress as learners.
- To further develop special class provision, the special class co-ordinating teachers should be provided with timetabled time to meet regularly, in order to collaboratively plan for the complex needs of their students in these classes.

- A core special education teaching and planning team was not in place. The principal should establish a core special education teaching and planning team as a matter of priority.
- A more individualised student-centred approach to planning is required, so that students in the special class for students with MildGLD, are provided with more opportunities to learn, progress and to be included in mainstream subject areas alongside their peers.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. The quality of learning outcomes of students with special and additional educational needs

The quality of learner outcomes was good overall with some example of very good learning observed. In a few lessons some possibilities for improvement existed.

In lessons where teachers encouraged students to connect what they were learning with their lives outside of school, learning outcomes were very good as students were provided with opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning. Appropriate opportunities for students in the special classes to generalise their learning were provided through organised activities to engage students with trips outside of school, and during in-school and break time activities.

Where teachers demonstrated high expectations of student learning, students were presented with challenges that were appropriate to where they were at in their learning. Conversely, where learner outcomes were less than effective, students were not being challenged at an appropriate level as lesson tasks were repetitive and students were not making sufficient progress. In these lessons teachers should have had higher expectations of their students' abilities to learn and achieve.

Students commented positively on the benefits of formative feedback on their developing learning. It was most effective when students were provided with supportive materials such as handouts containing written reminders and visual prompts to support them during learning activities or discussions, and by teachers identifying key feedback on learning, sometimes through consultation. Teachers should consider making such support sheets and written formative feedback available to students digitally so that they will have access to this material at a future date. In special classes, visual timetables and schedules should be developed for individual students to provide them with predictability and structure to the school day and to support their learning and task engagement.

Students used an online platform to share homework with teachers and to access lesson notes. This effectively supported students to develop organisational skills. It was noteworthy that all first-year and second-year students, as well as all TY students, had been provided with individual devices to support their learning.

Support was provided to individual students through a model of small group or one-to-one withdrawal from subject areas. The supports provided focused mostly on English and Mathematics, and on organisational skills. In some withdrawal lessons the support provided to students was not sufficiently targeted to meet their individual learning needs. Targeted interventions to support individual student's identified special educational needs should be the focus of these lessons and students should be supported to develop transferrable skills to support them to access the curriculum and progress as learners. In lessons where students are withdrawn to receive support, the type and level of support should closely align with the students' individual learning needs and support lessons should be planned accordingly.

## **2. The quality of learning experiences of students with special and additional educational needs**

Overall, learning experiences for students were very good, and in some lessons, were excellent.

Safe and secure learning environments were a feature of all lessons. These were positively created through very respectful teacher, student interactions and relationships. Students displayed consistently high levels of respect for themselves, their peers, and their teachers in lessons observed. Students were very kind to each other and seamlessly supported each other, particularly when they were provided with opportunities to do so.

Team teaching supported students across the year groups in some subject areas and in the special classes, mostly in the class for students with ModGLD. Learning outcomes and experiences in these lessons were observed to be highly effective as teachers provided students with targeted and immediate supports. Teachers in these teams worked very well together and were very aware of how to challenge and support students with a wide range of abilities.

In almost all mainstream subject lessons, teachers provided students with opportunities to actively engage in their learning. This allowed students to discuss topics with their peers and to work in smaller groups before returning to the whole class with feedback. Teachers who provide additional support to groups of students through a model of withdrawal should ensure that these students are provided with opportunities to work together and to develop skills associated with collaboration, communication, critical thinking, decision-making and deeper learning. This is very relevant in the context of planning for the purposeful participation of students in hour-long lessons.

Where very good and/or excellent learning experiences and outcomes were observed, all students were included in all aspects of the lessons and teachers provided very well-planned and structured opportunities for student to participate in and to consolidate their learning. In focus groups students expressed that the pace of some lessons was rushed and therefore negatively impacted on their learning. All teachers should plan and provide students with appropriate wait-time, opportunities to work together and with meaningful opportunities to reflect on and consolidate their learning.

There was scope in almost all classrooms to develop the physical classroom spaces, particularly in relation to the layout of the desks to better allow for group work and the development of the associated skills afforded by this approach. This included the reconfiguration of the classrooms used for special class provision.

## **3. The management and use of resources received to support students with special and additional educational needs**

The management and use of resources received to support students with special educational needs was good overall.

Some very good strategic planning was undertaken by the senior leadership team in conjunction with the special educational needs and special class co-ordinating teachers. There was, however, further development required to build on existing strengths and improve provision in some areas.

The principal ensured that the special education teaching hours were used fully for their intended purpose, and this was most evident in the full utilisation of the special education teaching allocation to provide specialised supports for students in the special classes in line with the principle that those with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of support.

A special education co-ordinating teacher was in place. The work of the co-ordinator was of a very high standard. A very significant level of planning, preparation and communication with

parents, students, teachers and outside agencies was undertaken by this teacher. The work of the co-ordinator was supported by other teachers including a co-ordinating teacher for the L2LP and a very experienced teacher who linked to mainstream special education teaching provision.

A core special class co-ordinating team was established and met with the overall special educational needs co-ordinator and senior leadership once a week. To further develop special class provision, the special class co-ordinating teachers should be provided with timetabled time to meet regularly in order to collaboratively plan for the complex needs of the students in these classes. Part of this work should include planning for the learning outcomes of the priority learning units of the L1LP and L2LP into curricular subject learning outcomes and the design of assessment tasks.

A core special education teaching and planning team was not in place. The principal should establish a core special education teaching and planning team as a matter of priority. This core team, when established, should share the planning and organisation of provision with the co-ordinator and meet regularly to review and monitor student outcomes. Members of the team should be allocated timetables mainly dedicated to special education duties and the provision of targeted interventions to students. This approach would better provide consistency, continuity and stability of support for students and build teacher capacity in the school.

The identification of emerging needs for students without outside professional assessments of a diagnosed need is required. The principal should oversee the development and establishment of whole-school systems and structures for the identification of student needs as they emerge. This should be a collaborative process involving mainstream subject teachers, non-teaching staff, the special education teaching and planning team, parents and students.

The school's online platform was used as a communication tool with all subject teachers and teachers had good knowledge of the students in their classrooms. Student support plans were shared on this platform, along with other information on individual students. It is advised that only relevant information on individual students as detailed in the student support plans be shared on this platform.

Student support plans were in place for all students listed on the school's provision plan. A significant level of work had been undertaken by the special educational needs co-ordinating teacher in the development of these plans, however, they needed to be developed further. The special education teaching and planning team should use the problem solving process as detailed in the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* to guide the organisation of the provision and development of student support plans. Subject teachers should ensure that they access and use these plans and special education teachers should ensure that targeted interventions are provided to meet each student's priority learning needs. This approach should ensure optimal learning for all students. To further develop the planning process it is recommended that this work is shared amongst members of the core team.

Transition and progression procedures were effective. There were good communication structures established with the feeder primary schools to gather relevant information to plan for and to aid student transitions into the school. It is advised that the timing of the formal cognitive assessment for incoming first-year students in advance of starting first year be reconsidered. Student progression to the world of work and/or to further education was well supported.

#### **4. The structures in place to foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of all students with special and additional educational needs**

Effective structures were in place to support inclusion, equality and the holistic development of students with special educational need in the school.

The principal provided exceptionally high quality leadership of and a vision for educational inclusion in the school. It was very evident to the inspection team that the principal, deputy principal and special education teachers were very committed to proactively providing students with an appropriate inclusive educational experience.

A clear and open admissions policy was in place and enrolment procedures facilitated access for students with a wide range of special educational needs. A special education policy was in place. This policy should be reviewed to reflect actual practice in the school, particularly as the required changes to develop practice in the organisation and provision of supports are put in place.

It was very positive that student-centred planning enabled some students allocated a place in the special classes to access some of their learning alongside their peers in some mainstream subject lessons, where appropriate. While it was also positive that some students with a place in one of the special classes for autism accessed learning in mainstream subject areas for their full timetable and were supported through the mainstream special education teaching provision, these students should be provided with specialised autism specific approaches and interventions to support their identified needs. This specialised support would better ensure that they can continue to develop, learn, progress and be included. Opportunities existed for some students in the special class for students with Mild GLD to access some or more of their learning in mainstream subject classroom settings with their peers. A more individualised student-centred approach to planning was required for these students to learn and progress with their peers in mainstream subjects and other areas of school life.

In the focus group discussions, students indicated that there was open access to clubs and sporting activities and that they had access to and were included in the extra-curricular life of the school. Students also had opportunities to access work experience through the TY, LCA and LCVP programmes. Students with more complex needs were individually facilitated to access work-experience associated with their individual needs and based on progression routes identified. This was highly effective practice and the work of the SNAs in supporting the inclusion of students under their care is acknowledged. Parents reported that these supports were very welcomed, although some parents expressed a preference for more time for their sons to undertake work-experience to develop the skills they will need when they leave school.

Overall, parents met with as part of the evaluation were happy with their children's experiences in the school and with their learning outcomes.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal, the special educational needs co-ordinator and members of the special education teaching team at the conclusion of the evaluation.

## 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	Examples of descriptive terms
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective



# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

We are very happy with the report in general. We are very happy to accept the findings and recommendations. We accept and will put in place a plan of action to carry out all recommendations in 2024/25. The recommendations provide a road map for us next year.

## **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

- 1) CPD will be provided to staff who are providing targeted interventions to support the individual students' special educational needs.
- 2) Special Class Co-ordinating teachers will be timetabled to meet once a week in the academic year 2024/2025.
- 3) A core special education team has been established for September 2024. They will meet weekly.
- 4) Opportunities will be provided to students with MildGLD to integrate more in mainstream.
- 5) ASD students in mainstream will be supported with specialised autism specific approaches and interventions.
- 6) It is noted that parents of students enrolled in the special classes would welcome more work experience opportunities.
- 7) We will look at reconfiguring some of our special classes.