

Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (Primary)

FEEDBACK FORM for Partners

You are invited to provide written feedback regarding the Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (Primary) model on this feedback form.

- **Section A** provides an opportunity to comment on specific aspects of the evaluation
- **Section B** provides space for your general observations about any aspect of the Evaluation of Provision for pupils with special educational needs (Primary) Model
- Please return the feedback form to brian_macgiollaphdraig@education.gov.ie on or before Friday May 27th

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Comment	<p>Please note that IPPN conducted a survey of the pilot principals in relation to Curriculum Evaluation in April 2016. Six of the principals completed the survey.</p> <p>See separate survey results which provide additional context and information to supplement the information below, which was sought from the same cohort based on the DES SEN Review form itself.</p>

Section A: Feedback on specific aspects of the **SEN** Evaluation

Aspect of the evaluation	Comments on this aspect
<p>Before inspection visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice • Documents • Parental Permission for participation in pupil group interview 	<p>Favourable reaction in general, though less favourable than in the CEM pilot survey. All principals said the notice period was 'just right'. All said the information form was helpful and easy to complete. In terms of the perceived administration burden relating to the evaluation, two thirds said it was 'medium', with 17% saying it was 'high' and the remaining 17% saying it was 'low' burden.</p> <p>Specific comments received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient notice of the evaluation was given with clear guidelines of expectations of Inspectorate. The volume of paperwork to be completed by the Principal in advance of the visit was significant but not hugely problematic. • Because of the pupils involved, requests for timetables from Special Class Teachers meant in fact forwarding timetables for individual pupils. In my case, in addition to timetables for Learning support Teachers and Resource Teachers I had to forward 14 pupil timetables! • Parental Permission slips were forwarded to the school so distribution and collection were not a problem. • 10 days - sufficient • Took a huge amount of work and effort especially as all timetables/caseloads etc. had to be coded before they could be forwarded. All Micra and Sigma results as well as IEP's, SET Meeting Minutes, EAL testing and results and SSE notes and plans needed to be presented • Fine • For the amount of documentation needed and changes to timetables (e.g. replacing children's names with codes) the notice was a bit too short. • There was a lot of documentation requested, however in light of the type of Evaluation, it was needed. • It took a lot of time to actually email documentation to the Inspector ahead of the evaluation. This can be an issue if you have a large number of SEN teachers and children.

<p>During the inspection visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings and interviews • Classroom visits • Documents and assessment data • Feedback meetings 	<p>Positive reaction from principals regarding the focus on teaching and learning and the involvement of the school community, though a third felt that SEN post holders were not spoken with. Generally, there were less favourable responses than found in the CEM pilot survey. Good practice was affirmed. A third of principals who responded feel that utilization of external agencies was not sufficiently evaluated. A minority said that the inspector(s) did not speak to EAL/GAM Teachers, SNAs or SEN post holders. See separate survey results for details.</p> <p>Specific comments received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inspectorate was friendly and accommodating in their meetings, interviews and classroom visits. • There was minimal emphasis on teacher notes. The emphasis was on records of continuum of support. • The feedback meetings were respectful and relaxed with good practice being acknowledged. • All arranged with principal and timetabled on first day of evaluation. • As above – arranged and timetabled • As above but needed organization to have everything at hand for the inspector • Helpful, affirming and informative • Meetings were held in a very cordial manner and everyone’s opinion was respected. In general it was a positive experience for the school and staff. Both Inspectors were respectful of timetables, events in the school etc. There was no real sense of intrusion even though the evaluation was very thorough. Meetings were held with Principal, SEN Co-ordinator, teachers and a representative group of SNA’s.
<p>Following the inspection visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evaluation report • Factual Verification, School Response • Acting on the report 	<p>Most principals were happy with how their schools’ work was reflected in the report. Most felt that the recommendations fit with their SIP.</p> <p>Specific comments received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Evaluation Report was fair. It acknowledged the good work being done in the school and made reasonable recommendations. • The Factual Verification and School Response were easily completed and practical. • Following the Report my school has introduced some changes to procedure which we feel are

	<p>both manageable and beneficial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair and fairly concise • Time given for response. We had no issues with the report. Very pleased with it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have acted on the 2 suggestions in this 2015-2016 school year • The evaluation report was exact and one recommendation was made in relation to targets in IEP's (to be a little more specific).The timeframe was adequate. The BOM were very happy with the report and responded in a positive manner to it.
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One principal filled in the following form – including it here for completeness. Unsure of the source of this format/layout.

Section A: Feedback on specific aspects of the Evaluation	
Aspect of the evaluation	Specific questions
Notification	<p>Was the notification period for the evaluation sufficient? Yes. Because our participation was optional, this probably doesn't really apply.</p> <p>Were the procedures and practical arrangements required for the evaluation explained clearly during the initial phone conversation / e-mail? Yes.</p>
Briefing paper and Information Note for Teachers	<p>Did the Briefing Paper clearly explain the process and procedures involved in the evaluation? Yes</p> <p>Was the Information Note for Teachers helpful in explaining the model to teachers? Yes</p>
School Information and Self-Report Form	<p>Was the school information and self-report form useful to you reflecting on aspects of your work with pupils with special educational needs? Yes</p> <p>Was the school information and self-report form useful to you in reporting on your use of resources for pupils with special educational needs?</p>

	<p>Yes. However, it took some time to gather all of the paperwork in the format that was requested. Schools have their own record-keeping systems and the information might be requested/sought in any format that is convenient from the school's own record-keeping systems.</p> <p>Was the school information and self-report form useful to you in preparing for discussions during the evaluation?</p> <p>Yes.</p>
<p>Initial meeting with principal / teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs</p>	<p>Did the initial meeting with the principal and teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs provide you with an opportunity to inform the inspectors about the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs?</p> <p>Yes, this was a good forum to explain our school's systems, procedures, modus operandi and some of our frustrations with regard to allocations of resources, etc.</p>
<p>Visits to learning settings</p>	<p>Was there sufficient time for the inspector(s) to evaluate teaching and learning in the various mainstream classrooms in your school?</p> <p>It was probably a bit rushed for the size of our school. Because the inspector(s) were also expected to give oral feedback at the end of the two days, time had to be set aside for this to be prepared.</p> <p>Was there sufficient time for the inspector(s) to evaluate teaching and learning in the various support settings in your school?</p> <p>Probably too rushed. Because the inspectors wished to see as many methods/settings as possible (in-class, withdrawal, individual, small group, etc), the time spent in any one setting was quite short.</p> <p>Did pupils have opportunities to interact positively with the process?</p> <p>Yes, it was nice that a focus group was included as part of the process</p>
<p>The second meeting with principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs?</p>	<p>Did the second meeting with meeting with the principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs facilitate teachers engaging in discussion with the inspector(s) regarding outcomes for pupils with special educational needs?</p> <p>N/A there was just one meeting with the Special Education Team</p> <p>Did the second meeting with meeting with the principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with</p>

	<p>special educational needs facilitate teachers engaging in discussion with the inspector(s) regarding the school's use of the resources it receives for pupils with special educational needs?</p>
<p>Parent Questionnaires (if applicable to your school)</p>	<p>Were the procedures for the administration of parent questionnaires efficient?</p> <p>In our (DEIS) school, we send 'plain English' letters and texts home. We request that parents would return letters if they do not give consent, as we have learned over many years that it is often through oversight that notes were not returned and children should not miss out on opportunities as a result. On enrolment form, we get permission from parents to do a range of activities during the school day.</p> <p>Were the questions on the parent questionnaires appropriate?</p> <p>No. They were too difficult, wordy, technical.</p> <p>Will the analysed results of the parent questionnaires be helpful to the school?</p> <p>Absolutely.</p>
<p>Assessment data and document review</p>	<p>Were the relevant assessment data and school documents reviewed?</p> <p>I believe so.</p>
<p>Feedback to individual teachers</p>	<p>Was the feedback provided to individual teachers fair?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Was sufficient time available for feedback to individual teachers?</p> <p>Probably somewhat rushed.</p> <p>Will the feedback provided to individual teachers help to bring about improvements in learning outcomes for pupils with special educational needs?</p> <p>Very likely.</p> <p>Will the feedback provided to individual teachers help to bring about improvements in the school's use of the resources it receives for pupils with special educational needs?</p> <p>Very likely.</p>
<p>Feedback to the principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs</p>	<p>Was the feedback provided to the principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs fair?</p> <p>Yes, though we have a difficulty with the current rating scale as it is set out. (We have included this in our official</p>

	<p>response, but I include it again here for clarity).</p> <p>Was sufficient time available for the feedback to the principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs? It was fortuitous that we had a scheduled Croke Park hour after school on that day and so this was allocated. Otherwise I'm not sure how the feedback might have been delivered. This time was a very necessary part of the process.</p> <p>Were the key strengths of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs acknowledged? Yes, though please refer to our school community's difficulty with current rating scales/criteria below.</p> <p>Were the recommendations explained clearly? Yes.</p> <p>Will the feedback to the principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs help to bring about improvements in learning outcomes for pupils with special educational needs? Very likely to. We have adopted the process and recommendations as the third area of improvement in our SSE and SIP process.</p> <p>Will the feedback to the principal and/or teachers involved in provision for pupils with special educational needs help to bring about improvements in the school's use of the resources it receives for pupils with special educational needs? Perhaps, though no specific recommendations were made in this regard and we don't get enough resources to meet our pupils' needs.</p>
<p>Report</p>	<p>Does the report reflect the findings presented at the feedback meeting? Yes</p> <p>Is the report clearly written and in a manner that is easily understood by all members of the school community? Yes.</p> <p>Is the table 'Terminology used in reports' helpful? N/A We are unaware of this table.</p>

	<p>Will the report be useful to the school in its provision for pupils with special educational needs? Yes</p>
Factual Verification and School Response	<p>Were you happy with the opportunities to factually verify the report? Yes.</p> <p>Were you happy with the opportunities to respond to the report? No. This time-frame was far too tight and unrealistic. A meeting of the Board of Management had recently taken place before the issue of the report and the next meeting was not scheduled for six weeks. It should not be necessary to call a special meeting as Board members are voluntary and it is unrealistic to expect them to come to meetings at short notice on one issue only. The 'deadline' for response to the report should take cognizance of this and should be phrased as "five working days after the next scheduled Board of Management meeting in the school."</p>

Section B – General observations on the Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (Primary)

The general sense is that the pilot was successful and worthwhile and that the Inspectors engaged very positively in the process.

All principals who responded agreed that:

- the evaluation was focused sufficiently on the most important elements of SEN in your school
- the various methods your school employs to provide for pupils with SEN
- the deployment of teachers
- the document review was completely relevant to the evaluation
- good practice was affirmed
- the school happy with the recommendations for improvement
- the notification period was just right
- the Information Form was helpful and easy to complete
- pupils had a 'medium' level of opportunity to interact positively with the process
- the report was clearly written and easily understood.

tional Needs (two thirds or more) agreed that:

- the parental questionnaires adequately capture the voice of parents regarding all of the work of the school

- all the parties consulted satisfied with how their contribution was reflected in the evaluation report
- CPD of staff sufficiently recognised during the evaluation
- the school context taken into account
- sufficient time given to evaluating teaching and learning during the evaluation
- the evaluation focused sufficiently on
- the school's provision for gifted pupils or high achievers
- the school's work on the Continuum of Support.

A minority 17% felt that there was sufficient focus on the school's SSE plan. Likewise, only a third felt there was sufficient focus on the school's provision for gifted pupils or high achievers.

Specific comments from principals regarding their general observations:

- Overall, this evaluation was a positive experience. The only issues related to the amount of information required, the coding of timetables and the time given to get the information together. The BOM were very happy with the outcome, as were the staff.
- As a staff we found it a positive experience which we gained a lot from and we did not feel the same pressure because it was a pilot
- Overall, we found the experience to be a positive one. The Inspectors(2) were very courteous and helpful as well as being affirming. They acknowledged the high functioning of our teachers and Sp Ed Team and the communication between all the partners in education in the school.
- We wish to thank the two Inspectors for their professionalism, courtesy and affirmation of the school community during the inspection process. It was a good learning experience for all staff involved.
- As this is a pilot project, we understand that you will be taking on board the views of staff involved. We perceive there to be a flaw / limitation in the current rating scale. When staff were given the original oral feedback, they felt quite deflated, despite the many positive comments. They only heard "two goods and one very good." This rating was confirmed in the written report. On further reflection, our interpretation is that we got two 4/5 ratings and one 5/5. We consider 5 to be excellent / outstanding if it is at the top of the scale. We therefore think that the descriptors of the numbers are misleading / ambiguous. A score of 5 in our view should be rated as 'excellent', a 4 as 'very good', a 3 'good', etc.
- Our view would be that there is also scope for more than the three broad areas of evaluation. There should be more descriptors/SMART objectives provided on the DES website and provided to the participating school in advance from DES to indicate what exactly will be evaluated. This approach would be more helpful to the school. It is difficult for a school to attain excellence unless and until staff are very clear what this involves and what it actually looks like. If DES is looking for SMART targets at a school level, they should also be willing to provide them to schools for evaluation purposes.
- Two items that are not specifically alluded to the report, though they were outlined to inspectors are:

- 1) The dreadful effect of losing our SENCO (Assistant Principal) post of responsibility in June 2015 and not having this post of responsibility replaced. It is a further nail in the coffin for our now decimated middle management team which amounts now to a loss of five posts over the past number of years since the moratorium was put in place in 2009. This situation is now absolutely unsustainable and DES will have to recognise that they cannot keep making demands on schools when these management positions have not been filled. The time of paying lip-service to this issue is long past. We intend drawing up a list of what we do not have the capacity to do anymore, but we will be only too happy to do again when those posts are filled. We were desperately hoping for some alleviation in the budget, but apparently only post-primary schools need this alleviation. It is very demoralising. We have done our very best in the case of Special Educational Needs to pick up the pieces and spread more responsibilities among the remaining members of the ISM team, but it is a fine balance for the principal and Board of Management between asking teachers to do more work and acknowledging that they are already at capacity.

- 2) We would also like it recognised that we make very good (excellent?) provision for our able/exceptionally able children within the limited resources that we are given. Our DEIS targets always include getting a higher number of children into the higher band(s) for both literacy and numeracy. It has taken a number of years to get to the stage where support and class teachers accept that these pupils also deserve and are entitled to extra support. We started out by getting small grants from external agencies such as Ballyfermot Advance and Dublin Bus to put in extras for these children, e.g. pay for assessments/tutoring in DCU, run an after-school club, etc. We are now at the stage where every support teacher takes on at least one of these groups (either 'Maths Factor' for numeracy or 'High Flyers' for literacy and general knowledge) in their caseload, even if this can only happen once or twice a week because of the other demands. The principal has observed from the teachers' Cuantais Míosúla that teachers on the Special Education Team really enjoy the opportunity of working with and challenging these children (because sometimes they see such small and slow progress among some of the children they work with). This approach also keeps the teachers mindful of the high standards that we are doing our best to achieve in the school.

- We also have concerns around the whole occupational therapy field, an area of which teachers and SNAs have relatively little experience or knowledge. We have used DEIS and grant money to establish and equip a multi-sensory room in the school. It would be very useful for us to build specific exercises/sensory experiences into individual children's IEPs. It would be useful if DES and SESS were to consider the provision of CPD for staff in this area. SNAs should also be included in the remit of the SESS for professional development.

- With regard to NEPS, it is alluded to in the feedback that we utilise the services of NEPS very well. We wish to point out that this is only because we have such a wonderful psychologist over the past number of years who completely understands our school's needs, i.e. how we need to prioritise assessments in order to fulfil the needs of the system as it still currently exists. (We do hope this changes shortly without resulting in a loss of resources for schools like ours). It was not always thus and previous psychologists that were assigned to us did not understand this need and wished to operate under a different model and foisted their/the system's priorities on us and did not offer as many assessments as we required.

We would be grateful if this form could be returned by e-mail to brian_macgiollaphadraig@education.gov.ie on or before Friday May 27th
Evaluation Support and Research Unit,
Inspectorate,
Department of Education and Skills