Carrigaline Community School

NCSE Practice-Based Research Programme Pilot

Carrigaline Community School is a **caring, co-educational, inclusive community school** in Carrigaline, Co. Cork, providing education for a diverse student population.

The school is committed to the **holistic development of every student**, promoting academic achievement alongside personal, social and cultural development.

With a strong connection to the local community, CCS offers a **broad range of curricular, extracurricular and lifelong learning opportunities**, supporting students to develop their talents, confidence and sense of belonging.



School and project details

Name of school: Carrigaline Community School

Practicing teacher lead: Ann O'Regan

Research theme: INCLASS support

Research aim: INCLASS aims to develop better understandings of how we meet the needs of learners with additional educational needs (AEN) in classroom settings across school types (primary, post-primary, special schools).

Further objectives included:

- To develop teachers as research partners in the INCLASS research intervention.
- To share findings from the study amongst participants, advocacy groups and policy makers in order to guide future practice and engagement regarding inclusive practice/ pedagogy in school settings.





Research findings

The research revealed similar themes and concerns, across all four schools, in relation to how teachers are developing inclusive practice at Stage one of the Continuum of Support. The Physical setting, UDL, Collaboration, and the role of the SNA were identified as key factors in fostering inclusive practice at this stage of support.

Our top findings

- UDL is an effective practice to help meet the needs of students with AEN in the mainstream classroom.
- Collaboration is key to effective INCLASS support.
- SNA support in the classroom was identified as hugely beneficial to INCLASS support.
- Team teaching is an effective strategy for INCLASS support.

Based on this data we have clearly identified effective InClass practice in these schools, however the data also revealed some **challenges,** particularly in the area of

- UDL training.
- Time for collaboration.
- The role of the SNA.

Research in practice

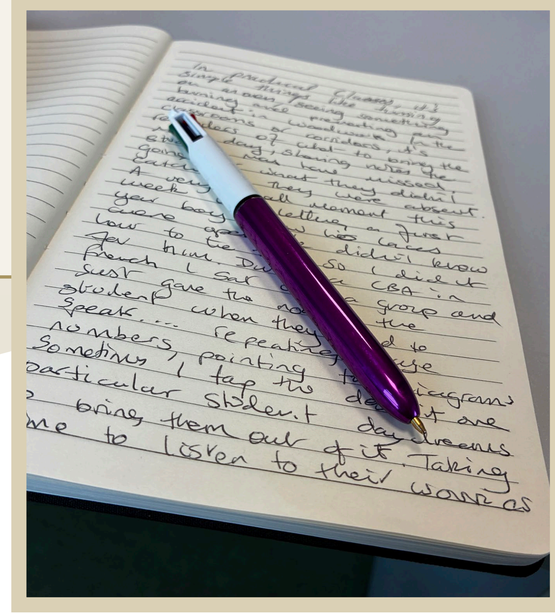
Methods
Observations, Conversations and Journaling.

Participants
There were 18 participants including a mixture of students, teachers, parents and SNAs (Special Needs Assistant).

4 schools and 12 teachers engaged in a collaborative research project, observing how schools support children in all of their diversity in mainstream class settings. **This close-to-practice research** generated 44 observations of classroom practice across settings. We worked in collaboration with University College Cork. This involved targeted collaborative workshops with researchers on topics such as formulating research questions, conducting literature reviews, research methodology, data analysis, and research dissemination. The INCLASS research received full ethical clearance from the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork.

In this research, the teacher-researchers collaborated on the design of a semi-structured observation template that would allow them to look upon their familiar teaching worlds with researchers' eyes. The template laid out the following guiding thoughts on observing inclusive practice (adapted from Morrison, 1993 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013) and was supported by the teacher-researchers' field notes.

- Physical setting (the environment and its organisation).
- Human setting (organisation of people, characteristics/ make-up of groups, models of provision, etc.).
- Interactional setting (formal/informal, planned/unplanned, verbal/non-verbal).
- Pedagogic setting (resources and their organisation, pedagogic strategies, curricula, assessment (forms of) etc.).
- Other observations.



Impact of our research

- We are working on time-tabling more team teaching in a wide variety of subject areas and have been having conversations with staff to put this into practice.
- We have chosen to improve on *collaboration* as one of our goals from the Indicators of Practice.
- We have created an SET guidelines pack which includes ways in which subject teachers and SETs can collaborate to support students in both the mainstream and in their SET setting.
- We have shared UDL strategies with staff both at meetings and on our AEN update platform within our school, so teachers have access to how they can support students in class.
- We have created and are trialing, as part of the pack, a template to capture student voice as part of the collaborative approach in setting and reviewing targets.

While the data has led us to focus on some of the key findings, one of the unexpected benefits was the importance of being involved in the research process itself. Teachers and SNAs were energised by the experience of being involved. There was a sense of recognition that their voices and experiences mattered. It also opened up opportunities for professional conversations, for example taking teachers and SNAs out of the 'bubble' of the classroom, into reflective practice.

We have also used the research to draft a paper with UCC. The paper has been submitted to the British Journal of Special Education (BJSE) and has received positive feedback from the reviewers. We are currently addressing their comments and making the recommended revisions to the manuscript.

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council for Special Education