

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Na nGasúr
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Maree Road Oranmore County Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	04506F

Date of inspection: 20-11-2019



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WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in Mathematics under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learner experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

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

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	20-11-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil na nGasúr (known locally as Scoil Iósaif Naofa) is an all-boys primary school catering for first to sixth class and located in the village of Oranmore, County Galway. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway. There is an administrative principal, ten mainstream teachers and six special education teachers (SETs), two of whom are shared with other local schools. There is also a class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). There are 269 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall learning in Mathematics is good, with the school recording improvements in pupils' mathematics achievements in the last three years.
- Highly effective learner experiences are provided.
- Teaching in the mathematics lessons observed was good overall; this included some very good practice.
- In-class support teaching has been introduced to support pupils' learning; appropriate differentiation was evident in most lessons.
- There is scope for improvement in assessment practices for pupils in receipt of additional numeracy support.
- Whole-school planning for and school self-evaluation (SSE) in Mathematics are very good, with agreed actions for improvement impacting positively on classroom practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In a few settings, in-class models of support should be reviewed, in order to facilitate focused, differentiated numeracy instruction.
- Evidence-based diagnostic assessments should be used to inform targets in numeracy for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is good. Most pupils displayed positive attitudes and were engaged in their learning during the lessons observed. The pupils in the focus group discussion described working in groups, using digital technologies and playing mathematical games as strengths in how they get to learn. The presentation of work in copybooks is at a very good standard in most cases. The whole-school focus on problem solving is impacting positively on pupils' learning. Most pupils knew the whole-school strategy for problem-solving and there was evidence of pupils confidently applying the strategy in some of the lessons observed.

The majority of pupils responded well to questioning across the strands of the curriculum. Pupils could describe their learning activities appropriately and used mathematical language successfully. While the majority of pupils achieved the learner outcomes of the lessons observed, the understanding of mathematical concepts in the case of a few pupils requires closer monitoring and focused intervention. Pupils' achievements in mathematics assessments are very good overall, with some pupils attaining a very high standard. The school has recorded improvements in pupils' mathematics achievements in the last three years.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

Highly effective learner experiences are provided for pupils. Interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers were very positive. Pupils' behaviour was excellent during the evaluation.

Pupils engaged in a range of meaningful activities in groups, pairs and individually. They had access to relevant mathematical resources, including concrete materials, games and digital technologies. Teaching aids and presentations of pupils' work are displayed on the walls both inside and outside of classrooms. High-quality photographic displays record activities from Maths Week. It is highly commendable that indoor and outdoor trails have been devised to support exploration of Mathematics in the environment. The use of surveys in ascertaining pupils' views promotes their participation and is highly praiseworthy. Home-school links are purposeful, whereby parents are informed of the topics to be taught each month. A range of co-curricular activities, including the Junior Entrepreneur Programme and initiatives in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), supports pupils' learning in Mathematics.

The overall quality of teaching is good; examples of very good practice was also observed across the school. Practice was most successful when teachers shared the learning intention with the pupils, a range of methodologies was used and learning activities were differentiated very effectively to cater for the range of pupil abilities. All teachers were well prepared for their lessons and displayed very good classroom management skills. In the class for pupils with ASDs, very good use was made of visual and concrete resources to support and embed pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. Where possible, pupils with ASDs are integrated into mainstream classes for mathematics instruction. The judicious use of textbooks in all settings is noteworthy. Teachers are praised for their commitment to continuing professional development (CPD). Commendably, *Mata sa Rang* initiative is implemented in the junior classes to further support pupils' mathematical understanding. In the context of this school, it has been a very good decision to provide most of the support for pupils with SEN on an in-class basis. However, in a few settings, team teaching models of support should be reviewed, in order to facilitate focused, differentiated numeracy instruction.

The overall quality of assessment is effective. A range of strategies is used by all teachers to assess learning in Mathematics, including teacher-designed tasks and tests. Assessment data from standardised tests is analysed thoroughly at whole-school level. Valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on their own learning in Mathematics. Evidence-based diagnostic assessments should be used to inform targets in numeracy for pupils with SEN. These targets should inform the teachers' short-term planning.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of school planning, including SSE, is very good. The school plan provides very good guidance to teachers on agreed strategies for the teaching of aspects of the mathematics curriculum, and mathematical language is clearly identified.

The school has engaged very effectively in the SSE process. It is evident that the identified priority of problem-solving is impacting on classroom practice and learner outcomes. The Digital Learning Plan is in place and the principal and board of management are proactive in building upon the infrastructure and digital technologies available. Embedding digital technologies as part of the learner experience has been identified as a key target. The school has been awarded a Digital Schools of Distinction.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the affirming report and are delighted that it acknowledges and reflects strongly the school's strengths in the teaching of Mathematics. It also affirms the commitment towards the culture of school self-evaluation and planning for improvement by the dedicated team of teachers and management.

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

The Board was delighted to see that the report recognises and acknowledges pupils' achievements in maths assessments as very good overall. Whilst assessment data from standardised tests is analysed thoroughly at whole school level and used as a tool to direct teaching and learning, we endeavour to focus in on more evidence-based diagnostic assessments to support children availing of special educational needs support.

The Board will continue to support staff as they continue to review and develop the process of in-class models of support.

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	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;