An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Rockmount Mixed National School</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Rockmount  
Miltown Malbay  
County Clare |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number   | 09390O                          |

Date of inspection: 09-05-2019
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 inspector 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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

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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to principal and teachers |

• Discussion with principal  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Pupil focus-group interview

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Rockmount Mixed National School is a rural, co-educational primary school located approximately six kilometres from Miltown Malbay, County Clare. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. The school has two mainstream class teachers, including a recently appointed teaching principal. A special education teacher (SET) is based in the school and works with another school in the locality. There were thirty-four pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• Pupils’ overall learning in Mathematics is good.  
• Teaching in the mathematics lessons observed was good overall; this included elements of very good practice.  
• In-class support teaching has been introduced to support pupils’ learning in Mathematics; appropriate differentiation was not evident in all lessons.  
• Pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics are good overall; use of the environment to support learning is limited.  
• The overall quality of school planning for Mathematics is good.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• In-class models of support teaching should be further developed in order to facilitate more focused, differentiated numeracy instruction, including providing a greater challenge for pupils of higher ability.  
• All pupils should be provided with more regular opportunities to engage with the environment to reinforce mathematical concepts and to further enrich their learning in Mathematics.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good. The learner outcomes in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good. During the evaluation, most pupils demonstrated enjoyment in their learning and were motivated to learn. Almost all pupils could explain their learning tasks competently. The majority of pupils responded well to questioning across the strands of the mathematics curriculum and could use mathematical language successfully. The understanding of mathematical concepts in the case of a few pupils requires further development. The presentation of work in copybooks is at a very good standard in most cases.
Some pupils were able to apply their knowledge and engage in higher-order mathematical reasoning. There is scope, however, to enhance pupils’ skills in relation to problem-solving in Mathematics.

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

The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics is good. Work in pupils’ copybooks and a review of teachers’ monthly reports indicate that a broad and balanced programme is provided. A wide range of concrete materials, including mathematical games, was used in all lessons.

Pupils worked very successfully both independently and collaboratively during the lessons observed. All pupils in the focus group discussion reported that working collaboratively assists their learning in Mathematics. There was some evidence of pupils using mathematical trails. Pupils in the focus group discussion reported that they enjoyed using the environment in this way and engaging with real-life mathematical situations which are not textbook-based. There is scope to make greater use of the immediate environment to reinforce mathematical concepts and to further enrich pupils’ learning experiences.

The implementation of co-curricular initiatives, including Ready, Set, Go Maths and coding programmes, is highly commendable. Further opportunities should be devised for pupils to use information and communications technology (ICT) as a learning tool in mathematics lessons.

The pupils’ behaviour during the evaluation was exemplary. Interactions among the pupils, and between the pupils and teachers, were very respectful and positive.

The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good; this included elements of very good practice. All teachers were very well prepared; they shared the learning intention for the lessons with pupils and modelled high-quality mathematical language. Practice was most successful when teachers employed very effective questioning techniques to stimulate and extend pupils’ thinking. Very good displays to support teaching and learning were noted in all classrooms; these included samples of pupils’ work and photographic displays of mathematical work completed.

Oral Mathematics featured at the start of each lesson observed. A greater emphasis on a problem-solving approach and opportunities for pupils to explain and justify their answers would enhance this effective practice.

The National Educational Psychological Service’s (NEPS) Continuum of Support is used very effectively to plan for and record intervention processes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in Mathematics. It is highly commendable that most of the support for pupils with SEN is provided on an in-class basis. However, team teaching should be further developed in order to facilitate more focused, differentiated numeracy instruction, including providing a greater challenge for pupils of higher ability.

A wide range of very effective assessment of learning practices has been established, including the use of checklists, regular teacher-designed tests, diagnostic tests and standardised tests. It would be worthwhile extending the good work in assessment for learning, noted at some class levels, throughout the school.
3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

The overall quality of school planning for Mathematics is good. The school plan has been recently reviewed. It is commendable that specific mathematical language for each strand of the mathematics curriculum has been identified.

All teachers provide good-quality planning documentation for Mathematics. It would be worthwhile identifying specific and differentiated learning activities in teachers’ fortnightly planning, to enable pupils to achieve the intended learner outcomes.

A school self-evaluation (SSE) report and school improvement plan (SIP) for Mathematics have been published. Progress in relation to the targets identified in the SIP should be reviewed to monitor the impact of agreed actions.
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.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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