An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>SN Cnoc a Déaga</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Knockadea</td>
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<td>Ballylanders</td>
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<td>Kilmallock</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 19-01-2018
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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection: 19-01-2018

Inspection activities undertaken:
- Discussion with principal and teachers
- Review of relevant documents
- Pupil focus-group interview
- Observation of teaching and learning
- Examination of pupils’ work
- Interaction with pupils
- Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Náisiúnta Cnoc a Déaga is a co-educational, Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. The staff comprises of two mainstream class teachers and one shared teacher who supports pupils with special educational needs. At the time of the evaluation, there were 24 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupil attainment in Mathematics is satisfactory; an increased emphasis on differentiated, collaborative learning activities would enhance pupils’ proficiency in numeracy.
- Pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics are good; pupils engaged in learning activities with interest and enthusiasm during the evaluation.
- The quality of teaching observed was good; however, the organisation of support for pupils in numeracy merits review to align with The Continuum of Support Guidelines and the guidelines which accompany Circular 13/2017.
- While the overall quality of assessment is satisfactory, there is scope for development in the use made of assessment data to inform teaching and learning in numeracy.
- The quality of the whole-school plan for Mathematics is good and the school engaged positively with School Self-Evaluation processes until the initiation of industrial action.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Differentiated, collaborative learning activities should be emphasised to increase pupil confidence and attainment in Mathematics.
- The organisation of support for pupils experiencing difficulty in numeracy should be reviewed.
- Assessment processes and assessment data should be used to inform teaching and learning and should closely align with the learning intentions set for pupils.
- School Self-Evaluation processes should be re-initiated to advance whole-school approaches to numeracy.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
   • The quality of pupil attainment in Mathematics is satisfactory. Pupils demonstrate adequate understanding of core mathematical concepts. They use an appropriate range of mathematical language, computational procedures and strategies to solve oral and written number and word problems. Pupils can explain and justify their answers to these problems to varying degrees. An increased emphasis on differentiated, collaborative learning activities, in which pupils are encouraged to explain and reason mathematical approaches and solutions, should enhance pupils’ confidence in communicating their learning to others. To consolidate their learning in an integrated manner, pupils should be facilitated to connect aspects of their learning in Mathematics across strand and strand units.
   • In the focus group discussion conducted during the evaluation, half of the pupils stated that Mathematics was their favourite subject and half of the pupils reported finding Mathematics challenging. Pupils in each learning setting engaged in the lessons observed with high levels of interest and enthusiasm.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
   • The quality of learner experiences in Mathematics is good. Pupils are exposed to a broad and balanced curriculum. They are encouraged to explore and identify Mathematics in their environment and daily experiences. In the focus group discussion, pupils described these experiences as the ones that made Mathematics relevant and purposeful to them. Pupils also described the opportunities provided to them to engage in a variety of mathematical activities, games and trails.
   • The quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was good. Individual teacher planning and preparation for lessons was of a high standard. During the evaluation, a range of concrete materials and mathematical resources was used to good effect to support pupils’ learning. Teachers used a variety of teaching methodologies to ensure the attainment of learning objectives. Talk and discussion was used effectively to develop pupils’ understanding of new concepts and to encourage pupils to use mathematical language in context.
   • While pupils were afforded the opportunity to engage in practical tasks and group work, greater consideration should be given to the organisation of collaborative activities to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged.
   • In the focus group discussion, pupils made connections between Mathematics and other areas of the curriculum including Science, English, Visual Arts, Music and Physical Education. Teachers are encouraged to maximise the opportunities that arise across the curriculum to progress pupil attainment in numeracy, by explicitly planning integrated learning objectives for Mathematics.
   • The organisation of support teaching for pupils who present with additional educational needs in numeracy merits review. The special educational needs (SEN) policy should be revised to align with The Continuum of Support Guidelines and the guidelines that accompany Circular 13/2017. Whole-school approaches to early intervention and prevention should be implemented and clear criteria regarding the selection of pupils for support in numeracy should be outlined. Student support plans should detail specific targets that address identified needs in Mathematics. Progress reports on the attainment of such targets should be completed at regular intervals.
• The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Teacher observation, teacher questioning, teacher designed tasks and standardised tests are the primary forms of assessment used. Greater use should be made of the data generated from assessment to inform teaching and learning. Assessment criteria should be closely aligned with the learning objectives set for pupils and evaluated at regular intervals.

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

• The quality of school planning is good. The school plan for Mathematics is reviewed regularly. It informs school practice and contains specific guidance in relation to agreed whole-school approaches, the language of Mathematics and assessment practices. The consistent implementation of the school plan should be monitored.

• The school has engaged positively with School Self-Evaluation. Prior to the initiation of industrial action, the school compiled school improvement reports and plans for numeracy. These plans targeted improving pupils’ disposition towards Mathematics, supporting parental involvement in their child’s Mathematical development and implementing whole-school approaches to areas of identified need in Mathematics. It is recommended that the school re-engage with SSE processes to ensure the implementation of these plans.

• The school has acquired a good range of resources and concrete materials to support the implementation of the Mathematics curriculum. During the evaluation, pupils expressed a keen interest in using information technologies to support their attainment in Mathematics. The school is advised to extend their resources in this area.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
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><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
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<td></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><strong>Good</strong> 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>
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<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><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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>
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<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><strong>Fair</strong> 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>
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<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><strong>Weak</strong> 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>
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|            | Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management affirm the good practice that has been identified in the teaching and learning of Mathematics in Knockadea N.S.

The Board can say that the staff will address the recommendations and will engage positively to ensure implementation of the recommendations.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The school intends;

- To purchase i-pads
- To engage in greater collaborative work
- To address practical supports for parents
- To use data from regular assessment to identify pupils in need of support for numeracy using an assessment checklist.
- To extend maths for fun to once a fortnight
- To detail specific targets in mathematics in the student support plans and to report progress on the attainment of such targets
- To progress pupil attainment in numeracy by planning integrated learning objectives in maths.