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>Ardvarney Mixed National School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Dromahair</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Leitrim</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>15116D</td>
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Date of inspection: 22-05-2019
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, 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.

The school did not meet the requirements in relation to 2 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school immediately furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection: 22-05-2019

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
Ardvarney Mixed National School is rural co-educational school which is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. The school caters for thirty-seven pupils from junior infants to sixth class. The teaching staff comprises two mainstream teachers and two part-time special education teachers who are based elsewhere. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good overall; pupils demonstrate a good ability to compute accurately.
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics is good; pupils are interested and participate well in their lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching in Mathematics is very good; teachers cultivate a positive mathematics learning environment.
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory; assessment for learning (AFL) approaches are not sufficiently developed.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good overall; target setting within Continuum of Support plans is not refined and does not sufficiently inform team-teaching practices.
- The quality of whole-school planning including DEIS planning is good; concept, skills and specific language to be taught are not sufficiently outlined.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Whole-school approaches to assessment should be further developed, including the incremental development of pupil peer and self-assessment practices to further enhance learning opportunities for pupils.
- Further consideration should be given to interpreting the assessment data to set specific targets for all pupils as part of planning for the Continuum of Support and to guide team teaching practices.
- The whole-school plan for Mathematics should include detail of the concepts and skills to be covered and record fully the specific language to be taught at each class level as pertains to the strands of the Mathematics curriculum.
1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of pupils’ learning attainments in Mathematics is good overall. Pupils demonstrate a good ability to compute accurately, have a good understanding of concepts and connect Mathematics to real-life contexts successfully. They display good skills in articulating their learning and discussing the logical procedure in completing mathematical questions. Pupils who participated in the pupil-focus group discussion reported that they enjoy learning Mathematics when they are active in their learning. They particularly enjoy using concrete manipulatives, games and the challenge involved with Mathematics in determining the correct answer. In the lessons observed, pupils had a good awareness of and an ability to implement a range of mathematical skills especially in the strands of Measures and Number. Pupils engage very well in lessons, particularly where they are actively involved in their learning and use practical investigations to predict, discuss and record their mathematical tasks.

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

The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics is good. Attractive stimulating learning environments are provided by all teachers. High levels of interest and participation during lessons in Mathematics were observed. The facilitation of rich discussions regarding pupils’ use of precise terminology and mathematical vocabulary during lessons is commendable. Pupils’ oral language skills in relation to Mathematics are developing very well through sustained support and specific prompts from teachers during interactions. Where very good practice was observed, pupils were actively involved, used concrete materials and were encouraged to use the precise language being taught. Pupils would further benefit from the effective use of purposeful, collaborative group work experiences.

The overall quality of teaching in Mathematics is very good. All teachers demonstrate highly effective classroom management skills. Teachers employ an effective blend of methodologies including structured whole-class teaching, small group and individual teaching. Teachers cultivate a positive mathematics’ learning environment where pupils are appropriately supported, encouraged and affirmed. Very effective questioning techniques are used to ascertain pupils’ understanding and application of mathematical concepts.

The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Teachers currently maintain classroom-based assessment data for pupils. There is scope to develop the approaches used to ascertain pupils’ individual learning needs across the strands and the skills of the Mathematics curriculum. Data relating to specific strands generated from standardised tests should be analysed to inform future planning for differentiation. This will provide a specific focus for interventions and in-class support. It is recommended that pupils’ self-assessment and peer-assessment practices should be promoted incrementally in both classrooms.

Support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good overall. Support is provided through team-teaching and the withdrawal of pupils for targeted support. Teachers should ensure that all support plan targets are informed by pupils’ priority learning needs and that the targets set are specific and measurable so that progress can be easily recorded. There is a need to include the specific learning outcomes to be achieved on a weekly basis for pupils receiving additional support. The special education teachers and mainstream teachers should adopt a whole-school approach to
planning for differentiated teaching and learning for team-teaching approaches. Pre- and post-intervention testing is required to monitor the impact of team-teaching on the progress of pupils with varying abilities.

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

The quality of whole-school planning for Mathematics is good. Teachers have collectively developed the whole-school plan for Mathematics. The principal works to promote a learning culture in the school where professional development is encouraged.

The school has engaged successfully in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process within the DEIS plan. The school’s engagement in whole-school planning and in self-evaluation processes is impacting positively on teachers’ practice and on pupils’ learning experiences in the area of problem solving. It is recommended that the whole-school plan for Mathematics include detail of the concepts and skills to be covered and to complete the recording of the specific language to be taught at each class level as pertains to the strands of the mathematics curriculum. An audit of the local school environment in developing a maths trail for pupils would also be of benefit.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the curriculum evaluation report and its positive affirmation of the quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics in our school.

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 of management and staff recognise and accept the recommendations that were made in the Curriculum Evaluation and are happy to implement the recommendations. Since the inspection the following actions have been undertaken in the school:

Teaching staff have registered for CPD in Assessment for Learning and it is hoped that a PDST advisor will assist with the implementation of this throughout the school.

Further consideration will be given to interpreting the assessment data to set more specific targets for all pupils and to guide, inform and consolidate current team-teaching practices throughout the school.

The whole school plan for Mathematics now includes a more comprehensive breakdown of the exact language, skills and concepts which will be taught at each class level.

We look forward to further enhancing the teaching and learning of Mathematics in our school.
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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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</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 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><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>
<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>
<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>
<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>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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