An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Cloonfad National School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Ballyhaunis County Roscommon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>15557K</td>
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Date of inspection: 14-03-2018
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(s) 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

Date of inspection  14-03-2018

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
Cloonfad National School, under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, has six mainstream teachers with two full-time and one part-time special education teachers. Enrolment has been increasing in recent years: there were 146 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation. The school participates in the School Support Programme of 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 the pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good with a number of pupils achieving at very good levels.
- The pupils are motivated to learn and high levels of enthusiasm were in evidence during lessons observed.
- The overall quality of teaching is good; some aspects of support teaching show scope for development.
- A range of effective assessment practices is implemented; there is a need to undertake further analysis and tracking of individual pupil progress to support differentiated provision and to inform in-class intervention.
- The school is well resourced and effective use is made of the school’s very attractive gardens for the development of mathematical trails.
- The quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good and a good-quality school plan informs classroom teachers’ practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The model of support teaching for Mathematics should be reviewed to provide for more early intervention and in-class support.
- Greater and more consistent use should be made of assessment information to monitor pupils’ progress and to inform programmes of learning in Mathematics for groups and individuals.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning is good overall, with some very good outcomes observed. Pupils’ attainment in standardised tests of numeracy is, generally, well above expectations.

During focus-group discussion, pupils indicated that they enjoy learning Mathematics but demonstrated a limited awareness of how their skills in Mathematics could be applied to
experiences and settings outside of school. Interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very respectful and positive. While the majority of pupils recall number facts and complete relevant computational tasks with speed and accuracy, some pupils need further support to achieve fluency in this aspect of the curriculum. In some cases, pupils should be enabled to record their written work in Mathematics more carefully and to record all the steps they have taken in the process.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The quality of support for pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good overall. Almost all classrooms provide number-rich learning environments to support and scaffold learning. Pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in a good range of activity-based learning experiences. The school has a very attractive garden and its potential is exploited very well in the development of mathematical trails. Pair work and group work are used effectively to enable pupils to develop mathematical skills. Both concrete materials and information and communications technology (ICT) are used effectively to develop learning. The further investment by the school in structured materials to teach number would enhance this good practice.

The quality of teaching of Mathematics is commendable. All lessons observed were structured and paced well. To assist their pupils’ learning, teachers are advised to provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their learning to real-life situations and to integrate Mathematics more meaningfully with other areas of the curriculum.

Learning support is delivered through a combination of in-class and withdrawal approaches. In-class models of support, aligned to pupils’ prioritised learning needs, should be further developed in order to facilitate focused, differentiated numeracy instruction in small groups. At the time of the evaluation, support for numeracy was very limited in the junior classes. The current balance of support teaching for literacy and numeracy needs to be reconsidered in order to provide more early intervention in numeracy. Programmes of learning to support pupils in Mathematics should be underpinned by specific learning targets, which are measurable and achievable, derived from the pupils’ identified priority learning needs.

Teachers have engaged in continuing professional development in the teaching of Mathematics and there are good levels of collaboration between support teachers and mainstream class teachers. To build on this good practice, it is advised that teachers share expertise and good practice with each other through discussion, modelling of lessons and team teaching.

Teachers employ an appropriate range of assessments to monitor and track their pupils’ progress. Standardised test results are analysed and pupils in need of support are identified. It is recommended that achievements be benchmarked against an ability test and tracked as pupils progress through the school. Records should be maintained in a manner that is clear, useful and easy to interpret and share. The further use of assessment data to inform the provision for differentiated learning in mainstream settings is recommended.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good. As part of the school’s engagement with the SSE process, school documentation provides evidence that parent and pupil surveys were administered regarding
aspects of Mathematics provision. A School Improvement Plan (SIP) has been devised which focuses on strategies to improve pupils’ problem-solving skills. There is clear evidence that this work is informing practice in all classrooms.

The whole-school plan for Mathematics is a comprehensive document, which outlines a broad, developmental programme for all curricular strands and strand units. Progression and development in the programmes taught are ensured at each class level. Mathematical topics are documented effectively and the plan provides good guidance and useful support to teachers in preparing their work.
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>
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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>
<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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