**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>Bunscoil na mBráithre</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | New Road  
Ennis  
County Clare |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number  | 16677C |

**Date of inspection: 06-03-2019**
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 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 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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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>05-03-2019 and 06-03-2019</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to principal and teachers |

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Bunscoil na mBráithre (Ennis CBS) is a co-educational primary school in Ennis, County Clare. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe and the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools’ Trust. The school has an administrative principal, twenty-four mainstream class teachers, eleven special education teachers (SETs) and a teacher who is allocated to a class for pupils with specific speech and language difficulties. There were 664 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good.
• The overall quality of teaching in Mathematics is good.
• In the majority of classes, support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in Mathematics is delivered through withdrawal of pupils from their mainstream class.
• The overall quality of school planning for Mathematics is satisfactory; assessment practices are less than satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Whole-school strategies for the assessment of Mathematics, including assessment for learning and assessment of learning, should be agreed and implemented.
• Provision of support for pupils with SEN should be reviewed and restructured to facilitate more in-class models of support teaching.
• Approaches to teachers’ planning and preparation for mathematics lessons should be agreed and implemented; specific targets should be identified in the school improvement plan for Mathematics.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good. The learner outcomes of the lessons observed ranged from fair to very good. The majority of pupils were motivated to learn, responded well to questioning and could discuss a range of mathematical concepts. In a few classes, pupils could not use mathematical language appropriately to explain their answers. Further opportunities for pupils to use mathematical language should be explored.

Pupils’ achievements in mathematics assessments are good overall, with some pupils attaining a very high standard. Pupils’ behaviour during the evaluation was very good and they worked very effectively both individually and collaboratively in almost all classes.
2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences is good. The learning experiences ranged from fair to very good in the lessons observed.

In the majority of the lessons, pupils used concrete materials to enhance their learning, with mathematical games also used in some lessons. It is highly commendable that pupils in a few settings were encouraged to pose mathematical questions during lessons. However, opportunities for pupils to engage in robust discussion on their learning were not evident in the majority of lessons. All lessons in Mathematics should provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and explain their mathematical thinking. There was limited evidence of pupils reflecting on their learning in Mathematics. Strategies for enabling pupils to reflect on their learning in Mathematics should be implemented.

A range of co-curricular activities, including initiatives in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), supports pupils’ learning in Mathematics. It is highly commendable that trails have been devised to support exploration of Mathematics in the environment. These trails should be used more regularly by teachers.

The overall quality of the teaching observed was good; this ranged from fair to very good in lessons. Highly effective practice was characterised by very good structure and pace of lessons, consolidation of prior learning and high-quality teacher questioning and use of mathematical language.

The preparation of very effective and appropriately challenging activities for pupils was a key feature of the very successful lessons observed. Pupils in the focus group reported that they enjoyed playing mathematical games. Most of them reported, however, that such opportunities were limited and that lessons in Mathematics were predominantly based on textbooks. All teachers should prepare meaningful learning activities to support the development of pupils’ mathematical skills according to their levels of ability. Further investment in base ten concrete materials is recommended to support the development of pupils’ concept of number.

Very effective in-class support for pupils with SEN was observed in a few lessons. In the majority of classes, however, support for pupils with SEN is delivered through withdrawal from their mainstream class. Currently, in these cases, the teacher who withholds the pupils takes responsibility for their learning instead of their class teacher. The class teacher should maintain overall responsibility for pupils’ mathematical learning in keeping with the principles of Department of Education and Skills guidelines. Provision for support for pupils with SEN should be reviewed and restructured to extend in-class support teaching for Mathematics.

The overall quality of assessment practices is fair. Elements of good practice were observed in a few classrooms including regular teacher-designed assessments, error analysis and recorded observations on pupils’ progress. While pupils’ work in copybooks is corrected in almost all settings, it would be beneficial to provide more constructive written feedback to pupils. Whole-school approaches to the assessment of Mathematics should be agreed and implemented.

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

The overall quality of planning for the subject is satisfactory. It is commendable that the school plan has been recently reviewed collaboratively. The revised plan provides very good guidance
to teachers on agreed strategies for the teaching of aspects of the mathematics curriculum, and mathematical language across the strands is identified clearly.

Teachers’ individual planning practices range from fair to good. In most settings, there is an over-reliance on textbooks to develop pupils’ numeracy skills. Whole-school approaches to teachers’ fortnightly planning should be agreed to include the clear identification of intended learner outcomes and specific learning activities.

It is commendable that pupils, parents and teachers have been involved in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and a range of actions for improvement has been identified. However, there was limited evidence of these actions impacting on classroom practice. Specific and measureable targets for improvement in Mathematics should be identified through the analysis of data. The implementation of the school improvement plan for Mathematics should be monitored and reviewed regularly.
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><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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