

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | St Brigid's National School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Merville Rd Stillorgan Co. Dublin |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 16794G |

Date of Evaluation: 14-03-2017



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 learning 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 of the school 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

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

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| Date of inspection | 14-03-2017 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers |

An evaluation of Mathematics was undertaken in St Brigid's National School in March 2017. This report is based on a number of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interactions with pupils, review of their work, meetings with principal and other staff members, a pupil focus group discussion and review of a selection of school documents and assessment data.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Brigid's National School operating under the patronage of the Church of Ireland is a co-educational school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. Staff at the school comprises a teaching principal and three class teachers, one learning support teacher and one full-time resource teacher.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good with excellent standards being achieved by some pupils.
- The teaching of Mathematics is of a very high standard in the school.
- There is very good assessment of learning (AoL) in every classroom with a variety of effective assessment practices implemented; there is scope to develop assessment for learning (AfL) approaches on a whole-school basis.
- Pupils' ability to solve problems and to apply mathematics learning to real-life situations is high.
- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is provided on a withdrawal basis individually or in small groups.
- The principal leads the school very effectively and the overall quality of whole-school and individual planning for Mathematics in the school is very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should develop the use of assessment for learning (AfL) approaches for Mathematics, including the use of formative feedback, conferencing, peer and pupil self-assessment and re-teaching of concepts based on assessment data on a whole-school basis.
- The current approach to supporting pupils with additional learning needs on a withdrawal basis should be reviewed to include the use of team teaching and co-teaching approaches.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS

The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good with some excellent standards being achieved by some pupils. Pupils are motivated to learn Mathematics and display a notable enthusiasm

throughout lessons. Members of the pupil focus-group discussion conducted during the evaluation reported that they enjoy their lessons in Mathematics and like the way teachers explain things clearly to them and link Maths lessons with real-life situations. Most pupils have a strong understanding of concepts, can recall number facts with speed and accuracy, and can reason mathematically. They work independently and in groups and pairs to discuss problems and are able to justify and explain their methods and answers. Pupils make appropriate use of strategies and mathematical language to solve problems and can apply their logic to a variety of contexts. In the focus group discussion pupils gave many examples of specific situations where they were able to apply their learning to real-life problem solving.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

The overall quality of teaching is very good with some excellent practice observed. All teachers are very well prepared for their lessons in Mathematics. Lesson objectives are clearly explained in advance. Pupils are well supported by appropriate visual aids, concrete materials, maths games and effective use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Pupils were actively engaged and motivated to learn. There is very good assessment of learning (AoL) in every classroom, pupils' progress in Mathematics is regularly checked through teacher observation, use of checklists and regular classroom tests. There is scope for greater use of assessment for learning approaches (AfL) such as use of formative feedback, conferencing, peer and self-review and re-teaching of concepts based on assessment data. High quality, effective teaching was observed in support settings for pupils with additional learning needs. Under the current model of provision support is provided on a withdrawal basis. The current approach to supporting pupils with additional learning needs throughout the school should be reviewed to include more use of team teaching and co-teaching approaches as appropriate.

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

In addition to carrying out her teaching duties very well, the principal has effectively led the whole-school planning process for Mathematics. The overall quality of planning for Mathematics is high. The school principal and school team have succeeded in developing a comprehensive whole-school plan for Mathematics. The plan covers all strands of the curriculum and outlines whole-school approaches to language, problem-solving and number facts. Teachers' individual planning is closely guided by the whole-school plan and teachers' plans are of a high quality and outline a range of specific learning objectives and purposeful activities. As part of its school self-evaluation (SSE) process the school carried out a detailed review of Mathematics in the school. Consequently the school developed a School Improvement Plan (SIP) for Mathematics which identifies specific and measurable targets for overall improvements in attainments in Mathematics and the further advancement of problem-solving skills. The school has made very good progress in achieving the targets established in its SIP for overall improvement in attainment in Mathematics.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

There have been discussions at staff and BOM level about the recommendations in our report. We have enlarged our development with regard to assessment for learning (AFL) in our classrooms and will continue to do so in future. Formative feedback, pupil self-assessment and re-teaching of concepts based on assessment data on a whole-school basis are in operation. In the autumn we will focus on conferencing in more detail.

Last autumn (2016) we had once again tried to implement team teaching, but it hadn't been overly successful. Now we will implement it using new methods and are hopeful that a fresh approach will prove very advantageous.

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 the school's provision of each area.

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