Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

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<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Fothar</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Port na Bláithche  
Leitir Ceanainn  
Contae Dhún na nGall |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 16903I |

Date of inspection: 12-03-2019
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 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; 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: 13-03-2019

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
Scoll Náisiúnta Fothar is a rural co-educational school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. It has two mainstream class teachers and two special education teachers, one of whom is based in another school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning is good; they can integrate and connect different aspects of their learning in Mathematics to other subjects, concepts and real-life situations.
- The learning experiences provided for pupils is good; a secure mathematical environment exists where pupils’ suggestions are valued.
- The quality of teaching is good; teachers provide limited opportunities for pupils to engage with pupil collaboration and discussion during lessons.
- Support for pupils with additional needs is good overall; current co-teaching approaches are underdeveloped.
- The quality of assessment is good; assessment practices are well developed with teachers using a range of formative and summative assessments.
- The overall quality of whole-school and individual teacher’s planning is satisfactory; there is considerable variance in the quality of individual teacher’s short-term planning for multi-grade classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Teachers should provide more consistent opportunities for pupils to engage in purposeful pupil discussion and collaboration during lessons.
- Teachers should adopt a cyclical approach to collaborative planning, implementation, monitoring and review of co-teaching initiatives.
- In reviewing the whole-school plan for Mathematics, greater clarity should be provided for teachers regarding the development of appropriate short-term planning for multi-grade classes.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning is good. All pupils demonstrate a considerable sense of enjoyment and motivation to participate actively during their lessons in Mathematics. The majority of pupils recall mathematical terminology and definitions to a very good standard. Pupils can integrate and connect different aspects of their Mathematics learning to other subjects, concepts and real-life situations.
They work very competently on their individual tasks and can articulate and justify their mathematical opinions and reasoning to a very good standard. During the pupil focus-group interview, all pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning in the subject. Pupils enjoy, in particular, the activity-based learning experiences provided for them.

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

The overall learning experiences provided for pupils is good. Pupils demonstrated a clear interest in engaging with stimulating and challenging learning experiences. During the focus-group discussion, they articulated very positive attitudes regarding the importance of exploring new ideas in a secure learning environment. They constructively reflect on errors and engage successfully in self-correcting strategies.

The quality of teaching is good. A very consistent emphasis on the use of precise mathematical terminology is a key feature of teachers’ work. Effective questioning strategies are used to promote engagement in learning, to elicit prior knowledge, to support the making of connections and to apply knowledge and understanding to new learning. The quality of teachers’ planning is satisfactory overall in preparation for lessons in Mathematics. Some good examples of planning are available which reflect appropriate curriculum content and differentiated learning outcomes for the various ability levels. Appropriate concrete resources are organised for pupils to engage with in facilitating deeper understanding of the content taught. While activity-based learning is operating very successfully, which engenders very positive pupil dispositions towards learning in Mathematics, there is scope to provide more open-ended and pupil-led activities for all pupils. Teachers should develop the very good approaches currently used in providing for active learning experiences, so as to provide more consistent opportunities for pupils to engage with DLT as a learning resource during lessons; the provision of more consistent opportunities for pupils to engage with DLT as a learning resource should be explored.

Support for pupils with additional needs is good overall. Support teachers provide a balance of in-class support and small group withdrawal for pupils’ varying numeracy needs. The Continuum of Support has been established and very clear procedures are in place regarding the various levels of support. Long-term planning documentation prepared by SET teachers is of a good standard, is easy to interpret and is shared with mainstream class teachers. Commendable initial steps towards the provision of co-teaching initiatives have been established. Going forward, there is need for teachers to plan collaboratively to support co-teaching approaches more effectively. The meaningful use of generated assessment data to set specific targets and to underpin the programme taught should be incorporated into the planning for co-teaching in both classrooms. This will enable teachers to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention, provide appropriately differentiated learning activities and support a purposeful review process.

The quality of assessment is good overall. Current assessment practices are well developed with teachers using a range of formative and summative assessments. Successful whole-school monitoring of pupil achievement identifies areas of strength and development at each class level which supports the monitoring of continuity and progression from class to class. There is scope to enhance current pupil self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies in supporting pupil agency and responsibility in their own learning.
3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of whole-school planning and individual teacher planning for Mathematics is satisfactory overall. While teachers work together to agree appropriate learning activities for pupils, there is scope for improvement in certain aspects of planning. The whole-school plan includes very useful and developmental delineation of key vocabulary and agreed approaches pertaining to the teaching of particular concepts and topics in Mathematics. At present, there is considerable variance in the quality of individual teachers’ short-term planning which ranges from weak to good. In reviewing the whole school plan for Mathematics, there is need to provide more appropriate guidance and clarity for teachers regarding the development of suitable approaches to short-term planning which take due regard of the multi-grade context in both classrooms as well as the strategic nature of short-term planning requirements for special education teachers.

School self-evaluation (SSE), while in the early stages of development, is of a good standard. Effective evidence gathering in the form of parent, pupil and teacher surveys as well as good analysis of standardised and classroom-based assessments has taken place. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the identified focus and agreed approaches in achieving school improvement. There is a visible emphasis in classrooms regarding identified priorities in Mathematics. It is recommended that the school improvement plan be finalised and a summary report furnished to the parent community.
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 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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