An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Cluain Maoláin N S</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Cluain Maoláin, An Uaimh, Co. Westmeath.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17089N</td>
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Date of inspection: 07-02-2018
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 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection  07-02-2018

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
Cluain Maoláin National School is a vertical co-educational primary school situated in the village of Clonmellon in County Westmeath. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. At the time of the inspection, 236 pupils were enrolled in the school. The school has a principal, eight mainstream teachers, three full-time special education teachers and one part-time special education teacher who is based at another school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Pupils’ learning experiences are of a very good quality and they demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning activities.
- A high standard of mathematics teaching pertains in the school. Consistent whole-school approaches to differentiation and to further challenging more able pupils, would enhance this good practice.
- There is a very good focus on building staff capacity and teachers’ collaborative practice through the engagement of particular staff members in continuing professional development and the enthusiastic sharing of this expertise at a whole-school level.
- While some very high quality targeted in-class interventions for Mathematics are impacting successfully on pupils’ learning in the infant and junior classrooms, the organisation of other in-class models of support is not sufficiently aligned with the analysis of assessment data.
- Though pupils demonstrate a competent ability to discuss their learning, and they use mathematical language capably, their higher-order reasoning skills can be further extended.
- Many pupils in the school achieve very high levels of success in standardised assessment tests in Mathematics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The provision of additional supports in Mathematics for pupils in the middle and senior classes should be targeted specifically to the pupils’ learning needs. Planning should be underpinned by an appropriate level of preparation and record-keeping by the support teachers.
- A whole-school approach to differentiation should be developed to cater for a wider range of learners and to further develop pupils’ higher-order reasoning skills in Mathematics.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of pupils’ learning is commendable overall. In the lessons observed, pupils presented as highly motivated and enthusiastic learners. Many pupils demonstrate commendable skills in recalling number facts and previously taught mathematical concepts, and can apply the systematically taught computation strategies independently. They also demonstrate a competent ability to discuss their learning and they use mathematical language capably. Many pupils in the school achieve very high levels of success in standardised assessment tests in Mathematics. While pupils apply their acquired knowledge and skills confidently when undertaking problem-solving activities, there is scope to further develop their higher-order reasoning and communication skills in relation to more complex and challenging concepts across the strands. There is potential also in many contexts to ensure that there is a higher level of challenge for more able learners. In the focus-group discussion, pupils reported that their teachers explain new topics clearly, that they make learning in Mathematics fun through the use of concrete materials, information and communication technology (ICT) and group work.

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

The quality of pupils’ learning experiences is very good. Highly stimulating learning environments are provided by teachers in all settings. Very good emphasis is placed on connecting mathematical concepts to the pupils’ life experiences. This is further enhanced through the use of trails in the school environment and through the pupils’ engagement in the annual Mathematics for Fun programme of events. Very effective home-school links have been developed through the provision of a termly mathematics support page for parents’ use. Pupils are enabled to record key mathematical concepts in a diary which is used for consolidation across topics in the middle and senior classes. Both concrete materials and ICT are used very effectively to enhance teaching and to promote learning.

The quality of teaching in Mathematics is good overall, with exemplars of high quality practice observed. In these instances, carefully planned and differentiated learning tasks were provided for pupils. This practice should be further developed at a whole-school level. Very good quality activity-based learning experiences are provided for pupils, with an appropriate emphasis on collaborative learning tasks and opportunities for pupils to explore and apply their learning independently. There is a very good focus on building staff capacity and teachers’ collaborative practice through the engagement of particular staff members in continuing professional development and the enthusiastic sharing of this expertise at a whole-school level.

Additional supports for pupils in Mathematics are provided through a combination of in-class and some withdrawal approaches. Highly effective and carefully-planned targeted teaching was noted in relation to the withdrawal of individuals and small groups. Some well-embedded and very high quality targeted in-class interventions for Mathematics are impacting successfully on pupils’ learning in the infant and junior classrooms. This initiative is underpinned by very effective levels of planning and the recording of pupils’ progress. While the school’s standardised assessment data is used to identify pupils with additional needs in Mathematics in the middle and senior classes, the use of diagnostic assessment is recommended to underpin the development of a targeted programme of intervention for specific pupils in those classes. The school should now explore a more diverse range of support models in the delivery of the interventions in middle and senior classes to maximise the impact of in-
class support for a wider range of learners. Implementation should also be underpinned by an appropriate level of planning and record-keeping by the support teachers.

Assessment practices in Mathematics are good. A variety of assessment of and assessment for learning tools are in use by all teachers. The sharing of the learning intention is a strong and well-embedded practice in all learning settings. Pupils’ achievements are monitored by the use of teacher-designed tasks and tests, some criterion-referenced tests and the administration of standardised assessment tests in Mathematics. The analysis of standardised test results by strand unit is recommended. The use of this data, together with diagnostic assessment where relevant, should inform the organisation and targeting of additional supports for some pupils in specific strands of the Mathematics curriculum as they progress through the school.

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

The whole-school plan for Mathematics is very good. The plan provides very clear guidance to teachers on the school’s selected approaches in a number of key areas. The impact of this plan is evident in the work of the teachers. The school has engaged purposefully in the school self-evaluation process (SSE) and has identified particular strand units in the Mathematics curriculum for improvements. While the analysis of school data indicates steady improvements in pupils’ learning overall, further analysis of this data is advised so as to track the pupils’ outcomes within the strand units identified for SSE in Mathematics.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
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><strong>Very Good</strong></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><strong>Good</strong></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><strong>Satisfactory</strong></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><strong>Fair</strong></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><strong>Weak</strong></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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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management and the school community of Cluain Maoláin NS are pleased to receive such a positive report in respect of the teaching and learning of Mathematics in our school. We are delighted that the report has highlighted the very positive attitude towards Maths, and has affirmed the many excellent examples of teaching and learning witnessed in the school. We appreciate the guidance on how to further improve the high standard of Mathematics teaching within the school.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

We will review the provision of additional supports in the middle and senior classes. The school will investigate available programmes that will enable us to break standardised tests down into strand units, which should further clarify the needs of each class. This information, along with all other assessment data will then be used to draw up a targeted programme to address any identified difficulties. We will approach this area with the same level of conscientious preparation that is evident in the planning in the infant and junior programmes within the school.

We will review the differentiation policy, and endeavour to extend the existing good practice throughout the school, ensuring a consistent approach that caters for children of all ability levels. We will continue to investigate any available continuing professional development and appropriate programmes/resources that will further develop the pupils’ higher order reasoning skills in Mathematics.