

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballysloe NS
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballysloe Gortnahoe Thurles
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17140K

Date of inspection: 15-03-2018



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
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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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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 did not meet aspects of the requirements in relation to 1, 2 and 3 above and therefore was not compliant with the checks undertaken.

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection: 15 March 2018	
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

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballysloe NS is a co-educational, Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Cashel and Emlý. The staff comprises two mainstream class teachers and one shared teacher who supports pupils with special educational needs. There were 20 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation, with no pupils in either first or fifth class.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupil attainment in Mathematics is good; increased opportunities for pupils to verbalise their mathematical reasoning would enhance overall attainment.
- In the lessons observed, good quality active learning experiences were provided for pupils and they engaged with interest and enthusiasm.
- Teaching is of a good quality; however, the organisation of in-class supports for pupils merits review.
- Overall, the quality of assessment in Mathematics is satisfactory; there is scope for the more effective use of assessment data to inform teaching and learning.
- Whole-school and individual planning for Mathematics is good and the school has begun its re-engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.
- The school did not meet aspects of the requirements in relation to child protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increased emphasis should be placed on the pupils' use of mathematical language along with the provision of frequent opportunities for them to explain their mathematical reasoning.
- The organisation of in-class supports for Mathematics should be reviewed in order to maximise the impact on pupil-learning.
- Assessment data should be used in a more structured manner to inform learning intentions for individual pupils and to guide the focus of SSE.
- The school should ensure that it is fully compliant with all child protection requirements.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupil learning in Mathematics is good, with some pupils achieving at a high level. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of core concepts across a range of curriculum strands. However, in some instances the pupils had difficulty in relating their learning to real-life experience most notably in the strand of measures. Increased opportunities for pupils to verbalise their mathematical reasoning using appropriate mathematical language, would enhance overall attainment. Some pupils had difficulty with making connections between their learning in Mathematics and their learning in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers should, therefore, maximise opportunities that arise across the curriculum to further progress pupils' attainment in Mathematics.

During the focus group interview with pupils, half of them reported that Mathematics was their favourite subject. All stated that they enjoyed collaborative work and that they frequently used a buddy system to support them in their learning. They said that their mathematical skills had been used in conducting surveys, in measuring and in recording data for their work on the *Green Schools* Programme. They described their experiences of the practical applications of mathematical skills outside of the classroom where the distance of a ball throw and speed in running was recorded. It is commendable that the school improvement plan documents an intention to make greater use of the school's immediate environment to progress learning through the development and use of maths trails.

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

The quality of learner experiences in Mathematics is good. Teacher-led talk and discussion was a feature of all lessons observed. Mathematical language was displayed and explicitly taught in all learning settings. The pupils should be encouraged to make greater use of these visual displays and to consistently use mathematical terminology in lessons. Pupils benefit from the consistent implementation of a whole school approach to problem-solving.

Practical, individual and group tasks were set for the pupils. They engaged with enthusiasm, collaborating to complete tasks and also demonstrating good ability to persevere with independent learning activities. Where station-teaching activities are organised in these multi-grade classes, consideration should be given to the learning challenges presented for each class level and tasks should be appropriately differentiated to match pupils' needs and abilities.

The school has, in recent years, invested in a broad range of resources to support learning in Mathematics and the use of these resources has improved the learning experiences for the pupils. A whole-school emphasis on the use of concrete materials to support pupil learning in Mathematics was observed during the evaluation and the pupils were competent in the use of information and communications technology (ICT).

The quality of teaching observed was good. Individual teacher planning and preparation for lessons was of a good standard. A wide variety of teaching methodologies was used to encourage and to ensure attainment of learning objectives. Very good use of target boards to consolidate and to extend learning was observed.

The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Teacher observation, teacher questioning and summative assessments are consistently used. Greater use should be made of the data generated from assessment to guide strand-specific interventions at class and at whole-school levels.

The organisation of in-class support for pupils merits review. This review should be informed by a deeper analysis of assessment data to plan specific individual interventions for pupils who experience difficulty as well as for pupils with high mathematical ability. Greater specificity is required in targets set in pupil support plans and attainment of targets should be documented at regular intervals. The overall provision of in-class supports for Mathematics should be reviewed in order to maximise the impact on pupil-learning.

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

The quality of school planning for Mathematics is good. The board of management ratified the revised whole-school plan for Mathematics in February 2018. This plan contains specific guidance on teaching approaches and some guidance on the language of Mathematics. There is scope to provide greater guidance for teachers in relation to the structured development of language and terminology as the pupils progress through the school.

The school has engaged positively with SSE and has recently formulated a school improvement plan (SIP) for numeracy. A range of actions are included in this plan, although the majority of actions are directed towards the senior classroom. It is advised that specific actions be included in the SIP for the junior classroom and that a revised approach to the provision of in-class support for numeracy be reflected in the SIP.

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.

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 <i>very good</i> 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;

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 accepts the findings in the report and advises that all recommendations will be addressed. The board of management is happy that the work undertaken on school improvement, both from an educational and structural perspective, is acknowledged in the report. It is pleased that both teacher planning and whole-school planning are described as being of a good standard.

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 are engaged in the school's self-evaluation and feel this will assist us in improving the quality of assessment going forward.

Station activities will now be managed by class teachers, thereby allowing us to make optimal use of supports available in our provision for SEN.

We noted that staff have been carrying out assessments on pupils termly and that on a daily basis, all staff make teacher observations and verbally cross link this with the learning support teacher. Teachers note challenges and address them by following up on them the next day. We did analyse the data from the SIGMA last year and the targets were set out in the SSE Report in February 2018. We have already purchased the computer software and will track the assessment data online using this facility. This will further enhance our data analysis and all staff will make written notes of the strand areas requiring attention, based on their observations following assessment. Assessment of learning will be used also and planning notes will be readjusted accordingly.

The school had formulated a Child Safeguarding Statement in advance of the inspection, but this policy had not, at the time of the inspection been ratified by the board. The board has since overseen both the risk assessment and ratified the Child Safeguarding Statement. All staff have received a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement, have read same and are aware of their responsibilities as a mandated person. The principal has displayed the Child Safeguarding Statement and the names of the DLP and DDLP in a prominent place at the main entrance to the school.