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>St Patrick's National School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Boherash</td>
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<td>Glanworth</td>
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<td>Co Cork</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 13-02-2019
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 [Subject] 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 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.

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 | 13-02-2019
---|---
Inspection activities undertaken | Observation of teaching and learning
• Discussion with principal and teachers
• Review of relevant documents
• Pupil focus-group interview
• Examination of pupils’ work
• Interaction with pupils
• Feedback to principal and teachers

CONTEXT
St. Patricks is a co-education, vertical primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne. The school has six mainstream class teachers, four fulltime special education teachers (SETs) and a shared SET. There are 135 pupils enrolled in the school and the overall attendance levels are good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• Overall, the quality of pupils’ learning is good and they demonstrate good capacity in the use of mathematical language.
• In general, the quality of the learning experiences provided for pupils is good; they enjoy frequent opportunities to work collaboratively.
• The overall quality of teaching is good with very high-quality practice noted in a number of settings; however, strands of the mathematics curriculum are not addressed consistently throughout the year.
• Good quality support is provided for pupils with special educational needs; there is scope to extend structured models of in-class support.
• The quality of assessment is good; there is potential for a more rigorous analysis of assessment data to monitor the impact of whole-school initiatives and to extend the use of pupil self-assessment strategies.
• School planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), is generally effective in progressing pupils’ learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Provision should be made for a balanced delivery of all strands and strand units of the curriculum.
• The school should use assessment data more rigorously, to monitor the impact of whole-school initiatives and to ensure that the programmes of learning are sufficiently differentiated to support and to challenge pupils; self-assessment strategies should be extended throughout the school.
• Special Education Teachers (SETs) should provide further structured models of in-class support, in mainstream classes with the highest level of need.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

   Overall, the quality of learning is good. In general, pupils enjoy Mathematics and are motivated to learn. Most pupils have a clear understanding of computational procedures and capably recall number facts. They are competent in the use of mathematical language and ably use appropriate terminology, supported through use of teacher-designed posters and word walls. While some use is made of the immediate school environment to provide a practical context for learning, there is scope to increase the use of maths trails to further enrich pupils’ learning.

   All pupils enjoy opportunities to engage in problem-solving activities and some show a good ability to justify and to explain their answers. In general, pupils would benefit from increased opportunities to discuss and to justify problem-solving approaches and strategies. It is also advised that further attention be directed to the development of the pupils’ capacity in estimation, particularly in the strand of measures. Most pupils present their work in copybooks to a high standard.

   Pupils from senior classes who attended the focus group interview spoke positively about their learning experiences and enjoyment of aspects of Mathematics. They reported that they liked working in the areas of chance and shape and space. Some of them could describe the practical application of learning in Mathematics to real-life situations and most expressed a preference for active, collaborative learning.

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

   The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics is good. Pupils’ achievement is celebrated and displayed in classroom and on corridors. They are enabled to work together and use concrete materials on a regular basis to scaffold their learning and to consolidate concepts. They have access to calculators and to information and communication technologies (ICTs) during activities and tasks.

   Play-based learning is used successfully in infant classes to develop the pupils’ skills in measure, number, time and shape. Learner experiences are further enhanced through the Ready, Set, Go maths programme. In a number of lessons observed throughout the school, the pupils engaged very well in problem-solving activities and were provided with purposeful opportunities to discuss their learning and to share their thinking. This practice should be an integral element of all lessons.

   The overall quality of teaching is good. In lessons observed, the quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. In a number of instances where practice was of a very high standard, the learning objective was shared with the pupils. These lessons were highly structured and a range of appropriate methodologies was employed to effectively cater for the breadth of abilities and aptitudes within the classroom. Pupils in these classes displayed a strong confidence regarding their capacity in Mathematics.

   Many teachers have participated in continuous professional development. They willingly share their knowledge and skills and this professional dialogue has informed the successful implementation of programmes such as Mata sa Rang and Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework for junior pupils. It is advised that a similar approach be adopted to the sharing of approaches and initiatives for middle and senior pupils.
The quality of teacher planning is good overall. While all strands of the curriculum are addressed, it is recommended that a greater balance be attached to the exploration of the curriculum throughout the year and that all strands be incorporated into teachers' termly planning for Mathematics.

The quality of assessment is good. Teachers employ a variety of assessment approaches and some have introduced pupil-self assessment. The school should use assessment data more rigorously, to monitor the impact of whole-school initiatives and to ensure that the programmes of learning delivered are sufficiently differentiated to support and to challenge pupils. Self-assessment strategies should be extended throughout the school.

Good quality support for pupils with special educational needs is provided through a combination of withdrawal, in-class and station teaching approaches. SETs and mainstream class teachers work collaboratively to implement the curriculum for all pupils. Further extension of structured models of in-class support is advised, with a focus on mainstream classes with the highest level of need.

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

The overall quality of school planning for Mathematics is good. Teachers collectively reviewed the whole-school plan in 2015 and the revised document provides useful guidance for teachers in particular with regard to approaches and methodologies. Commendably, the school strives for an increased focus on active learning methodologies, along with reduced reliance on textbooks.

The school is praised for the work undertaken on improvement initiatives as part of the SSE process. It conducted a thorough analysis of strengths and areas for development and set improvement initiatives in place for mathematical language and the development of the pupils’ skills in problem-solving. As the school continues to engage with the SSE process, it is advised that targets set in improvement plans be more specific and measurable so that the impact on pupil-learning outcomes can be easily determined.

The school displays a strong commitment to the SSE process. It has very good capacity to progress improvement in Mathematics.
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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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td>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 <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>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.</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>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.</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>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.</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>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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Appendix

TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Patrick's National School welcomes the positive findings of the inspection report. We are delighted that the report affirms the commitment and dedication of staff in their quality of teaching, assessment and support for pupils with special needs.

We are delighted that the report confirms the quality of pupils’ learning; that the pupils demonstrate good capacity in the use of mathematical language and had frequent opportunities to work collaboratively.

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

The Board welcomes the recommendations set out in this report.

Plans are in place to continue to provide further structured models of in-class support in mainstream classes with the highest level of need. The SET team met and reviewed their current practice of in-class support and in collaboration with mainstream class teachers, has timetabled additional support for the remainder of this term. We will assess the effectiveness of this measure at the end of each term.

We will use part of our Croke Park hours to plan for a continuation of a more balanced delivery of all strands and strand units of the curriculum and we will draft a framework for each term. The school can analyse its effectiveness on an ongoing basis and again in August as part of our whole-school Planning day.

The Board welcomes the recommendation to use assessment data more rigorously, to monitor the impact of whole school initiatives and to ensure that the programmes of learning are sufficiently differentiated to support and to challenge pupils. We will review how we use our current assessment data and set up an action plan in the coming months.

We will also review the current use of self-assessment strategies at our planning hours and see how we can extend these throughout the school.