An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

Curriculum Evaluation  
Mathematics  

REPORT  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Joseph’s Junior National School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Saint Joseph’s Junior National School  
Balcurris Road  
Ballymun  
Dublin 11  
D11ND82 |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 19431I |

Date of Evaluation: 09-02-2017
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 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.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>09-02-2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Inspection activities undertaken** | • Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to principal and teachers |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

An evaluation of Mathematics was undertaken in Saint Joseph’s Junior School in February 2017. The school participates in the Department of Education and Skills’ programme for educational inclusion, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), and has eight mainstream classes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• Overall, the quality of learning in Mathematics is good with pupils demonstrating an excellent knowledge and understanding of number concepts in particular.
• Overall, pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics are very good and they display high levels of attention, concentration and perseverance.
• There is a very high standard of teaching, particularly with regard to the teaching of early mathematical activities and number.
• Assessment practices as observed through the well-established Maths Recovery and Ready Set Go programmes are very successful.
• Highly effective provision for early mathematical activities and number skills is in place; similarly effective provision for the full breadth of other strand areas is not yet achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Provision for Mathematics, informed by the school’s assessment data, should incorporate greater breadth and balance across the strands to enhance the pupils’ learning experiences.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good. A particular strength in the school is the excellent standard being achieved in pupils’ knowledge and understanding of number concepts. In all classrooms, pupils clearly enjoy their learning experiences. There is evidence of progression in pupils’ learning outcomes through the class levels. While outcomes in number concepts are very good pupils do not display consistent mastery and application of concepts related to other strand areas.
Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding well during play and activity-based learning. This good practice should be extended to all settings.

In the infant classes, pupils’ recognition and formation of numerals is developing very well. They count, sort and classify concrete materials, contributing to robust understanding of number concepts. Pupils understand number concepts, recall and use terms relating to number and use computational procedures with increasing competence and confidence. They communicate their learning effectively, especially when challenged to justify particular answers to a range of number-based questions. Pupils use resources effectively to identify patterns and trends in the application of number facts.

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

Overall, pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics are very good. They experience success incrementally in their learning and consequently display very positive attitudes. Key features of pupils’ learning include their high levels of attention, concentration and perseverance. They participate purposefully in a range of games and manipulate a wide range of resources. Links between pupils’ mathematical knowledge and understanding and how it applies to them and their lives should become a more consistent feature of their learning experiences. The schools’ planned development of pupils’ use of information and communication technology is commended.

There is a very high standard of teaching of Mathematics in the school particularly with regard to the teaching of early mathematical activities and number. Teachers engage regularly in professional development and display a very high level of expertise. They engage in team teaching during which they scaffold pupils’ learning very effectively within differentiated groups. In the most effective practice observed, teachers’ questioning encouraged the children to justify their reasoning and lead their own learning in collaborative settings. The enjoyment of Mathematics is promoted by all teachers.

Assessment practices as observed through the well-established Maths Recovery and Ready Set Go programmes are very successful. Teachers’ ability to assess the outcomes from these programmes ensures that clear understanding of pupils’ achievement, in accordance with their abilities, in early mathematical activities and number is well understood. There is a substantial range of assessment data available in the school. Further use of this data to inform the implementation of other strands of the curriculum can help to enhance the mathematical experiences of pupils.

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

Whole-school planning in Mathematics is good overall. There is a highly effective plan for the development of number concepts. There is a close correlation between this planning and its collective and individual implementation in lessons. This has helped to ensure that pupils’ learning outcomes in the number strand of the curriculum are very good. The school needs to build on this very good practice to incorporate more comprehensive breadth, balance and developmental learning in the other strand areas.
Individual teachers’ planning for Mathematics is good overall. Where plans are highly effective, teachers use assessment data to differentiate teaching strategies and learning activities appropriately. Furthermore, these plans identify opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical language and skills purposefully in a meaningful context. The school has identified the value of a whole-school approach to planning in relation to number. This can now inform the approach to planning for the implementation of the other strand areas.

The school had identified number as their focus area for improvement in numeracy. To build on this good work, whole-school strategic planning should include specific target setting and monitoring of the extent of pupils’ progress in all strands in Mathematics.
Appendix

School response to the report

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

The Board of Management would like to congratulate the pupils and staff on the very positive findings contained in this report.

The Board of Management is very pleased to see that the Inspectorate has noted the excellent standards being achieved in pupils’ knowledge and understanding of number concepts. The staff at St Joseph’s Junior School have focused on developing skills and expertise in teaching number over the past ten years using Maths Recovery methods to deliver the Revised 1999 Mathematics Curriculum and always aim to deliver enjoyable learning experiences for the pupils.

The staff of St Joseph’s Junior School are very encouraged by the fact that the Inspectorate highlighted the positive attitudes that the pupils have towards their Maths education, as we believe this contributes to the high levels of attention, concentration and performance observed during the inspection.

The teachers and management devote a significant amount of time to the development of appropriately differentiated plans and are pleased to see this effort is commended. We aim to teach at the cutting edge of each child’s ability therefore progressing the pupils’ learning at an appropriately demanding pace.

We are very aware that our school is a DEIS Band 1 school located in an area of significant historical disadvantage and want to ensure that we provide the best possible education for all young learners preparing them for their future.

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 teachers are looking forward to using ICT to further develop the other strand areas of the Maths Curriculum. The Board of Management has recently invested in a class set of tablets for whole school use.

We also plan to further extend the assessment and planning approaches that have been noted in the teaching of number topics to the other strand areas of the Maths Curriculum.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>