

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Laurence's N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	St Laurence's Ns Kindlestown Greystones
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19573F

Date of inspection: 08-12-2017



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(s) 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	08-12-2017
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

St Laurence's National School, operating under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, is a mainstream, co-educational primary school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- School leadership is praised for the high quality whole-school planning for Mathematics; the strategies and agreed approaches outlined in school planning documents are very evident in classroom practice and are having a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Overall the quality of the pupils' learning in Mathematics is high with very good standards being achieved by many pupils and pupils display positive attitudes and enthusiasm towards Mathematics.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good with some excellent practice observed.
- There is an agreed whole-school approach and focus on the teaching of problem-solving and development of skills; there is scope to further develop pupils' critical thinking and their ability to reason mathematically.
- There are some effective approaches to assessment evident in both mainstream and support settings; there is potential to optimise the use of assessment information.
- Although the school is not currently engaging in the school self-evaluation process due to industrial action, previous improvement plans are having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater and more consistent use should be made of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and to inform programmes of learning in Mathematics for groups and individuals.
- To enhance pupils' ability to reason mathematically and develop their critical thinking skills more regular opportunities should be provided for pupils to justify and explain their answers and methods and to engage in enquiry-based learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of the pupils' learning in Mathematics is high with very good standards being achieved by many pupils. Pupils display positive attitudes and enthusiasm towards Mathematics and high levels of engagement in lessons were evident. In the discussion group, pupils spoke positively

about their lessons and reported that they particularly liked working with their peers, participating in games and using concrete materials. Learning experiences for pupils were made meaningful through very good links with real-life and consequently pupils were very sure of the purpose of learning Mathematics. Sharing the learning objective in advance with pupils contributed effectively to their sense of achievement and success in Mathematics and pupils were generally attaining learning objectives as set out in planning documents. Through very well-resourced school and classrooms, some commendable use of Mathematics in the environment and an agreed whole-school focus on the use of concrete materials, pupils are supported in their learning. While there was effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) by teachers there is scope to extend the use of ICT and embed it further in pupils' learning.

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good with some excellent practice observed. Teachers were very well prepared and demonstrate a high level of understanding of mathematical concepts. Lessons were well structured with good focus on oral Mathematics with skip counting and choral counting particularly well done. There was laudable use of games throughout lessons. Teachers are very good communicators and explained clearly what was expected in tasks and in many cases shared lesson objectives with the pupils in advance. There is an agreed whole-school approach to problem-solving and all teachers demonstrated an awareness of the school's focus. Where excellent practice was observed there were very high levels of pupil participation throughout the lesson with pupils exploring solutions to problems and explaining their approaches and understanding to each other. There is scope to develop pupils' mathematical thinking skills further through affording pupils in all classes more opportunities to explain concepts, to talk to their partner, their group and class about how they solved a problem and exploring different ways of solving problems. Pupils are well supported in their learning in Mathematics both in mainstream and support settings.

Teachers use a range of assessments to monitor pupils' progress. There was good use of assessment for learning and of learning approaches. Copybooks are very well maintained and regularly corrected by teachers with high levels of teacher feedback and pupils' comments in copybooks. The results of standardised tests are analysed carefully to identify trends and areas of need and the results are disseminated to all members of staff. Some examples of well-structured and focused in-class interventions with good use of baseline assessment data are in evidence and the awareness of staff of the need for structured interventions based on needs of individuals and groups of pupils is lauded. To ensure progression in Mathematics for all pupils there is potential to optimise the use of assessment information to track progress and to inform programmes of learning for groups and individuals

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

School leadership is praised for the high quality whole-school planning for Mathematics. The planning for Mathematics gives very good guidance to teachers and has been disseminated successfully to all staff. The strategies and agreed approaches outlined in school planning documents are evident in classroom practice and are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. There is an agreed whole-school approach and focus on the teaching of problem-solving and development of skills. There is a commendable culture of collaborative planning and shared decision-making in the school.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

The following aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* were checked during the evaluation:

1. Teachers' access to a copy of the school's Child Protection policy
2. The prominent display of the name of Designated Liaison Person near the main entrance

The school was fully compliant with both aspects.

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 of St Laurence's National School and the teaching staff of that school, find the report very positive and affirming of the school and its ongoing work. The evaluation of learning, teaching and planning of Mathematics in St Laurence's is greatly appreciated as are the recommendations in the report.

The Board is delighted that so many of the school's strengths were highlighted and we welcome the guidance on how best to improve upon and develop the already high standard of Mathematics in the school. We are particularly pleased with the Inspectorate's affirmation of the positive attitudes and the enthusiasm evident in the school environment in relation to the teaching and learning of Mathematics.

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

We will endeavour to track our pupils' achievements and needs in regard to their mastery of mathematical skills through the further development of assessment and pupil tracking strategies. Assessment information is currently used in literacy to track the progress both of individual children and to ascertain whether specific concepts have been consolidated at whole class level. A similar system will now be developed to encompass Numeracy.

To develop critical-thinking it is proposed to extend the use of ICT in the area of Mathematics as part of our Digital Learning Framework, which is currently under construction. In addition to using websites such as Number Invaders to promote critical reasoning, we will introduce Bee-Bots as a means of exploring different ways of problem-solving in Mathematics. Training will be provided for teachers in this area and facilitators will visit the school to model the use of Bee-Bots in a classroom setting.

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;