Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Swords Educate Together NS</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
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<td>Swords</td>
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<td>Co. Dublin</td>
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Date of inspection: 15-11-2019
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 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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
SCHOOL CONTEXT
Swords Educate Together National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of Educate Together. The staff consists of an administrative principal, sixteen mainstream teachers and seven special educational teachers (SETs) and the school has access to an additional SET based in another school. There are 442 pupils enrolled.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall quality of pupils’ learning outcomes in Mathematics is very good; pupils presented as enthusiastic and highly motivated learners.
• The quality of learner experiences is very good with pupils involved in a range of Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics initiatives (STEAM) activities; however, opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively are not fully realised.
• The quality of teachers’ practice is good overall with individual teachers’ practice ranging from satisfactory to very good; appropriate differentiation was not evident in all lessons observed.
• The quality of assessment is satisfactory; assessment practices are not being used consistently to inform teaching and learning in both mainstream and special education settings.
• The overall quality of planning in Mathematics is good; while whole-school curricular planning and individual teacher planning are provided, planning for differentiated learning experiences that are appropriately challenging for all pupils has not been established in a significant minority of settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• A whole-school approach to the provision of sufficiently challenging learning experiences for all pupils, including the provision of collaborative and co-operative learning opportunities, should be adopted in order to enhance and extend pupils’ learning in Mathematics.
• Assessment practices should be extended on a whole-school basis to inform teaching and learning and to ensure that all supplementary teaching should be aligned to pupils’ prioritised learning needs.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning is very good overall. Pupils’ mastery of mathematical skills is very good. Pupils can ably articulate a range of problem-solving strategies. In the lessons observed, pupils generally achieved, and at times surpassed, the intended learning objectives of the lessons.
Assessment data indicates that pupils are progressing very well in Mathematics. Pupils engage very enthusiastically in their lessons, particularly where they are actively involved in their learning.

Pupils make meaningful and authentic connections between school-based learning and learning that takes place in other contexts. Pupils’ motivation to learn is enhanced by the schools’ development of a number of initiatives including robotics and STEAM which enhances pupils’ problem-solving and investigative skills.

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

The quality of pupils’ learning experiences in Mathematics is very good. Pupils are provided with a broad range of learner experiences. They demonstrate a high level of interest and ability to participate in learning. During the focus group discussion, pupils spoke confidently about the aspects of mathematics which they enjoyed and reported that working collaboratively assists their learning in Mathematics. Pupils should be provided with further opportunities to work collaboratively and co-operatively in order to develop as autonomous learners.

The quality of teachers’ practice is good overall. During the inspection, teachers’ individual practice ranged from satisfactory to very good in the sample of lessons observed. Some very effective practice was observed in a small number of settings where learning outcomes were clearly mediated to pupils’ learning needs. In these settings, highly effective teacher questioning was evident and differentiated learning experiences were provided in accordance with pupils’ varying abilities. This very good practice should now be extended on a whole-school basis to ensure pupils are challenged at a level commensurate with their ability. Teachers use mathematical language appropriately to explain concepts and to guide pupil responses.

Teachers create bright and engaging displays which include samples of pupils’ work. Teachers demonstrate very effective classroom management skills. Respectful interactions between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves were observed throughout the evaluation.

The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall with a range of practices noted in individual settings. Where practice was observed to be very good, a systematic approach to analysing errors in mathematical processes was used to inform teaching and learning. However, assessment practices are not being used consistently to inform teaching and learning in both mainstream and special education settings. Valuable early intervention initiatives have been established in a small number of classes using the Ready Set Go Maths and Numicon programmes. However, these in-class initiatives are not yet fully informed by assessment information. Further analysis of assessment data, including the provision of diagnostic assessment in Mathematics, is required in order to identify clear targets and to monitor pupils’ learning. Teachers are skilful in recognising and facilitating pupils’ agency as learners and how they communicate and present their learning. Opportunities exist to develop these skills further through the development of self and peer assessment strategies.

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

The quality of school planning is good. The whole-school plan for Mathematics is supportive of teachers’ practice. Content could be further delineated to support teachers in their planning for
the incremental development of mathematical skills. The overall quality of teachers’ individual planning is satisfactory. A whole-school approach to planning for content and themes has been devised by the teachers. However, the use of the whole-school approach varies significantly with practices requiring improvement observed in a significant minority of settings. Where very good practice was observed, teachers planned for meaningful learning experiences which were appropriately challenging for all pupils in the class with explicit planning evident for assessment during the learning. This information was then used by teachers to inform future learning. This good practice should be adopted on a whole-school basis.

Teachers have a high level of engagement with the SSE process and the impact of previous initiatives have been carefully tracked and monitored. The school’s improvement targets identified for the numeracy cycle of SSE relating to a strategic approach to problem-solving are very well embedded in both teachers’ practice and pupils’ learning experiences. A culture of collaboration and reflection is fostered by the principal and the in-school management team. This includes the highly commendable involvement of parents in the delivery of robotics and STEAM initiatives. The principal and in-school management team work purposefully to ensure that pupils and teachers have a leadership role in developing and organising Science Week, Maths Week and other STEAM initiatives.
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 Swords Educate Together National School wishes to acknowledge receipt of the recent Curriculum Evaluation inspection report conducted in our school, focussing on Mathematics. The Board of Management and school staff are delighted to welcome this positive report and the recommendations outlined. The report affirms the strong commitment to the teaching and learning of Mathematics in the school and acknowledges the initiatives which are currently being successfully implemented. We are pleased that the quality of pupils’ learning outcomes and learner experiences in Maths is reported as very good and that the children are enthusiastic and highly motivated learners. We are pleased that there is a good level of teacher practice observed in the teaching of Mathematics and that there is evidence of our pupils making meaningful and authentic connections between school-based learning and learning that takes place in other contexts. The Board of Management is proud of the fact that pupils were observed to be highly motivated and enthusiastic learners, and that they participate eagerly in interesting and relevant learning experiences. The Board also appreciates the acknowledgement within the report to our school’s Ethos, inclusivity, collaboration between pupils, parents/guardians and staff.

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 of Management and staff of Swords Educate Together National School acknowledge the recommendations of this report and look forward to the implementation of such. We believe that the recommendations outlined in the report are achievable and will further enhance the quality of teaching and learning in our school.

The following actions are identified from the report and will be addressed in both mainstream and SEN settings:

- Include differentiated learning outcomes in short term planning to provide sufficiently challenging learning experiences for all pupils.
- Extend current Assessment of and for Learning practices, where there is a focus on a more systematic approach to analysis of error in Mathematics, to inform teaching and learning.
- Develop screening and diagnostic testing in Mathematics in order to identify priority learning needs.
- Develop pupils’ agency as learners, through collaborative and cooperative opportunities, in order to enhance and extend their learning in Mathematics.

We intend to carry out these actions collaboratively, drawing on the current effective practices highlighted in the report. This will be facilitated through staff meetings with curricular focus, professional development and professional dialogue, with the aim of extending these identified practices across the school.
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>
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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 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>
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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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