An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Holy Family Senior School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Aughnaharna, Portlaoise, Co. Laois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>20480F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of inspection: 12-04-2018
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
Holy Family Senior School is a co-educational primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The school was established in 2016 when three primary schools amalgamated. It moved to its current site in September 2017 and caters for pupils from third class to sixth class. The school has two special classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and twenty-four mainstream classes. A Curriculum Evaluation for Mathematics was carried out over two days in Holy Family Senior School in April 2018. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a sample of Mathematics lessons, including thirteen mainstream class settings, six support-teaching settings and one special class.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good.
- Classroom teachers’ planning is of good quality overall, but whole-school planning requires improvement in some areas.
- Teaching is commendable overall, with examples of exemplary individual practice observed.
- Curriculum leadership roles in Mathematics have been developed to support the sharing of best practice.
- Support teaching is not sufficiently linked to the pupils’ identified levels of attainment in Mathematics; monthly progress reports are not routinely provided by special education teachers (SET).
- In support settings, the special educational needs teaching allowance is not being used in its entirety for the intended purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The board of management should ensure that all special education teachers are deployed in compliance with Circular 0013/2017
- All teachers, including special education teachers, should maintain monthly progress reports in accordance with rule 126 of the Rules for National Schools
- An in-depth analysis of standardised Mathematics test data should be conducted in order to provide comprehensive data of pupils’ levels of attainment in each strand of the Mathematics curriculum.
- To provide explicit guidance for all aspects of teachers’ planning and practice, the whole-school plan for Mathematics should be reviewed, updated and fully contextualised to the school.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS

The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is good. Pupils work well independently and they are also provided with opportunities to engage in active learning and group work. Most pupils demonstrated a clear understanding and recall of computational procedures and number facts. Pupils are provided with opportunities to engage with a range of materials and resources. During the focus-group discussion held with pupils in middle and senior classes, pupils spoke very positively about their experiences of Mathematics both inside and outside the classroom.

In the lessons observed and in the course of interactions, pupils presented as enthusiastic and motivated learners. Where best practice was observed, pupils were able to relate Mathematics to real-life, meaningful experiences. To further enhance pupils’ learning outcomes a more in-depth analysis of a wider range of assessment data, including standardised tests, should be used to inform a differentiated provision for a range of learners.

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

The overall quality of teaching in Mathematics is good with very good practice noted in some settings. Pupils are affirmed regularly for their efforts and achievements. In the majority of lessons observed, specific mathematical language was explicitly taught and this should be a feature of all lessons.

Praiseworthy examples of co-teaching and in-class support were observed in some settings, where pupils had opportunities to work collaboratively and to engage in purposeful learning activities. In most lessons observed there was a strong focus on information and communications technology (ICT), on mental Mathematics and on problem-solving strategies. Notwithstanding these elements of good practice, there is scope to provide more differentiation and intervention opportunities for the range of pupils in each class. The strand-specific data generated from standardised assessments should be used to inform classroom practice and in-class support for Mathematics.

Some pupils are withdrawn for additional support in Mathematics. While these lessons are interactive and supportive, the organisation of this provision of support warrants further consideration. A more robust diagnostic approach to assessment is needed in order to identify pupils’ particular learning needs in Mathematics and to address these with the setting of specific, measurable and time-bound targets.

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

The overall quality of school planning for Mathematics is satisfactory. The whole-school plan offers some guidance regarding curriculum content at each class level and some whole-school approaches to strategies and methodologies. However, there is scope to provide more explicit guidance to teachers regarding all aspects of planning and practice for Mathematics.

Classroom planning for Mathematics is of a good quality overall. During the evaluation, the majority of plans reviewed provided effective learning objectives and purposeful activities. All classroom teachers provide long-term and short-term plans for Mathematics and monthly progress reports.

The quality of planning in the special class setting is of a very high quality. However, action is required to improve the planning for and the recording of pupils’ progression in mainstream support settings. Learning targets in short-term and long-term planning should be specific, measurable, time
bound and directly linked to each identified priority learning needs of the pupils, in order to allow for
the incremental progression of learning. A SET is currently deployed to cover teacher absences in
mainstream classes. This deployment of a SET is inappropriate and the board of management should
ensure that all teachers are deployed in full compliance with Circular 0013/2017. The school is
reminded that short-term planning in all special settings should be prepared weekly as per the
Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream
Schools (2017). Furthermore, all teachers, including special education teachers are required to
maintain monthly progress records in line with Rule 126 of The Rules for National Schools.

The school reported that it is engaging in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and that the focus
is currently on curricular areas other than Mathematics. Commendable work has been undertaken
by a core team of teachers to develop the leadership of teaching and learning in Mathematics. The
team is now advised to prioritise the review of whole-school approaches to the planning and
assessment of Mathematics.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Good</em> 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><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> 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><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><em>Fair</em> 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><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td><em>Weak</em> 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>
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

(Blank)

Area 2  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 is making sure that all special education teachers are deployed in compliance with Circular 13/2017.
- All teachers will maintain monthly progress reports in accordance with rule 126 of the Rules for National Schools
- The focus group in Maths will conduct an in-depth analysis of Standardised Mathematical test data
- The whole-school plan will be reviewed and fully contextualised to the school