

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Mathematics**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St Joseph's Community College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Carrigholt Rd. Kilkee Co. Clare
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	70880F

**Date of Inspection: 11-10-2016**



**WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?**

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. 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. Learning, teaching and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	10-10-2016 and 11-10-2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods; four single periods and one double period</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Joseph's Community College is a co-educational, post-primary school operating under the joint patronage of the Sisters of Mercy and the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). The programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. At present, the school does not offer a transition year programme.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The standard of teaching was good or very good in most lessons; some weaknesses were evident in a very small number of lessons.
- The standard of learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons observed.
- Students' active engagement with their learning was an effective feature of a number of lessons.
- Very good examples of carefully-planned differentiated activities and of assessment for learning through questioning were observed in some lessons.
- The standard of subject provision and whole-school support for Mathematics is good.
- Planning and preparation for Mathematics is good with some scope for the further development of short-term schemes of work.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The good practices observed in relation to active and collaborative learning should be extended to all lessons.
- Best practice in relation to differentiation and assessment for learning (AfL) should be discussed by teachers with a view to further developing practice in these areas.
- Schemes of work should be further developed to include reference to particular methodologies, resources and assessment modes to be used in conjunction with each strand of the syllabus.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The standard of teaching was good or very good in most of the lessons observed. There were weaknesses evident in the teaching approaches used in one lesson.
- The majority of the lessons observed were well structured. Best practice was observed where learning intentions were shared with students at the outset and were revisited at the end of lessons to recapitulate the content covered and the skills developed.
- The standard of learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons observed. Students' active engagement with their learning was a feature of the majority of the lessons observed, to varying degrees of success. Where most effective, activities were interspersed throughout the lesson, involved collaboration between students and were time-limited. Such an approach should be adopted in all lessons.
- A variety of learning styles and mathematical ability levels were noted among the student cohort. Teachers are very aware of this and in the best lessons, resources and activities were carefully planned to address the variety of learning needs. In other cases, an additional layer of challenge was recommended in order to ensure that the more able students remained challenged for the full duration of the lesson.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used in the majority of lessons observed to frame the lesson content and to support teachers' presentations. Particularly effective use of ICT was noted in one lesson where online booking websites were used as a tool for assessing the appropriateness of a travel budget.
- Homework was issued in all of the lessons observed and was typically corrected as a whole-class activity. Students were diligent in making corrections to their work where necessary and, in most cases, students' work was well presented.
- Where questioning strategies were most effective, teachers framed a combination of higher-order and lower-order questions and used targeted questioning as a means of ensuring that all students remained engaged. In addition to questioning, the incorporation of a broader range of AfL techniques should be discussed by teachers with a view to developing practice in this area.
- Teachers have developed positive working relationships with students and all lessons were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

### **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The standard of subject provision and whole-school support for Mathematics is good. Timetable provision is in line with syllabus requirements in all but first year where students have four periods of Mathematics per week. This should be increased to five periods per week, as resources allow, in order to comply fully with Circular 0058/2011 and Circular 0025/2012. It is noted that teachers provide additional tuition to students, in their own time, as needs arise.
- Aside from a small withdrawal group in each year, first-year and second-year students are taught in a mixed-ability setting. This approach is reported to be working well and is reviewed regularly. The use of team teaching as an alternative approach to catering for the students in need of additional support has been used in the past and should remain an option as needs dictate.

- From third year onwards, students are taught in level-specific classes where concurrent timetabling facilitates the movement of students between levels where necessary.
- The teachers of Mathematics have a very good qualifications profile. All of the teachers satisfy the requirements of the Teaching Council for the teaching of Mathematics and all have attended a range of CPD events in relation to Mathematics.
- Of particular note is the school's involvement in an initiative that uses the principles of formative assessment, to progress students' learning, in a very meaningful way. One of the mathematics teachers has taken a lead role in this initiative and is working with other schools and the LCETB in rolling out this programme. This is highly commended and is worthy of continued in-house discussion.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The standard of planning and preparation for Mathematics in the school is good. A subject plan has been developed collaboratively and gives a good overview of how the subject is provided for in the school.
- The mathematics department is co-ordinated on a rotating basis in line with good practice. Meetings of the mathematics team are held regularly throughout the year and the minutes of these meetings are retained in the subject plan. As well as the necessary operational focus of these meetings, teaching and learning should become a regular agenda item in order to further facilitate the sharing of best practice.
- Yearly plans have been developed for each year group and for each level of study. These plans lay out the content to be covered in each year as well as a timescale for each strand of study. Over time, these plans should be developed into more comprehensive schemes of work, stated in terms of learning outcomes and linked to associated methodologies, resources and assessment modes.
- The teachers of Mathematics conduct an annual analysis of students' performance in the certificate examinations. Strengths and areas for development are highlighted as part of this analysis and this is very good practice.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

# **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. Joseph's Community College, Kilkee wholeheartedly welcomes this very positive report on the teaching and learning of Mathematics in St. Joseph's Community College. We welcome the main findings and associated recommendations. In particular, we welcome the findings that the standard of teaching was good or very good in most lessons, and the standard of learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons observed.

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

With regard to the recommendations, the Mathematics Department commit to extending the good practices observed in relation to active and collaborative learning, differentiation and assessment for learning and further development of subject planning and student learning.

## 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.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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 <b>very good</b> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;