

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Mathematics

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Kingswood Community College |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Kingswood Avenue Tallaght Dublin 24 |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 76293U |

Date of Inspection: 24-01-2018



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. Teaching, learning 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

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| Dates of inspection | 23-01-2018 & 24-01-2018 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

School context

Kingswood Community College is a co-educational school that opened in September 2016, under the auspices of Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The school is in its second year and offers the junior cycle to 179 students. The school operates fifty-eight minute lessons.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching mostly ranged from satisfactory to good with aspects of very good practice also noted.
- Student learning was good with further scope to provide additional challenge for students.
- Feedback and the monitoring of student progress are being enhanced with the development of a tracking system for students.
- Overall support by management for Mathematics is very good, with excellent opportunities for staff to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) within and outside the school.
- The mathematics department comprises three teachers, not all of whom are graduates in the area.
- Members of the mathematics department have collaborated extensively to develop a multi-touch book based on the needs of students in the school.

Recommendations

- In all lessons tasks should be sufficiently differentiated and designed to provide greater challenge to meet the learning needs of all students.
- Questioning strategies that deepen learning for understanding and encourage the student voice should be used more regularly in lessons.
- Written formative feedback should be included more regularly in students' homework copybooks.
- School management should work towards increasing the capacity within the mathematics department by recruiting graduates in the area.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching mostly ranged from satisfactory to good with aspects of very good practice also noted.
- All lessons began with a starter activity that linked prior learning with current learning. These activities were mostly very effective, particularly when the teachers took time to provide feedback on the key strength and areas for improvement based on the activity.
- Where practice was best, clear learning intentions were shared or referenced in the lesson. There is however, further scope for all teachers to revisit the learning intentions with their students at the end of lessons.
- A range of methodologies was noted in lessons observed and some included a combination of more than one approach. Strategies used included, a discovery approach, teacher-led instruction and a traditional approach. Tasks were used in all lessons to support the teaching approaches. The success of each approach varied within lessons with effective methodologies characterised by a good balance between teacher input and students purposefully engaged in the activity.
- Questioning strategies were used in many lessons to assess students' learning but were mostly of a recall nature. There was scope in most lessons for all teachers to use questions that challenge students to explain and justify their answers. In a few lessons there were a number of missed opportunities where questions could have been used to address misconceptions.
- In some lessons, students posed questions to check their understanding and in most instances, teachers provided the correct answer to them rather than using such questions as a whole-class learning opportunity. Teachers are reminded to take such occasions as a means of further assessing students within their lessons.
- Circulation by teachers around the classroom was mostly very good. This allowed teachers to note common areas of difficulty and to identify those students who required additional help. On occasion, however, less effective practice was noted when the teacher mostly remained close to the top of the classroom. Such practices should be avoided.
- Learning in lessons was good with many students observed to be motivated to learn and mostly demonstrated a positive approach to their learning. Overall, however, learners could have been more vocal in their learning.
- Classroom management was mostly good but on occasion, some students were talkative and became unfocused. This is an area for continual monitoring by teachers to ensure that students are on task and engaged purposefully in their learning. The inclusion of greater differentiation in tasks that teachers assign in lesson should be used in such lessons.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was the main resource used and was very effectively integrated in lessons. In addition, resources such as mini-white boards and die were very effectively used as aids to support student learning in lessons.
- Teachers' instruction and explanations were clear and effective. Teachers modelled best practice in the use of mathematical terminology and symbols. In return most students used terminology appropriate to their stage in the cycle.

- The literacy needs of students were well attended to in lessons. Providing students with opportunities to read and interpret what they are being asked to do should become a feature of more lessons.
- A review of students' copybooks indicates that there is some written formative feedback provided, there is further scope for this to be developed by teachers. There were some instances where student errors were left uncorrected. Consideration should be given to displaying exemplars of appropriate and acceptable presentation of work.
- Classrooms were arranged to support collaboration among students. In some classrooms, displays of commercially sourced materials were observed.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for Mathematics is very good. Concurrent timetabling from second year facilitates students to access a level commensurate with their ability.
- School management deploys additional teachers to almost all classes through a system of in-class support. The long-term sustainability of such a resource will need to be monitored. Defining and clarifying the specific roles of the in-class support teachers should be undertaken to ensure consistency in approach.
- CPD is very well supported by school management. Commendably, teachers participate in whole-school CPD and regularly observe each other's teaching practice. This is encouraged and facilitated by school management.
- The mathematics department comprises three teachers, not all of whom are graduates in the area. Teachers should consider accessing upskilling courses in Mathematics, such as those provided by the Department of Education and Skills. As the school anticipates an increase in its population, it is timely that management plan to increase capacity within the department.
- A range of extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities and the school's numeracy noticeboard provide students with an opportunity to experience Mathematics in settings other than in the classroom.
- There is very good provision for students with special education needs (SEN) in Mathematics with plans to provide extra support to students on an individual needs basis. The co-ordinator of SEN provides excellent in-class support to the mathematics teacher and students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, individual lesson planning was very good, with some scope for greater planning for differentiation noted on occasion.
- Although there is an overall co-ordinator, the work of the mathematics department is undertaken in a very collaborative, collegial manner. Within a short period, the mathematics department has developed a significant range of online materials to support the teaching and learning in the classroom.
- The subject plan has been developed and is differentiated to support the individual learning needs of students in the classes.
- Subject department meetings take place and minutes are retained. The teaching of common mathematical concepts has being agreed but could usefully be developed further to record a description and a worked sample of the approach.
- Common assessments take place for termly examinations and for some of the more regular class based tests. Very good practice was noted where students use Assessment for

Learning, such as two stars and a wish, to review their assessment. Greater use of the available baseline data to support subject planning is suggested.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, the special education needs co-ordinator and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 of quality 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; |