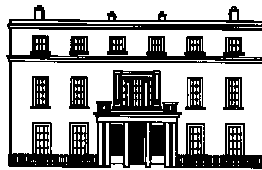


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Mathematics

REPORT
Scoil Phobail Chúil Mhín
Clonsilla, Dublin 15
Roll number: 913150

Date of inspection: 6 October 2014



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MATHEMATICS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	6 and 7 October 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eleven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers• Discussion with the learning-support co-ordinator

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching varied from good to very good and all of the lessons were delivered with enthusiasm and care. A range of teaching approaches were in evidence and in a number of lessons the quality of teacher questioning was very good.
- The practice of sharing the learning outcomes at the outset of the lesson was common practice across the department. However, in many instances the intended outcomes were not sufficiently interrogated. As a result there was room for improvement in the quality and variety of the tasks with which the students were engaged and in the quality of the review conducted at the end of the lessons.
- Classroom management, student behaviour and engagement were of a very high standard.
- Timetabling provision for mathematics is good and arrangements for students wishing to change levels are very good.
- Formal assessment practices and subject department planning in Mathematics are very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The intended learning outcomes and success criteria should be explored with greater clarity and suitably rich tasks should be chosen to ensure that the learning outcomes are fully achieved. Prior to their conclusion, each lesson should also feature a comprehensive review of degree to which the learning outcomes were realised.
 - There is scope to enhance the degree to which the needs of the more able students are catered for in mathematics lessons. Greater emphasis should be placed on open-ended tasks and extension activities to introduce the students to problem-solving as an integral part of lesson delivery in Mathematics.
 - The situation pertaining in first year where one class group is shared between two teachers should be discontinued in future timetables.
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INTRODUCTION

Scoil Phobail Chúil Mhín is a co-educational post-primary school with an enrolment of 1,085. It was one of the first two community schools founded in the Republic of Ireland in 1972. It provides a broad and balanced curriculum which includes Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was either good or very good in all of the lessons and was characterised by the commitment of the teachers and the enthusiasm with which lesson content was delivered.
- The majority of lessons featured a range of teaching approaches including group and pair work, effective integration of resources and, in some cases, high-quality teacher questioning. In the lessons where the questioning was at its most effective, it enabled the students to reflect on their learning, provided them with sufficient time to formulate considered responses and demanded that they explain their reasoning.
- A striking feature of the very best lessons was the clarity with which the learning outcomes and success criteria were shared at the outset and the quality of the task chosen to realise them. Every care was taken to provide a rich context for the lesson-content and embed it in the students' earlier learning.
- Classroom management, student behaviour and engagement were of a very high standard. All of the classroom interactions were respectful and warm and conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- The quality of student learning, as evidenced by the quality of the work in the copybooks and responses to teacher questions, was very good. However, in many lessons the learning outcomes were not sufficiently interrogated. As a result there was room for improvement in the quality and variety of the tasks with which the students were provided. It is recommended, therefore, that every lesson should feature rich tasks designed to fully exploit the intended learning outcomes. A comprehensive review to establish the degree to which the learning outcomes had been achieved should be conducted at the end of each lesson.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling provision for Mathematics is good. The time allocated is in line with best practice and the scheduling of mathematics lessons ensures equity of access to all levels for all students. The situation pertaining in first year, however, where one class group is shared between two teachers should be discontinued in future timetables.
- Arrangements for students wishing to change level are very good. The timetabling arrangements allow students to follow the highest level for as long as possible and the communication between all parties involved in the decision to change level are timely and comprehensive.
- The mathematics department is very well resourced. All mathematics teachers have access to the school's extensive information and communication technology infrastructure and a comprehensive range of resources to facilitate active teaching and learning are also available. The growing use of an on-line learning platform to facilitate the work of the department is to be particularly welcomed.

- School management has been very successful in building the capacity of the mathematics department with a good number of teachers in a position to teach higher-level Mathematics to Leaving Certificate. The members of the department have been assiduous in attending the workshops provided as part of the rollout of *Project Maths* and other relevant continuing professional development programmes.
- While there is no whole-school assessment policy in place, formal assessment practices in Mathematics are very good. Common assessments, within levels, are the norm for all in-school examinations in Mathematics, and due recognition is given to the need for balance between formative and summative assessment in the department's planning materials.
- Procedures for identifying and supporting students with special education needs or requiring learning support in Mathematics are very good. A variety of interventions including in-class support, targeted withdrawal and the provision of classes with reduced numbers of students are in place and are supported by inclusive whole-school supports that address the students' wider needs.
- The school supports a number of initiatives to support students with exceptional abilities in Mathematics. While this is most welcome, there is scope to enhance the degree to which the needs of these students are regularly catered for in mathematics lessons. To address this, greater emphasis should be placed on open-ended tasks, and extension activities that introduce the students to problem-solving as an integral part of lesson delivery in Mathematics.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning structures in Mathematics are very well established. A co-ordinator appointed as part of the school's schedule of posts has responsibility for managing the department's formal planning activities. A very good subject department plan is in place and it is evident that the department collaborate very effectively in preparing and sharing resources and in designing and administering the department's assessment activities.
 - Individual teacher planning, particularly in relation to the integration of resources is very good. Future planning should focus on how the learning outcomes for lessons are framed and explored, and on the types of activities chosen to optimise their successful attainment. This would result in the teachers taking greater ownership of the learning intentions and in deeper learning for the students.
 - Subject department planning is informed by detailed analysis of student performance in the certificate examinations. This indicates that there is scope to reduce the number of students not achieving a pass grade at ordinary level and the number taking foundation level in the Leaving Certificate. A number of systemic interventions to address this issue, including the introduction, this year of the LCA, have already been made. In order to support these interventions, future planning in Mathematics should focus on improving student learning by embracing the comments relating to lesson planning mentioned earlier in this report and immediately above.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. 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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The Board of Management wishes to commend the Maths Department on this Maths Inspection Report. The Board wishes to acknowledge the debt of gratitude due to our valued colleague who worked for many years as co-ordinator of the Maths Department.

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 recommendations made in the report are being worked on currently by the Maths Department in the school.