

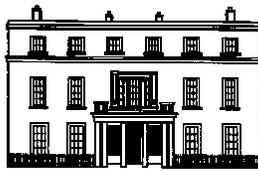
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Mathematics  
REPORT**

**Luttrellstown Community College  
Mill Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15  
Roll number: 76130P**

**Date of inspection: 1 May 2013**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF  
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	1 and 2 May 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Discussion with the learning-support coordinator</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during nine class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was, with the exception of one lesson, either excellent or very good.
- On-going and formal assessment practices in Mathematics are well managed and effective.
- Student behaviour and engagement were of a uniformly high standard and teachers and students displayed very positive attitudes towards Mathematics.
- Senior management strongly support and promote the development of Mathematics across the school.
- Subject department planning in Mathematics is very good.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In framing the first-year mathematics programme, agreement should be reached on the key skills the students should master and on the strategies required to deliver them. A school-wide approach to support this initiative should be put in place.
  - Future subject department planning in Mathematics should focus on creating and exploiting links between the different curricular strands.
  - *Extension activities* in the form of questions with reduced levels of scaffolding should feature in all future classroom, homework and assessment activities related to Mathematics.
  - The TY mathematics plan should be completely reviewed.
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## INTRODUCTION

Luttrellstown Community College, which operates under the aegis of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee, is in existence for just four years and has been in temporary accommodation since the outset. The first phase of the development of its permanent premises is almost complete and the school will relocate in time for the coming school year. Despite its relative youth, the school offers a good range of subjects and TY is available as an option in senior cycle.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was either excellent or very good in the majority of lessons with just one lesson featuring teaching that was less than satisfactory.
- The best lessons had clear learning outcomes, featured focussed student-centred activities supported by insightful and effective teacher interventions. The Mathematics underpinning the lessons was treated with an appropriate degree of rigour and due cognizance was given to developing the students' skills and knowledge.
- The effective use of resources to support teaching and learning is a particular strength of the mathematics department. In one instance, simple artefacts, created by the students themselves were used to determine the height of a tree on the school grounds. While in another, everyday objects were incorporated to enhance the students' understanding of three-dimensional space. Information and communication technology (ICT) was utilised to very good effect in all of the lessons.
- The quality of student learning was, in the vast majority of cases, very good. Teacher questioning served not only to establish what the students had learnt but enabled them to construct their own understanding of the lesson material and to explain their reasoning. This was particularly evident in a lesson where congruence was being explored where the teacher, through probing and insightful questioning, allowed the students to arrive at definition of congruency and to explore how it differs in meaning from similarity.
- All of the lessons would have benefited from the inclusion of *extension activities*, featuring questions with reduced levels of scaffolding and with the intention of developing the students' problem-solving skills. This type of question should feature in all future classroom, homework and assessment activities related to Mathematics.
- Assessment outcomes had a significant impact on the manner in which the lessons were delivered. In a number of instances, the direction of the lesson changed when it became obvious that the learning intention was not being achieved or that the teaching approach was not meeting the needs of the students. This flexibility reflects the central role that assessment and in particular *assessment for learning* plays in the operation of the mathematics department.
- Student behaviour and engagement was of the highest quality throughout. Positive attitudes toward Mathematics were modelled by all of the teachers. This approach was mirrored in the students' approach to their work and the manner in which they interacted with the teachers and their peers.

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

- Mathematics enjoys a high priority within the school and is strongly supported by management. Timetabling provision, arrangements for students' access to the different levels and the provision of additional class groupings designed to reduce class size all reflect the importance attached by management to teaching and learning in Mathematics.
- The mathematics department is very well resourced. Despite the temporary nature of its accommodation, the school boasts an extensive ICT infrastructure. All of the mathematics teachers have access to this infrastructure and to a host of resources designed to facilitate active teaching and learning.
- Arrangements for facilitating student transfer into first year and determining students' mathematical capabilities are very good. Greater use should be made of the outcomes of the entrance assessments in framing the first-year mathematics programme. In particular, the key skills the students should master should be identified and strategies for delivering these key skills should be agreed by the mathematics department. All subject areas should contribute, as appropriate, to the development and reinforcement of these identified skills.
- A whole-school assessment policy is in place and formal assessment practices in Mathematics are very good. Great credit is due to the members of the mathematics department for the manner in which they collaborate in preparing common assessments with agreed marking schemes, where appropriate, for all house examinations. Identifying *assessment for learning* as a key element in ensuring high-quality teaching and learning is a definite strength of the assessment policy and should remain as the primary focus in future iterations of the policy.
- Students with special education needs or requiring learning support in Mathematics are catered for in an innovative and student-centred fashion. Great care is taken to ensure that the support provided meets the identified needs of the student and a mix of interventions including withdrawal and in-class cooperative support are utilised.
- The mathematics department is committed and vibrant. Their engagement with the continuing professional development courses provided as part of the national rollout of Project Maths and with additional courses including post-graduate programmes provided in the teachers' own time is exemplary.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning in Mathematics is very good and is due in no small part to the dynamism of the department's planning co-ordinator. Responsibility for co-ordinating the department's activities is due to devolve to another member of the department later this year. However it is suggested that the role of co-ordinator be shared by the present incumbent and her colleague for the coming year given the particular demands that the move to a new premises will bring.
- A very good subject department plan detailing and supporting the department's various activities is in place. The plan contains detailed schemes of work for each year and level. These schemes are particularly well written and focus not just on the content to be delivered but also on the most appropriate teaching methods and resources to be employed.

- In order to enhance the very good work already in hand, it is recommended that future department planning focus on creating and exploiting links between the different curricular strands.
  - A separate plan for Mathematics in TY has been developed and should be completely reviewed. In conducting the review, the department should agree the role of Mathematics in TY and then develop the content, teaching methods and most appropriate resources accordingly.
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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. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.