

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Mathematics
REPORT

Grange Community College
Donaghmede, Dublin 13
Roll number: 70020B

Date of inspection: 12 April 2013



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	11, 12 April 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with individual students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven lessons• Examination of students' written work

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was good. Teachers prepared well for lessons, learning intentions were mostly clear and there were some very good examples of focussing on students' literacy.
- Classroom management was very good and the learning environment was encouraging and supportive. Students' attitudes to Mathematics were generally positive.
- Students' written work was generally well presented. Very good practice was seen where it was regularly monitored by teachers and comments were provided.
- It is very good that supports for students who find the subject particularly challenging are monitored to ensure their effectiveness.
- Students have the opportunity to participate in co-curricular activities including mathematics quizzes and courses offered by Dublin City University (DCU).
- There is currently no co-ordinator for Mathematics. This impacts negatively on whole-team planning activities.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Care should be taken to ensure that lessons are differentiated sufficiently so as to challenge students of higher mathematical ability.
 - The timetabling of supports for students who find Mathematics particularly challenging needs to be reviewed and amended.
 - The mathematics teachers should agree to establish the role of co-ordinator, which can rotate among members of the team. Meetings of the full team, operated in accordance with a prepared agenda, should take place periodically.
 - Schemes of work should be presented in terms of learning outcomes for students. It would be optimal to link areas of study to syllabus strands and resources to topics. All teachers should have input into all schemes of work.
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INTRODUCTION

Grange Community College, a co-educational school operating under the auspices of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee, has a current enrolment of 170 students. Programmes currently offered are the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was good. Teachers prepared well for lessons, often with digital resources and student handouts.
- Learning intentions were mostly clear and almost always achieved. Their review prior to the end of the lesson would give a clearer sense of progress to both students and teachers and is recommended.
- There were some very good examples of students' literacy being emphasised, but, in a small number of cases, more care needs to be taken with accuracy in work prepared by teachers.
- In most lessons, teaching was supported through the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and in most instances this enhanced students' learning.
- The pace of lessons was appropriately brisk, but there were some lessons in which the pitch may not have been sufficiently high to challenge better-able students. Greater use of differentiated teaching strategies may be necessary.
- There was good use of topic-specific terminology in all lessons and ongoing links were made with previously learned material.
- Classroom management was very good, with students being kept on task. Lessons were conducted in a supportive environment and students' attitudes to Mathematics were positive overall.
- Students' written work was generally well presented and very good practice was seen where it was regularly monitored by teachers and comments for affirmation or improvement were provided.
- Mutual respect between teachers and students was always in evidence.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole school support is good. The time allocation to Mathematics is good and lessons are spread through the week. In addition, most year groups have an appropriate balance of morning and afternoon periods.
- Mathematics groups are divided by level in third year and sixth year, with concurrent timetabling facilitating students in studying the level most suited to their abilities and in changing level during their courses of study. This is good practice.
- Second-year students are currently being taught in a single, mixed-ability group. To fully cater for the needs of students of all abilities, in future, every effort should be made to allow the formation of two distinct groups from the start of second year.
- There are appropriate systems in place to identify students who find Mathematics particularly challenging. Supports are provided in the form of small-group withdrawal,

the formation of small classes or team teaching. It is very good practice that the method of support is monitored to ensure its effectiveness.

- Students receiving support often have different teachers during the week or only receive dedicated teaching for part of the week. This is not optimal practice and should be addressed.
- Teachers are facilitated in attending continuing professional development (CPD) activities. It is of particular note that one team member is currently undertaking further study in mathematics teaching.
- Additional mathematics activities are offered to students and it is particularly noteworthy that students of higher ability have been able to benefit from participation in mathematics quizzes and in courses run by DCU.
- The mathematics department has a good range of materials and other resources to support teaching and learning. These are acquired at the request of teachers and, in line with good practice, are stored in central locations to which all teachers have ready access.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is fair to good. There is no co-ordinator for Mathematics and this impacts negatively on whole-team planning activities. It is recommended that the mathematics teachers agree to adopt the role of co-ordinator as a means of further developing the subject.
- Meetings of senior cycle and junior cycle teachers take place periodically and discussion has taken place on issues including the acquisition of resources, class organisation, student supports and a numeracy initiative. It is recommended that meetings of the full team take place and that an agenda be set in advance. This agenda should include reflection on the implementation of the new mathematics syllabuses. Trialling and discussing the Project Maths Teaching and Learning plans might be a good place to start with this.
- Significant effort has been put into drawing up a mathematics subject plan, which is in line with published guidelines. The plan would be greatly improved with analysis of students' performance in the certificate examinations, the identification of subject goals and the agreement of a time-bound action plan to achieve these goals.
- Teachers have prepared schemes of work, in line with good practice. In their review, it is recommended that they be rewritten in terms of learning outcomes for students, putting students at the centre of the planning process. Linking areas of study with the syllabus strands would also be useful, as would more specific linking of resources to topics. As a capacity-building measure and to ensure that mathematics learning is seen as a continuum, it is recommended that all teachers have input into all schemes of work.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the 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.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the report on the mathematics Inspection. The board is pleased that the positive aspects of teaching and learning at Grange Community College were recognised and commended.

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 role of subject co-ordinator has been established and will rotate between teachers on a yearly basis.

Meetings of the full team of teachers are happening on a regular basis.

There are two distinct teaching groups for each year.

Subject support for individual students has been enhanced.