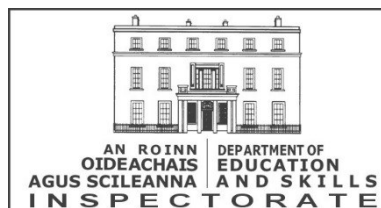


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Mathematics
REPORT

Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ
Limerick
Roll number: 64270P

Date of inspection: 6 April 2016



REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MATHEMATICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	5 and 6 April 2016
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in over half of the lessons observed; there was scope for development in the remainder.
- In the most effective lessons, suitably challenging learning intentions were achieved using differentiated tasks and a variety of methodologies.
- Timetabling provision for Mathematics is good and the mathematics department is very well resourced.
- There is a comprehensive subject department plan which is updated regularly and contains teachers' ongoing reflection and review.
- The board of management and senior management are very supportive of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) and membership of relevant professional associations.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The good practice of linking methodologies and assessment tools to learning intentions needs to be extended and expanded upon by further developing the detail already included in the subject department plan.
- All teachers of Mathematics should use the relevant schemes of work and agreed common practices and assessment strategies to plan for lessons.
- To help build capacity, it is recommended that the role of subject co-ordinator be rotated and that an agreed list of responsibilities be compiled.

INTRODUCTION

Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ is an all-Irish post-primary school for girls located in Limerick City. There are 415 students enrolled this year. It offers the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes as well as a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons. In the remaining lessons there was room for improvement; on occasion, this was significant. The most effective lessons had very clear learning outcomes, suitably high expectations and built on related knowledge from various sections of the syllabus. Where there was room for improvement, all students were not engaged, expectations did not reflect the ability of the cohort and the students did not get sufficient opportunity to discover and learn actively.
- Individual planning for the good and very good lessons was of high quality and the teachers' role in the lessons was mainly as a learning facilitator. Suitably engaging and challenging resources and tasks were used to ensure all students progressed. Peer and group work, peer assessment and higher order questioning were some of the strategies employed in the best classes. Both in-class and homework exercises were monitored regularly and copybooks were sources of encouragement and guidance for improvement where formative feedback was evident.
- Positive learning environments were enjoyed by all the students observed. Relevant posters and student work were on display. Student behaviour was exemplary and there was evidence of good working relationships between teachers and students in the majority of lessons. In a few instances, students questions were not adequately answered and the teacher moved on and changed topic without exploring the obvious difficulties experienced by some.
- Exemplary practice was noted where students were arranged in groups or pairs to ensure that their learning experiences were maximised through support and collaboration with each other. Effective questioning was used to ensure students were comfortable explaining, presenting and formulating answers and the best lessons had a good balance of student-teacher input. Self-directed learning and self-assessment were features of the most effective lessons as was the practice of students monitoring their own progress when revising.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling provision for Mathematics is good. The lesson allocation for students in their exam years and for those in TY is generous. The needs and abilities of the third year students are reviewed annually and an extra class group is provided to best support the needs of the cohort. It is at this stage that they are arranged into specific levels.
- New teachers are supported and mentored by the assignment of a link teacher for their first year in the school. The newer members of the mathematics department commented on the value of this practice which is highly commendable.
- The school management and board of management strongly support teachers' engagement with CPD and their membership of relevant professional associations. Two

members of the mathematics department are commended for undertaking the Professional Diploma in Mathematics for Teaching offered by the University of Limerick.

- Classrooms are all well equipped with information and communications technology (ICT) and teachers have access to a shared drive where all planning documents are available as well as a bank of resources. Although the classrooms are well stocked with hands-on resources, there is also a moveable container with additional equipment which can be used, as required, by all.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject department plan is comprehensive and of a very high quality. It contains short term schemes of work, agreed common methodologies and assessment practices as well as reflection and review noted in various sections of the plan. It is recommended that the plan be used by all members and that the common, agreed practices be used for all lessons and in assessments. Where there was significant room for improvement noted in classroom visits, the lesson did not follow the department plan and neither was there a suitable alternative in evidence. The short term schemes of work should be dated for ease of use.
- The role of co-ordinator is voluntary and appointment is made by agreement among the relevant teachers. It is recommended that the role of co-ordinator be rotated to build capacity and ensure the broad range of experience of the department members is shared. An agreed role description would help provide guidance and support for the co-ordinator. It could also be used to ensure consistency of provision and provide a framework for review and reflection.
- Minuted department meetings take place each term as well as numerous informal meetings, details of which are recorded and filed with the subject department plan. The department members work closely together. They support and collaborate with each other and are very happy to share resources and ideas to enhance the learning experiences of the students.

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 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.

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 welcomes the report. We are happy that due recognition was given by the inspector to the quality of the department's teaching, learning and planning. The board thanks the in-school management and the teachers for their continuous dedication to Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ.

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

The board will carefully examine the recommendations of the report to ensure their implementation. This report, with the department's self-evaluation, will form the basis of all future ongoing development.

(This is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management.)