

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Mathematics
REPORT**

**Seamount College
Kinvara, County Galway
Roll number: 63050T**

Date of inspection: 9 February 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	8 and 9 February 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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with exemplary work observed in two lessons.
- Student learning was well supported with teacher-generated worksheets further supplemented in some lessons with relevant resources.
- Homework is assigned regularly and its completion closely monitored in the majority of lessons.
- The mathematics department is very well resourced and timetabling provision for Mathematics is good.
- The board of management and senior management are very supportive of teachers' engagement in continuing professional development (CPD).

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organisational structures used to support learning for first year and Transition Year (TY) students should be considered for other year groups.
- The mathematics department should develop and implement a wider range of strategies for active and collaborative learning.
- The practice of monitoring copies should be further developed to include formative feedback to guide for improvement and track progress as well as for affirmation.

INTRODUCTION

Seamount College is a co-educational voluntary post-primary school under the trusteeship of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Galway. There are currently 379 students enrolled in the school. It offers the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes as well as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. It is the only provider of post-primary education in the town of Kinvara.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with exemplary work observed in two lessons. Best practice was where suitably high expectations were set, learning intentions were clear to all, questioning was used to access prior knowledge and students worked collaboratively and purposefully for the duration of the lesson.
- The majority of lessons were teacher-dominated. More discussion, explanation and presentation from the students needs to be facilitated to help them develop the skills of formulating answers and increase their levels of mathematical literacy. Expanding the practice of targeted and specific group activities will help foster more independent learning skills among students. It can be used to include a variety of active learning methodologies to ensure the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning experiences are maximised.
- The practice of setting levels at the beginning of second year should be kept under review. Flexibility is recommended to ensure that the strengths and needs of individual groups are met. To be fully effective for a mixed-ability setting, teaching and assessment processes need to be differentiated appropriately to reflect the full range of abilities. It is commendable that the bands which are set are mixed-ability.
- Classroom management was very good and teachers circulated to monitor and support progress in all classes. Homework is regularly assigned and the policy of checking for its completion was evident in most lessons. However, there is a need to include formative feedback to give students guidance on how to improve and to help track progress as well as to affirm. Peer assessment was used very effectively to correct homework in one lesson. It is recommended that the mathematics department develop this strategy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling provision for Mathematics is in line with recommended class-time allocation. Sixth-year students benefit from an extra class period per week which has been added to their timetable in the recent past.
- Management's commitment to Mathematics has ensured that new members of the department are willing and able to teach all levels. Teachers are assigned to classes on a rotational basis while also maintaining continuity for junior cycle and senior cycle groups.
- The TY programme is used to expand the students' learning experiences of Mathematics and is centred around project work and partaking in competitions. There is a focus on the development of key skills and bridging any evident gaps in knowledge from the junior cycle. The mixed ability setting for TY is commended.
- Although there is no whole-school assessment policy, the mathematics department sets common tests with marking schemes for in-house exams where relevant.

- The board of management and senior management are very supportive of continuing professional development (CPD) and the department members avail of as many opportunities for CPD as possible.
- Resources are provided readily when requested and as well as using the specific mathematics resources, there is also a practice of borrowing from other departments where relevant and possible. This is good practice and helps reinforce cross-curricular links.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department plans are updated on an annual basis and include analysis of data available from certificate examinations. It is recommended that attainment as well as uptake is examined and in-house comparisons are used along with national averages to inform any targets set for improvement.
- The good practice of rotating the role of co-ordinator would be further enhanced by having an agreed role description included in the plan.
- High quality preparation for individual lessons was observed. In all lessons, students worked on teacher generated activities, enhanced in many instances with information and communications technology (ICT).
- In addition to regular formal subject meetings, there is ongoing informal collaboration between the members of the mathematics department. There is significant capacity and knowledge among the members of the department. An agenda item at each formal meeting to allow for sharing of successful methodologies, assessment practices and resources used would help to add to the learning experiences of students.

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 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.