

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Mathematics**  
**REPORT**

**Coláiste Cholmcille**  
**Inverin, County Galway**  
**Roll number: 71250A**

**Date of inspection: 20 November 2015**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	19 and 20 November 2015
<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></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- A good standard of teaching and learning was observed in the majority of lessons with examples of very good practice in a few lessons and scope for development in another.
- The teachers were professional in their commitment to Mathematics.
- Irish was the language of tuition and communication modelled by the teachers most of the time.
- Very good interpersonal relationships among teachers, support staff and students added to the positive atmosphere of the school.
- Provision for Mathematics is good and both examination years benefit from additional teaching hours to create smaller class groups.
- There is very good resource provision in the school particularly for information and communications technology (ICT).

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There is significant scope for further development of the use of active teaching methodologies in Mathematics.
  - The teaching and learning of Mathematics could be enhanced by making greater use of the school's ICT facilities.
  - Further development of the use of differentiation would help to ensure all students are suitably included and challenged.
  - Classroom practice should encourage and develop the use of mathematical language by the students.
  - In monitoring students' work, formative feedback strategies should be developed to both guide improvement and allow for reflection on progress.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Cholmcille is a co-educational post-primary school situated in the Connemara Gaeltacht. It has an enrolment of 230 students and operates under the trusteeship of the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB). The curricular programmes offered by Coláiste Cholmcille are Junior Certificate (JC), Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate (LC) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school also participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) and has recently opened an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit. Coláiste Naomh Eoin on Inis Meáin operates as a unit of Coláiste Cholmcille but did not form part of this inspection.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning were of good quality in most of the lessons with some very good practice in a few lessons.
- The best methodologies observed included the use of hands-on resources for demonstration, checking prior knowledge and skills before introducing an activity, facilitating classroom discussion on alternative solution methods, bespoke activities used to summarise the lesson and sufficient time allowed for questions to be answered.
- Classroom management was very good in all lessons. Students' efforts were regularly affirmed and teachers circulated to monitor progress during the majority of lessons. The teacher voice was the most prominent in all lessons. It is recommended that more discussion, explanation and presentation from the students be facilitated to help develop the skills of formulating answers and the use of mathematical language.
- Although students worked purposefully for most lessons, there is a need to expand the practice of active learning and the use of targeted group activities. Group activities work best when roles are assigned, there is a clear focus on the learning outcome and students share their results. Suitable group activities help foster elements of independent learning and ensure all students are included and aptly challenged.
- Very good use of ICT was observed in one lesson where students worked on a short quiz to summarise the learning achieved and reflect on their own progress. It is recommended that use of the very good ICT facilities be expanded to further enhance both the teaching and learning of Mathematics.
- A random sample of students' copybooks was reviewed. The practice of monitoring copybooks ranged from inadequate to good. The use of formative feedback needs to be developed in all class groups to help guide improvement, track progress and affirm good work.

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

- Provision for Mathematics is good with all students having one class of Mathematics per day. Additional hours are used to provide smaller class groups for both junior and senior cycle examination classes.
- Students are of mixed ability in first year and streamed thereafter. Concurrent timetabling allows for students to remain at the highest level possible for as long as possible. Until this year, the TY mathematics classes were of mixed ability but are now streamed.

- There is a good working relationship between the learning support team and the mainstream teachers. The good practice of integrating students with special educational needs (SEN) was observed in a few of the lessons. Its success was due to careful planning by the class teacher as well as collaboration with the learning support teacher. The students with SEN were well catered for in the lessons observed.
- The management's willingness to facilitate additional after-school mathematics classes is commendable. Classes to supplement students' in-school learning in conjunction with planned classes for parents help to raise the profile of Mathematics.
- Resource provision for Mathematics is very good. The ICT facilities are of a high standard: teachers and students have access to shared drives, junior cycle students use tablet devices and there is broadband throughout the school.
- Management is very supportive of continuing professional development (CPD) and facilitates teachers' attendance at courses. Many of the teachers have attended the Project Maths workshops and the department continue to avail of the support service by receiving school visits.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The role of co-ordinator is rotated and minutes of meetings are recorded. There is a comprehensive subject plan which includes certificate examination results analysis. The department should include relevant findings from other reports in its plan as well as ensuring that the findings from this report are incorporated and acted on promptly.
- High quality preparation for individual lessons was observed. Bespoke activities were prepared in advance, hands-on resources were used for demonstration and teachers in a number of lessons had additional resources available for students to use if needed.
- Management allows the department to make the decisions as to which teacher takes which class group as long as there is continuity of provision for the second and third years of the junior cycle and again for senior cycle.
- Parent-teacher meetings, school reports sent home after house examinations and using the students' diaries to exchange information are all means used to keep parents informed of progress or other aspects of learning.

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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.