An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Mathematics

REPORT

School name	Cloch An tSionnaigh N. S.
School address	Foxrock Ballacolla Abbeyleix
Roll number	15562D

Date of inspection: 01-10-2019

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
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WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Mathematics under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learner experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	01-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus-group interview	• Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Cloch an tSionnaigh is a rural, co-educational primary school located in the village of Clough, Co. Laois. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. The school has four mainstream teachers, one special education teacher and one part-time special education teacher who is not based in the school. At the time of the evaluation there were 82 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of learning is good overall and pupils' mathematical language and understanding of concepts are well developed.
- Pupils' learning experiences in Mathematics are of a high quality overall.
- The teaching of Mathematics is of a good quality with elements of highly effective practice observed during the evaluation.
- While the quality of assessment is good, with all teachers using a range of strategies to track and monitor progress, the analysis and use of data gathered to inform differentiated teaching approaches is not a consistent feature of practice.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, but target-setting within the *Continuum of Support* plans for pupils with additional needs in numeracy is not sufficiently refined and does not adequately inform approaches to team-teaching.
- School planning for Mathematics is good and there is evidence of whole-school initiatives having a positive effect on learner outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A more focused approach to identifying the specific requirements of pupils with additional needs in numeracy should be adopted and a collaborative approach to targeting their needs and monitoring their progress through team-teaching and in-class support should be put in place.
- As part of effective, differentiated practice, teachers should make use of assessment data to plan meaningful and appropriately challenging learning experiences for all pupils.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of pupils' learning is good. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of mathematical concepts and an ability to communicate their learning using appropriate mathematical language. In the lessons observed, learner outcomes ranged from good to very good and pupils were led, through guided discussion, to identify Mathematics in their environment and to apply their learning to real-life situations. Evidence from project-work undertaken in Mathematics reflects a meaningful integration with work in other curricular areas.

The school has identified problem-solving in Mathematics as an area in need of development and, commendably, has adopted a whole-school approach aimed at improving pupils' problem-solving skills. Pupils in the focus group reported that they enjoyed engagement with the mathematical challenges displayed regularly on noticeboards in the school and indicated that they would welcome more such opportunities to engage in problem-solving activities. Scope exists therefore, for the creation of such problem-solving opportunities with an emphasis on challenging all pupils to work independently and collaboratively in developing their higher-order thinking skills.

Pupils in middle and senior classes, when interviewed as part of a focus group, indicated that they found the use of digital technology in their mathematical activities enjoyable and beneficial and were keen to avail of this tool on a more regular basis. Likewise, they identified mathematical games and trails as being exciting and helpful in their engagement with the subject and said they would welcome further opportunities to engage in such activities.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

Pupils' learning in Mathematics is supported effectively. The school environment promotes Mathematics and pupils have access to a wide range of resources and attractive mathematical displays to support them in their learning. High levels of interest and participation were noted in the lessons observed and pupils were encouraged to be active in their learning.

The quality of Mathematics teaching is good overall with elements of very good practice noted in the lessons observed. Lessons were well structured and concepts were explained with the aid of concrete materials and relevant displays. Where practice was highly effective, teachers made use of effective differentiated questioning techniques to extend and consolidate learning, and created opportunities for pupils to explain and justify their answers and the methods employed in arriving at these answers.

Teachers' planning reflects curriculum-appropriate learning outcomes, and practice is supported by a range of effective teaching methodologies. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on the development and use of mental arithmetic and estimation strategies.

The quality of assessment is good overall. All teachers use a range of assessment-of-learning strategies and maintain records of pupil progress. While there is some evidence of assessment data analysis, there is a need for a consistent, whole-school approach to this in order to inform planning for differentiated learning outcomes and activities that are appropriately challenging for all pupils.

Support for pupils with special education needs in numeracy is satisfactory. Support is provided through the withdrawal of pupils for targeted support and more recently, through team-teaching. While the interactions observed in these settings were highly positive and affirmative, there is scope to address pupils' learning needs in a more focused manner. Teachers should ensure that support plan targets are informed by pupils' priority learning needs and that these targets are specific and measurable. Specific learning outcomes for pupils in receipt of additional support should be planned for and monitored on a weekly basis. The mainstream and special education teachers should work collaboratively to plan team-teaching approaches that will address the differentiated learning needs of pupils. The impact of such intervention on pupils' progress should be assessed and monitored regularly.

3.THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of school planning for Mathematics is good. The school plan informs teachers' individual planning and provides guidance for the delivery of a broad and balanced Mathematics curriculum. The plan provides an overview of the specific mathematical language to be taught at each class level. Teachers collaborate in identifying approaches that are effective in completing operations and they agree on the problem-solving strategies to be taught to pupils at each class level.

The staff has concentrated on the area of oral language as part of the school self-evaluation process and a focus on the language of Mathematics forms part of this. There is also a whole-school focus on the development of pupils' problem-solving strategies, which is evidenced in teachers' planning and practice. Resources are well-managed and teachers collaborate effectively in the planning and co-ordination of co-curricular mathematical activities.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	***Very good*** applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is ***outstanding*** and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	***Good*** applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	***Satisfactory*** applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	***Fair*** applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	***Weak*** applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;