An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Maolmhaodhagh (Naíonáin)
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Anne Street Dundalk County Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	15260K

Date of inspection: 15-01-2018

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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 inspectors 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 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.

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	15-01-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Observation of teaching and learning	• Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Maolmhaodhagh (Naíonáin) is an urban primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Cardinal of Armagh. At the time of the evaluation, teaching staff comprised ten mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers. The school caters for 257 pupils from infants to first class.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is good.
- Very high quality learning experiences are provided for pupils in Mathematics.
- Teaching in the subject is effective with some very good practice observed; in-class support approaches are not yet established effectively.
- Assessment practices are satisfactorily developed; the use of assessment data to inform in-class interventions and differentiated provision and to track individual pupil progress is not sufficiently robust.
- Good whole-school planning is in place for the subject and school self-evaluation (SSE) is impacting positively on pupils' learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In-class support should be developed to facilitate early intervention in junior infant classrooms and more purposeful learning for all pupils.
- Attainment in Mathematics should be tracked and robustly analysed to inform differentiated programmes of learning for pupils of all abilities.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is commendable. There is good progression in the learning outcomes of pupils as they move from class level to class level. Pupils display great enjoyment in learning and are motivated through the provision of active lessons. They count, sort and classify concrete materials and create and partition sets contributing to robust understanding of number concepts. They work independently and collaborate with each other in their mathematics learning. To further enhance learning, pupils should be challenged to justify and explain their answers and enabled to record their learning in Mathematics in copybooks. A particular strength in the school is the consistent emphasis on the development of mental mathematics particularly focusing on number concepts. Opportunities still exist for the expansion of this approach and the

further development of conceptual thinking and problem-solving skills to enable pupils to develop consistent mastery of concepts related to all strand areas.

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

The overall quality of the learning experiences provided for pupils in Mathematics is very good. Classroom environments promote and scaffold learning effectively. Pupils make use of a very wide range of concrete resources including information and communication technology (ICT). In lessons observed, all pupils engaged in a broad range of mathematical games and activities. During station teaching, collaborative learning activities were of a very high quality. In many lesson pupils were provided with opportunities to apply their learning to real-life situations and Mathematics was integrated with other curricular areas, most notably literacy and Music. While pupils are enabled to identify Mathematics in their classroom, the school environment could be further developed to promote learning; for example, through the use of mathematics trails.

The overall quality of teaching in the subject is good, with some very good practice also observed. Teachers employ a wide variety of methodologies based on programmes such as *Numicon* and *Mata sa Rang* and the enjoyment of the subject is promoted. Lessons have a clear structure and teachers make effective use of questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding. Overall, teachers themselves make good use of mathematics language though greater attention should be given to explicitly teaching specific vocabulary and ensuring the consistent use of the language by pupils. Individual teachers' planning for Mathematics is good overall. In the most effective teachers' plans, learning objectives were specific and measurable and assessment and differentiation strategies were well matched to the cohort of pupils.

Teachers work collectively to devise learning opportunities in Mathematics. Learning support is delivered through a mixture of in-class support, station teaching and withdrawal approaches. Highly effective practice was observed during station teaching where activities were based on assessment results and differentiated to meet the learning needs of all pupils. A similar approach should be applied to the delivery of the in-class support thereby facilitating early intervention in junior-infant classrooms and differentiated learning for all pupils. Staff should maintain a plan of the school's provision of support in accordance with the continuum of support. When reviewing the individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs teachers should ensure that they are informed by professional reports and that targets are sufficiently specific and measurable to enable pupils' progress to be monitored.

Assessment practices are satisfactorily developed. Teachers administer regular checklists, tasks and tests including standardised assessment to monitor progress in learning. There is a need to undertake more robust analysis and tracking of individual pupil progress to support differentiated provision and to inform in-class intervention.

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

Good whole-school planning is in place for Mathematics. The plan provides for the teaching of all strands and strand units of the curriculum and includes agreed whole-school approaches to the language of Mathematics. It informs and reflects the practice in the school and includes information notes for parents which explain various aspects of the programme.

The school has engaged successfully in the SSE process. An improvement plan for numeracy has been devised, focusing on the development of daily oral mathematics activities, the use of concrete materials and mathematical language. SSE is impacting positively on pupils' learning particularly in relation to oral and mental Mathematics. In developing the next school improvement plan, staff are advised to engage in more robust analysis of assessment data to inform measurable targets which should be reviewed annually.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

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

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;