An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Marys National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Castle Street Cloghan Birr
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	20068W
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	12/02/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	27/03/2026

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations currently report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects and curriculum areas of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), and the redeveloped Primary Curriculum (2025). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject or curriculum area 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 outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learning 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.

Included in this curriculum evaluation report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.
2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.
2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils.
3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	10/02/2026 and 12/02/2026
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

St. Mary's National School is a rural co-educational primary school located in Cloghan, Co. Offaly. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. At the time of the evaluation, the school had four mainstream class teachers, one full-time support teacher and one part-time support teacher who was based in another school. There were ninety-three pupils enrolled in the school. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan, which provides additional resources to identified schools to assist them in reducing barriers to children and young people reaching their potential.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in Mathematics was very good and pupils demonstrated high levels of motivation and enjoyment in their learning.
- Pupils' learning experiences were very good and all pupils engaged purposefully in active and playful learning activities.
- The quality of teachers' practice in Mathematics was very good; teachers were well prepared and a positive Mathematics culture was established across the school.
- The effectiveness of school planning, including DEIS planning, in progressing pupils' learning was very good.

Recommendations

- As there was scope for pupils to engage in more enquiry-based learning activities in all settings, teachers should ensure that Mathematics lessons include more open-ended problem-solving tasks where pupils have opportunities to discuss, share and justify their thinking, showing peers how they represent their ideas and reach solutions.
- Teachers should provide more feedback for improvement to pupils and ensure that developmental feedback, both oral and written, is a consistent feature of pupils' learning experiences. This will further develop pupils' self-assessment skills.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in Mathematics was very good. Pupils presented as motivated and enthusiastic learners. During lessons observed, they demonstrated very good knowledge and competence across a range of strand units from the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* including *Numeration and counting, Place value and base ten*, *Measuring* and *Chance.*

They engaged in mental mathematical activities during lessons and their ability to use number to solve problems and carry out operations was well developed. They recalled mathematical

facts accurately. Pupils in junior classes participated very effectively in station teaching initiatives. They explored the components of number and counting and enthusiastically recited number rhymes that supported their mathematical learning. Pupils in middle and senior classes used their mini whiteboards to represent their learning and responded very capably to teachers' questioning.

All pupils had access to a wide range of concrete materials which were used very effectively during lessons observed. Pupils used these materials purposefully to support and consolidate newly acquired mathematical language through structured talk and explanation. Most pupils could see the relevance of Mathematics to their own lives and demonstrated good ability to apply their learning to new contexts. As there was scope for pupils to engage in more enquiry-based learning activities in all settings, teachers should ensure that Mathematics lessons include more open-ended problem-solving tasks where pupils have opportunities to discuss, share and justify their thinking showing peers how they represent their ideas and reach solutions.

2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learning experiences and teachers' practice

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was very good. Teachers created positive learning environments and pupils displayed very good listening skills. All interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers were respectful and conducive to pupil wellbeing.

The school provided pupils with purposeful learning experiences which were active and cooperative. During all lessons observed, pupils worked collaboratively in pairs and groups and lessons were enriched by a playful approach to learning. They capably described how they used what they had learned in Mathematics in other subject areas such as Gaeilge, Geography, Science and Visual Arts. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the relevance of Mathematics to everyday life citing examples such as shopping, baking and telling the time. Initiatives such as the celebration of Mathematics Week was impacting positively on pupils' learning experiences. Senior pupils had opportunities to design and participate in Mathematics trails with junior pupils, which enriched their outdoor mathematical experiences.

The use of Mathematics journals had been introduced across all classes and was at an early stage of development. These journals provided valuable opportunities for pupils to record their thinking, reflect on their learning and supported them in developing a deeper understanding of their learning in Mathematics.

During lessons observed, some pupils had opportunities to use digital technologies as a tool to support and enhance learning, for example, when exploring measurement. Teachers should now consider how the use of digital technologies can be systematically developed throughout the school to provide pupils with opportunities to investigate and explore Mathematics creatively.

During the focus group discussion, all pupils displayed positive dispositions towards their learning in Mathematics. They said they enjoyed participating in group work and collaborative learning. They expressed a desire for more digital learning experiences during lessons. They described how they had created Maths trails for junior classes and said that they would like to do more outdoor learning in Mathematics.

The quality of teaching was very good. Teachers demonstrated very effective pedagogical knowledge in Mathematics, and it was evident that lessons built incrementally on prior learning. All teachers shared clear learning objectives with pupils and provided them with opportunities to recall their prior knowledge related to the current topic. Teachers were skilled communicators and employed a very effective range of methodologies such as modelling, explanation and demonstration to good effect. They made skilful use of questioning to assess pupils' understanding. Classroom management was of a high standard, and all teachers were very well prepared for lessons. They encouraged all pupils and affirmed their contributions to class discussions.

All teachers explicitly modelled key mathematical language correctly in the context of the learning activity and used the language consistently throughout the lesson. The promotion of Maths Talk strengthened the quality of provision in lessons observed. Where practice was best teachers displayed relevant mathematical vocabulary in classrooms. All teachers should ensure that relevant mathematical vocabulary in classroom displays is frequently updated and used by pupils to support them in describing their learning in Mathematics.

Teachers used a range of assessment approaches and practices to monitor pupils' learning, including skilful questioning, teacher observation, termly testing and standardised tests. Each teacher maintained an assessment folder which included test results, checklists, textbook tests and samples of pupils' work. There was some evidence of pupil self-assessment during lessons with scope to develop this further. While pupils' written work was generally well monitored, there was a need for teachers to provide more feedback for improvement to pupils. Teachers should ensure that developmental feedback, both oral and written, is a consistent feature of pupils' learning experiences. This will develop pupils' self-assessment skills further.

The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs was good. Special education teachers prepared appropriate support plans for pupils' priority needs in Mathematics. Pupils were making good progress and were well supported through effective teaching and enjoyable learning experiences. Teachers used assessment data, including analysing standardised test results and teacher-designed tests, to identify pupils' priority learning need in Mathematics. Teachers should extend the range of assessments in Mathematics and include diagnostic assessments to identify specific needs. In some instances, targets in support plans were too broad and needed to be aligned further to pupils' individual priority learning needs in order to optimise their incremental progress in Mathematics.

3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

The effectiveness of school planning, including DEIS planning, in progressing pupils' learning was very good. School leaders and teachers were committed to progressing whole-school priorities for enhancing learning. Leadership capably led learning in Mathematics and there were effective processes for collaboration, communication and the sharing of good practice.

A draft of a new whole-school plan, in line with the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum*, had recently been developed. This plan provided useful guidance for teachers on whole-school approaches to implementing the mathematics curriculum. A culture of improvement was evident as teachers collaborated to implement whole-school approaches which included maths journals, Maths eyes and playful pedagogies. There was scope to develop aspects of the whole-school plan further. School leaders and teachers should agree whole-school approaches to the assessment of Mathematics, and document how pupils' digital skills will be developed incrementally as they progress through the school.

The newly formed DEIS plan outlined well-considered targets and actions for school improvement. Some of the targets were overly broad and so the plan needs to be refined further. This will enable the school to continue to support improvements in teaching and learning for pupils.

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

For the pupils of St Marys National School about their learning in Mathematics

Date of inspection: 12/02/2026

Introduction

Your school had an inspection of Mathematics recently. This page for pupils describes what the inspector found and gives ideas about what the school should do to make learning better.

What did the inspector do during the visit?

The inspector visited classrooms and talked to teachers and pupils about the work they were doing. An inspector also met with a focus group of pupils to talk to them about their learning.

What did the inspector find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils' learning in Mathematics was very good and they were enjoying playful learning activities.
- Pupils were positive when they spoke about their learning in Mathematics.
- Teachers were very good at teaching Mathematics. They helped pupils to link new learning with real-life situations.

What the inspector said the school should do to make learning better

- Pupils need more opportunities to discuss and share their ideas when solving problems in Mathematics.
- Teachers should give more feedback to pupils so they know how well they are doing in Mathematics and where they need to improve their mathematical skills.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to pupils who took part in the focus group.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective