An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Subject Inspection: Mathematics & Applied Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Oatlands College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Mount Merrion Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60050E
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	28/04/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	21/09/2026

What is a subject inspection?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. 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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in Mathematics & Applied Mathematics under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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 subject inspection 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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.

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	27/04/2026 and 28/04/2026
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during 7 lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Oatlands College is a voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 617 boys, under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle (JC), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, and the Leaving Certificate (LC).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with some excellent practice observed, and some practice that requires improvement to be good.
- The majority of lessons were very well prepared and well structured, with some examples of highly effective learning activities.
- Students demonstrated very high levels of interest and motivation in their learning and very positive relationships were evident between students and teachers, as well as among students.
- Digital technology was used very effectively in some lessons to support student learning and understanding.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Mathematics was very good.
- The quality of subject planning was good overall; some aspects of JC and LC planning require further attention and development.

Recommendations

- The mathematics department should review the current practice of assigning students to levels from the beginning of second year. Extending the period of mixed-ability teaching would allow students more time to engage with the curriculum and make informed decisions regarding their level of study in JC Mathematics.
- Mathematics teachers should collaborate further to develop departmental planning and schemes of work, with greater integration of shared resources in the departmental folder. This collaboration should incorporate the very good teaching and learning methodologies observed, helping to promote consistency of practice across the department.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with some excellent practice observed, and some practice that requires improvement to be good.
- Relationships between students and teachers were very positive, and teachers demonstrated high expectations for students. Classrooms were print-rich and conducive to learning, with examples of student work proudly displayed. Key words and mathematical terminology were explicitly taught.
- Teachers used questioning effectively to assess prior knowledge and understanding. In the most effective lessons, higher-order, scaffolded questioning was used to extend students' thinking and develop critical-thinking skills. Students were encouraged to justify their reasoning, evaluate solutions, and reflect on the validity of their answers. This very good practice should be further extended to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all learners. In a significant minority of lessons, a more balanced use of global and directed questioning would support greater participation.
- In all lessons observed, students confidently volunteered to present their work and were willing to take risks when explaining their thinking. Peer collaboration was evident in most lessons, with students working in pairs or groups. The most effective lessons included well-structured group work that promoted deeper engagement and discussion. This was particularly successful where tasks were clearly defined, roles were assigned, timeframes were established, students shared feedback, and sufficient time was given to process and consolidate learning. A review of seating arrangements is recommended to further support collaboration and peer learning.
- In the majority of lessons observed, teachers were very well prepared and lessons were well structured. High-quality teacher instruction was the predominant methodology, with learning intentions shared at the outset to provide clear context for learning. In less effective lessons, there was an absence of clearly stated learning intentions which impacted on student understanding and led to a more procedural approach to problem-solving. All students should be provided with opportunities to develop conceptual understanding and sense-making, supported by the use of appropriate visual representations.
- Teachers consistently monitored students' progress and provided support where required. In the most effective instances, written formative feedback was evident on topic assessments, and students were encouraged to review and reflect on their work. Peer assessment, self-assessment, and shared reflection were also observed in these lessons. These highly effective practices should be extended across the department.
- Teachers made effective use of the school's online platform to share class notes and marking schemes. Excellent practice was observed where digital technologies were effectively used to support understanding, such as the use of spreadsheets to demonstrate financial contexts when exploring the sum of a geometric series. In very effective lessons, students demonstrated strong competence in using digital technologies to enhance their learning, including engaging in research and using online graphing tools to support visual understanding. Opportunities to further develop these transferable digital skills should be explored and extended within the mathematics department.
- An agreed departmental approach to Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) should be established. It is important that students are enabled to select their own areas of investigation and that CBAs are not delivered as common projects. As with other areas of learning, care should be taken to avoid over-supporting students, ensuring that they have opportunities to engage independently and develop resilience.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Mathematics was very good. Time allocation for JC and LC Mathematics was in line with curriculum guidelines. However, TY Mathematics was allocated four forty-minute lessons, exceeding the maximum of two hours for core subjects in TY and this should be addressed. Applied Mathematics in fifth and sixth year was allocated three timetabled periods per week, supplemented by a double lesson period outside of school hours.
- First-year and TY students were placed in mixed-ability classes, which is good practice. Effective concurrent timetabling was in place across other year groups. Students were assigned to higher and ordinary level classes from the beginning of second year, and it is recommended that this practice be reviewed with consideration given to maintaining mixed-ability groupings for longer to support more informed decision-making by students. At senior cycle, LC students were organised into mixed-ability classes within higher and ordinary levels, which is positive.
- Provision for students with additional educational needs was very good. Students' identified needs were regularly monitored and reviewed. Individual and small group withdrawal were used to provide learning support which was facilitated by a Mathematics teacher. It was positive that subject teachers liaised with the Special Educational Needs (SEN) department and contributed to target setting and content in these classes to compliment work taking place in mainstream classrooms.
- The Level Two Learning Programme (L2LP) was provided for students requiring this level of support. Relevant information on students' needs and suggested teaching strategies was available to teachers via the school's online platform. Team teaching was also used to support learning. It is recommended that teachers involved receive appropriate training to maximise its effectiveness.
- It was very commendable that teachers ran a weekly after-school drop-in clinic organised on a voluntary basis by the mathematics department.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was good, with some aspects of departmental planning requiring further development. The departmental plan was stored electronically, and schemes of work were available for all year groups and programmes. Teachers had collaboratively developed an extensive and high-quality shared resource folder, including presentations, worksheets, video links, online graphing activities, and common assessments across all topics and levels. However, JC and LC plans tended to reflect a linear, chapter-based approach rather than integrated learning experiences and this should be reviewed. The mathematics department should continue to collaborate in developing these plans to better support the implementation of curriculum specifications, including agreed teaching methodologies and clear links to shared resources.
- Planning for Applied Mathematics and TY were of a very high quality. The TY programme included four rotating modules—geometric constructions, financial mathematics, area and volume, and trigonometry. These were designed to support active, student-led learning through real-life contexts, problem-solving, and discovery, representing very good practice. However, some remaining elements of the TY programme were overly reliant on LC content and this should be addressed.
- The role of subject coordinator was rotated annually among teachers, which supported the development of leadership and organisational capacity within the department.
- Teachers provided excellent opportunities for students to engage in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including Maths Week and Pi Day. A voluntary Maths Club, held at lunchtime during the first term further supported students' learning and offered opportunities to broaden their engagement with the subject.
- It is highly commendable that teachers and students actively participated in national competitions organised by professional bodies, including events such as the Pi Quiz, the Maggie Gough competition, Peter's Problems, and the Maths Olympiad, with notable

success achieved. The school has also hosted the Irish Applied Mathematics Teachers' Association Junior Quiz on a number of occasions. Teachers' commitment to preparing students for these initiatives supports the development of students' mathematical and numeracy skills, and this is commendable.

- Formal and informal subject department meetings provided valuable opportunities for professional collaboration. Minutes were recorded using a school template and stored digitally in the departmental folder, with clear documentation of agreed actions. There was strong evidence of effective communication and the sharing of good practice among teachers through the school's online platform.
- Mathematics teachers actively tracked students' academic progress throughout their time in the school. They engaged in both short and long-term target setting in consultation with individual students, which is highly commendable.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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Department of Education and Youth

For the students of Oatlands College about their learning in Mathematics & Applied Mathematics

Date of inspection: 28/04/2026

What kind of inspection did your school have?

A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in Mathematics & Applied Mathematics.

What were the main findings of the inspection?

The inspector saw many things during the inspection. The main findings were:

- Teaching and learning were very good overall, and students engaged in some excellent activities.
- Students were very interested in their learning and teachers and students got on very well together.
- Teachers were good at planning their lessons, but they should work to develop the teaching plans for JC and LC.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Mathematics & Applied Mathematics?

- The school should think about putting students in higher and ordinary level classes later in second year to give them time to make the best decision on which level to choose.
- Teachers should continue to work together to develop subject planning and share teaching ideas that will improve student understanding.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
Special thanks to the students who participated 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