An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Mathematics
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Bishopstown Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62580U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	08/05/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	24/02/2026

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.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated learning and teaching in 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.

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>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) or Bí Cineálta (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	06/05/2025 and 08/05/2025
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus group	• Observation of teaching and learning during 8 lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh is an all-boys' secondary school, operating under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust (PBST). At the time of the inspection it had an enrolment of 700 students. It offers the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY) and the Leaving Certificate (Established).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good; aspects of timetabling for students with special educational needs (SEN) need to be addressed.
- Teachers had access to key information for incoming students and had further developed existing diagnostic tools to provide support for the transition of students.
- Teachers showed a very high level of reflection on their practice; their desire to continually enhance student experience through the provision of high-quality teaching and learning experiences was very evident.
- The overall quality of planning was good; there was a very high level of informal collaborative planning.

Recommendations

- In some lessons there was an imbalance of teacher-student voice; teachers should give greater weight to the facilitation and inclusion of student voice in lessons, so that students can fully develop as mathematical learners.
- A small allocation of SEN hours provided by management for team-teaching had been used to create smaller mathematics classes in one year group. The mathematics department, with oversight from senior leadership and the board, should ensure that this allocation of hours is used for its intended purpose.
- The department should review and update its current departmental plans and schemes of work to ensure that they represent the experience that the department desires to provide for its students; the incorporation of a developmental aspect of planning, related to teaching and learning strategies, that directly addresses students' participation and needs, should be included in this review.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good. Most lessons took the format of sharing learning intentions, followed by homework correction and then the introduction of new material, usually shared through explicit teaching methods by teachers; on occasion students were encouraged to explore material through well-designed introductory tasks.
- There was very good rapport between teachers and students, and this facilitated high-quality learning experiences. In all lessons, students demonstrated good prior knowledge, were comfortable asking questions, received comprehensive responses, and were very effectively encouraged to expand on answers using subject-specific terminology.
- All teachers demonstrated a depth of knowledge and interest that allowed them to be flexible in responding to the needs of individual students, whether that was to challenge students, to support their learning or to address misconceptions.
- In all lessons, learning intentions were used and were usually revisited towards the end of the lesson. This worked best where students had the opportunity to reflect on their own progress in relation to those intentions, however in many cases the reflection transacted as a list of things covered in class referred to by teachers in the closing moments. Teachers should consider how best to plan and use the time towards the end of lessons to support student reflection on work completed, providing students with a sense of success and progress that supports overall wellbeing.
- In many lessons, students were encouraged to talk and discuss, but the level of engagement of students varied between year groups. Teachers should consider how the skills of hypothesising, discussing and justifying are shared with students as explicit skills to be developed so that students make holistic progress as mathematical learners.
- Where teaching was very good, concepts were shared in a manner that made the links between different areas of mathematics explicit. In one instance, the link between algebraic representation and graphical representation was made evident. This was supported by very good use of mathematical software to support students' exposure to functions and graphs, and, paired with the algebraic procedure, served to strengthen students' understanding of the links between areas. This use of digital technologies to support a unified understanding of mathematics should be further explored by the department.
- In a small minority of lessons, there was an imbalance of teacher-student voice and an over reliance on didactic approaches. In these instances, students did not have sufficient time to try solutions, discuss approaches or to work at a level of pace and challenge that was suitable for the time of year, and it did not make the best use of the individual expertise of teachers involved. Other approaches, where students do the majority of work and have time to reflect on their progress, should be considered.
- The quality of student work was variable between students and greater rigour was required in the presentation of some students' solutions. In order to address this, the department should consider introducing agreed standards for the presentation of work, extending to agreed parameters about homework, from first year onwards. This would ensure that students are very familiar with the rigour required for effective written communication of mathematics from the outset.
- Excellent practice was observed in one lesson in relation to the language used by the teacher that promoted positive attitudes and dispositions, set clear expectations for achievement, and assisted the establishment of a sense of collaborative endeavour from the outset. This, coupled with strategically chosen examples that incrementally developed the concept, included phraseology that encouraged students to test their theories, to hypothesise about what they were observing and to justify their reasoning.

This use of language by the teacher supported students' resilience and exposure to mathematical thinking and should be shared across the department.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good.
- There were four specialist rooms used mainly for Mathematics, and there was very good access to mathematical manipulatives and other concrete materials. Consideration could be given to more actively curating a learning environment in the subject-specific classrooms that support mathematical learning. All students had access to all levels of Mathematics; it was concurrently timetabled after first year to facilitate student movement between levels, and the majority of higher-level classes were banded.
- A subject co-ordinator was appointed, and clear responsibilities for the role were established. There were three main subject department meetings per year but given the large number of teachers in the department, teachers tended to work informally in year groupings as there was limited time to share practice in subject meetings.
- Considerable thought went into the formation of mixed-ability base classes in first year, as informed by students' education passports from primary schools and standardised test scores. Teachers' had access to, and made good use of, individual student information to support the teaching, inclusion and progress of students with SEN.
- A small allocation of SEN hours provided by management for team-teaching had been used to create smaller mathematics classes in one year group. In this regard, the mathematics department, with oversight from senior leadership and the board of management, should ensure that this allocation of hours is used for its intended purpose. As team-teaching was already positively featured on the timetable as a means of providing support to students with identified needs, it may be beneficial for the department to revisit it as a possible means of providing additional support for students.
- There were four main assessments across each year group, and the outcomes of these assessments were tracked in consultation with students to ensure individual student progress. Very commendably, the department had developed a teacher-friendly version of a mathematical competency test for first years. The use of this test, and the manner in which the data will be presented, will give teachers fast access to the areas for strength and for development by providing a profile for each class group, allowing them to tailor planning for each group.
- Co-curricular activities such as Maths Week, local and national competitions and other school clubs, including chess and robotics, further supported positive attitudes towards the subject. The provision of these activities was appreciated by the students, who, overall, indicated that they were very happy with their experiences in Mathematics. The school also offered Applied Mathematics as an additional subject outside the school day. In recent years, members of the Mathematics department had upskilled and introduced Computer Science as a leaving certificate subject, further supporting cross-curricular thinking.
- The uptake of the subject at higher level was very good across the school; the department analysed the outcomes of state examinations, and noted that they would like to increase attainment in higher level mathematics. In order to achieve this, the department should consider which subject-specific pedagogies would have greatest impact in this area, and then set out to achieve these; it may be possible for some of the school's self-evaluation (SSE) targets to assist the department in this regard.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning was good; while aspects of formal planning needed to be updated there was a very high level of informal collaborative planning, particularly by teachers working within the same year group.
- Individual planning was of a very good standard and encompassed a wide range of activities and tasks. It worked best where teachers had considered how student progress would be assessed at the end of lessons.
- Given the large number of teachers involved in the delivery of Mathematics, the department should review and update its current departmental plans and schemes of work to ensure that they represent the experience that the department desires to provide for its students. The incorporation of a developmental aspect of planning, related to teaching and learning strategies that directly address students' participation and sense of agency, taking into account the incremental development of a student's mathematical skills over a six-year period, should be included in this review. As a good starting point for this review, it will be beneficial to discuss and document some of the very good informal collaborative planning.
- The TY plan was heavily focused on junior cycle and leaving certificate materials. The department will need to review the provision of mathematics in TY for the coming school year, to ensure that it aligns with the new *Transition Year Programme Statement*, for implementation in September 2025.

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

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh about their learning in Mathematics
Date of inspection: 08/05/2025

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.

What were the main findings of the inspection?

- The quality of teaching and learning of Mathematics was very good in the school.
- Teachers had access to lots of information that helped them understand how to support students in learning Mathematics.
- Teachers worked very well together in teams to plan for each year group.

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

- Students need to be given more opportunities to discuss and talk about Mathematics in their lessons.
- Teachers should review the plans for the Mathematics department to make sure that students are able to develop all the mathematical skills they need while moving through the school.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh welcomes the findings of this Inspection Report on the provision of Mathematics in the school, and the school is committed to building on the positive and affirming evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching in Mathematics. The Board is particularly encouraged by the recognition of the high standard of classroom practice, and the strong rapport between students and teachers that facilitates high-quality learning experiences.

The Board wishes to thank all students and staff who engaged so professionally in this inspection. This contribution and co-operation is built on a sense of belonging, shared responsibility and a commitment to a culture of improvement.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The school welcomes the recommendations outlined in the report, and is committed to addressing them through ongoing self-evaluation and improvement planning.

. The school is ensuring that all resources provided to support children and young people with special educational needs are used for their intended purpose in accordance with circular letter 0064/2024 (and the associated guidance).

· The SSE team identified the promotion of Tier 3 subject specific language as a target in the School Improvement Plan 2025/26, along with targeted actions.

· The learning and teaching team are committed to embedding team teaching in the school, and it is the team's primary focus for 2025/2026.

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