An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Subject Inspection: Mathematics
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Coláiste Bhríde Carnew
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Carnew Arklow Co Wicklow
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	70790E
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	21/04/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	02/06/2026

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>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>
</table>

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	20/04/2026 and 21/04/2026
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 6 lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Coláiste Bhríde is a co-educational, post-primary school under the trusteeship of the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board. It had an enrolment of 836 students at the time of the evaluation. The school offered the Junior Cycle (JC), an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good.
- Interactions between students and teachers were very respectful and positive where students were consistently affirmed for their contributions during lessons.
- There was highly effective planning and preparations for all lessons observed.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for the subject was very good; arrangements for students experiencing difficulty with Mathematics were highly effective.
- The quality of subject planning was good, with areas for improvement required at senior cycle.
- The TY programme content was predominantly reliant on the Leaving Certificate curriculum specifications.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide students with further opportunities to engage with activity-based learning through well-structured and purposeful pair and group work so that they have more occasions to participate in peer discussion and deepen learning.
- Teachers should work collaboratively to further develop a dynamic TY programme which embraces discovery and enquiry-based learning through student-led projects.
- School management, in collaboration with the mathematics department, should review their current practice of grouping first-year students to ensure that all classes are fully mixed ability and inclusive.
- The practice of assigning students in senior cycle to level groupings in order of ability should be reviewed to ensure a mixed ability approach within higher and ordinary level bands.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching learning and assessment was very good.
- Relationships between students and teachers were very good. Classrooms were welcoming and print-rich with examples of student work proudly displayed in most rooms. Key words and mathematical terminology were explicitly taught.
- Teachers were very well prepared and lessons were well-structured. In most lessons, learning intentions were shared at the start, and in a few instances, revisited at the end of the lesson to consolidate the learning and to identify future learning.
- In most lessons, the main methodology used was high-quality teacher instruction. Teachers used questioning effectively to assess students' prior knowledge and understanding. In a small number of lessons, very high-quality practice was observed when higher-order questioning was used to extend and develop students' responses. However, there was scope to extend this very good practice in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge for all students. In a significant minority of lessons, a more balanced use of global and directed questioning would support greater participation from all students.
- In a few lessons, students volunteered to present work and were happy to risk wrong answers while explaining their work to their peers. Peer collaboration was evident in most lessons, with students working in pairs to support each other's learning. This effective practice could be further developed by providing more structured opportunities for pair and group work, enabling deeper engagement and discussion. A review of seating arrangements is also recommended to better support collaboration and peer learning.
- In the majority of lessons observed, students were purposefully engaged in their learning. However, in a few lessons, there were students who were not sufficiently challenged and would have benefitted from activities more suited to their ability.
- All teachers monitored students' progress and provided assistance where required. In the most effective lessons, students were encouraged to critically evaluate their work and check answers independently. An extension of this practice is recommended. A review of student's copybooks showed limited evidence of annotation or written feedback. Teachers should ensure that ongoing monitoring, and assessment is of sufficient depth to identify and address gaps in understanding.
- Teachers made effective use of the schools' online platform to share class notes and marking schemes of topic assessments, students in the focus group described this approach as very helpful. In a few lessons, students demonstrated strong competence in using digital technologies to support their learning, particularly when engaging in research and completing digital quizzes or forms. Opportunities to developing these digital transferrable skills should be explored and extended within the mathematics department.
- Students in the focus group reflected positively on their experiences with Mathematics. They described their learning environment as supportive and said they felt they would get help from their teachers if they asked for it. They felt happy with the progress they were making in learning Mathematics.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- Subject provision and whole school support for Mathematics were very good. Time allocation for JC and LC Mathematics was in line with the curriculum guidelines. However, TY Mathematics was allocated three fifty-eight minute lessons, exceeding the recommended maximum of two hours for core subjects in TY.
- First year students were placed in mixed-ability classes with the exception of one targeted support group whose needs had been identified prior to starting in the school. It was recommended that school management, in collaboration with the teachers in the

mathematics department, review this practice to ensure that all first-year classes are fully mixed ability and inclusive.

- Effective concurrent timetabling was in place across all year groups. Students were assigned to higher and ordinary level classes from the beginning of second year. It is recommended that this practice is reviewed, with consideration given to maintaining mixed-ability groupings for as long as possible allowing students to make more informed decisions on their future course.
- At senior cycle, leaving certificate students were grouped by level. Within the levels, the classes were further streamed in order of ability and achievement. Movement within and between levels could take place. This arrangement should be reviewed, and consideration should be given to adopting a mixed ability approach within levels.
- The provision of an eight-week rotating Applied Mathematics module was offered as a sampled subject to all TY students and this is highly commendable.
- Provision for students with additional educational needs was very good. Some students with additional needs received numeracy support from a mathematics or SEN qualified teacher. Subject teachers contributed to target-setting and content for these lessons to compliment work taking place in the classrooms. This is very good practice.
- The Level Two Learning Programme (L2LP) was provided for students who had been identified as requiring this level of support. Students following this programme were integrated into mainstream classes for Mathematics and supported by a Special Needs Assistant. This is to be commended. Relevant information on the students' needs and suggested teaching strategies were available to the Mathematics teachers on the school's online platform.
- Excellent additional supports were available through the school's Homework Club, where students experiencing difficulties were supported by TY students in a collaborative and encouraging learning environment. Class teachers also provided a very high level of additional assistance to students outside of class time.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was good, with some aspects of departmental planning requiring development. Individual lessons were well planned with teachers demonstrating very good subject knowledge.
- Departmental schemes of work were available for all year groups and programmes. The JC plans were of a very good standard, outlining the agreed-upon sequence of topics, timings, learning outcomes and success criteria. Planning for LCA was of a very high quality. However, LC plans require further improvement. These plans showed a chapter-based approach to students' learning rather than providing integrated learning experiences for students and this should be reviewed.
- The departmental plan, supported by an extensive shared resource folder, was stored electronically. The shared resources require re-organisation and should be integrated into the subject plans. It is recommended that the mathematics department continue to collaborate in developing these plans to further support the implementation of the curriculum specifications, including agreed teaching approaches and links to shared resources.
- While the TY programme was overly-based on LC content it was positive that students participated in the *John Hooper Statistical Poster Competition* which provides valuable opportunities for students to showcase their data analysis and interpretation skills. It is recommended that teachers further develop the TY programme to include more contextual learning and dynamic modules with increased opportunities for participation in student-led projects that promote, active learning, real-life contextual learning, problem solving, and discovery.
- Formal and informal subject department meetings provided opportunities to discuss assessment arrangements and organisational matters. Minutes of meetings were recorded and stored digitally in the departmental folder.

- Members of the mathematics department had engaged in extensive professional development opportunities, such as online webinars on Financial Maths, GenAI, Developmental Nature of Maths produced by the Irish Maths Teachers Association, and OIDE presented courses on Complex Numbers. There was evidence that this learning had been shared with colleagues within the department.
- Mathematics was very well promoted within the school. In response to the Gifted Learner Programme, a School Self-Evaluation priority, the department engaged in a variety of mathematical national and in-house initiatives such as the Irish Maths Olympiad, Pi Quiz, Team Maths, in-school quizzes and in-school problem solving relay. This is to be commended.

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

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Department of Education and Youth

For the students of Coláiste Bhríde Carnew about their learning in Mathematics

Date of inspection:21/04/2026

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.

What were the main findings of the inspection?

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

- Teaching, learning and assessment were very good overall.
- Teachers and students got on very well together.
- The teachers were good at planning their lessons.

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

- Teachers should plan to do more group activities in class so that students have opportunities to learn from each other.
- TY Mathematics should include activities and topics that allow students to discover Mathematics in the real world.
- School management should ensure that all first year students can work together in mixed-ability classes.
- Senior cycle class groups should be mixed ability in the higher and ordinary bands.

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 thanks the inspectorate for the positive findings and insightful feedback following the subject inspection of mathematics on 20 and 21 April 2026. The board is pleased with the affirmaton of very good teaching learning and assessment. The recognition by the inspectorate of positive and respectful relationships across the board is taken as evidence of our school's mission statement in practice. It is appreciative of the affirmative findings of highly effective planning and preparation and whole school support of and provision for the subject. The board is fully supportive of the plans and actions already undertaken by school management and the subject department to act on recommendatons to further develop practices in the classroom and the organisation of teaching groups. Said plans and actions are documented in the relevant

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

> Teachers should provide students with further opportunities to engage with activity- based learning through well-structured and purposeful pair and group work so that they have more occasions to participate in peer discussion and deepen learning.

Subject teachers have reviewed subject plans to incorporate collaborative learning and enquirybased learning opportunities. Teachers who have graduated from the ETBI Instructional Leadership Programme and Magenta Principals will support colleagues in this regard. Opportunities for group-based activities and pair work will be identified and recorded in subject plans. Where classroom space permits seating arrangements will be reviewed to suit collaborative learning and communication.

> Teachers should work collaboratively to further develop a dynamic TY programme which embraces discovery and enquiry-based learning through student-led projects.

A full review of the TY mathematics programme will take place over the next academic year and will feature project-based learning such as The John Hooper Poster Competition currently undertaken in TY and commended by this inspection.

> School management, in collaboration with the mathematics department, should review their current practice of grouping first-year students to ensure that all classes are fully mixed ability and inclusive.

All first-year students in 2026/27 will be taught in fully mixed-ability classes. Second year students will be taught in mixed-ability classes until Christmas of second year 2026/27.

> The practice of assigning students in senior cycle to level groupings in order of ability should be reviewed to ensure a mixed ability approach within higher and ordinary level bands.

This recommendation will reviewed with a view to be phasing in after 2026/27 with fifth year students.

Published June 2026 / Foilsithe Meitheamh 2026