

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Coen's National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Merrymeeting Rathnew Co Wicklow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20208M

Date of inspection: 18-01-2019



**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 inspector(s) evaluated learning and teaching in [Subject] 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 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.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

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.

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

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	18-01-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Coen's National School, is a co-educational primary school catering for pupils from infants to sixth class. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It is a recently amalgamated ten mainstream teacher school with an enrolment of two hundred and seventy-one pupils. It has a pre-school and a junior class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is satisfactory; pupils present as enthusiastic and engaged learners; there is scope to further develop their use of mathematical language and their ability to describe their learning.
- Pupils' learning experiences are of a high quality and they work independently and collaboratively on well-designed tasks; pupil-led learning and the use of concrete materials should be a more regular feature of Mathematics lessons across all class levels.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is good; teachers use structured lessons to facilitate, challenge and support pupils' learning.
- The organisation of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good with exemplary practice observed; teachers collaborate effectively to cater for the range of pupils' abilities in classes and provision for pupils with SEN is a particular strength of the school.
- The principal, in-school management and curriculum planning teams provide very good organisational and curriculum leadership in Mathematics; teachers are open to new ideas in mathematics teaching and are commended for their collaborative and reflective practices.
- The whole-school planning process, including school self-evaluation (SSE), is used very effectively to progress pupils' learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A more focused targeting of pupils' abilities to use mathematical language to orally describe and explain their choice of methods and answers should be developed.
- In order to consolidate pupil learning further, the consistent provision of opportunities for pupil-led learning and the use of concrete materials to reinforce concepts should be a regular feature of Mathematics lessons across all class levels

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is satisfactory. Pupils present as enthusiastic and engaged learners who enjoy their mathematics lessons and want to achieve as learners. The school's decision to prioritise pupils' recall of number facts, their use of computational procedures and their mental mathematics skills, is highly praised for its positive impact on pupils' learning.

A number of worthwhile examples of the promotion of the pupils' ability to discuss and describe their own learning in Mathematics were observed. While pupils are willing to talk about their mathematics learning and the methods they use, there is scope to develop their use of mathematical language and their ability to describe their learning further. A more focused targeting of their ability to use mathematical language to orally describe and explain their choice of methods and answers should be developed.

The introduction of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* at Infant level is helping pupils to make purposeful connections between their Mathematics learning and other aspects of the school curriculum. The development of a whole-school approach to connecting relevant mathematical processes to a variety of meaningful, real-life, functional applications, through project work, mathematics trails and links to the environment will build on this good work. This will make mathematics learning more meaningful for all pupils.

The introduction of individual mathematics journals for each pupil on a pilot basis, in some junior and middle classes is highly commended. The further development of such a system of reflective journals school-wide, whereby pupils set out or draw the stages of their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving processes, record key facts and skills acquired and reflect on their own learning, is advised.

When interviewed as part of a focus group, middle and senior pupils identified the use of mathematical games as being of particular help to them. They enjoy having their learning in Mathematics displayed and promoted as part of classroom and school environments. They would welcome further opportunities to celebrate their mathematics' achievements and to share their learning with home. The pupils also expressed a desire to have their learning in Mathematics recorded in a wider variety of ways.

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

Pupils' learning experiences are of a high quality. Learning environments are positive and stimulating, with respectful interactions observed. Pupils benefit greatly from whole-school initiatives, including *Ready, Set Go Maths* and team teaching approaches which have been introduced to develop their number, operational and problem-solving skills. They work both independently and collaboratively with others on well-designed tasks.

The overall quality of mathematics teaching is good. Teachers use well-structured lessons which link to previous learning to facilitate, challenge and support pupils' learning. Regular questioning is used effectively, to check on pupils' understanding of concepts. The learning intention for lessons is clearly shared with pupils.

Where highly effective practice was observed, teachers made very good use of visual and concrete resources to support and embed pupils' understanding of new concepts. They facilitated pupils to direct their own learning through constructing meaning and rules and then purposefully practicing their new learning. To enhance this good work, the consistent provision of opportunities for pupil-led learning and the use of concrete materials to reinforce concepts, should be a regular feature of Mathematics lessons across all class levels.

The staff are open to new ideas regarding the development of mathematics teaching and a number of teachers have engaged in a range of professional development opportunities. As a result, where specific initiatives in relation to the school's priorities for Mathematics have been introduced, strong collaborative skills-focused teaching is evident, with a praiseworthy focus on reflective practice. The sharing of this expertise among staff is commended and is worthy of continued development.

The quality of assessment practices in the school is very good. Teachers employ collective and consistent approaches to gathering and using assessment information in Mathematics to monitor pupils' progress and to respond to pupils' identified needs. Good use is also made of assessment information to inform planning for the next steps in the pupils' mathematics learning. Generally, differentiation to meet the range of pupils' ability levels in classes is very well managed. To further develop this good work, the extension of assessment for learning processes to include further opportunities to develop pupils' own self-assessment practices is advised.

The organisation of support for pupils with SEN in Mathematics is very good, with some examples of exemplary practice observed. Pupils who require additional supports for their mathematics learning receive skilled, targeted assistance. The SEN team collaborate effectively with mainstream class teachers to cater for the range of pupil abilities in classes and provision for pupils with SEN is a particular strength of the school.

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

The whole-school planning process, including school self-evaluation (SSE), is used very effectively to progress pupils' learning. The principal, in-school management and curriculum planning teams provide very good organisational and curriculum leadership in Mathematics and successfully promote a culture of improvement and innovation in the school.

The teachers have collectively developed a whole school plan and policy which guides and reflects current practice in mathematics teaching and learning. The school improvement plan for numeracy as part of its DEIS plan, supports the development of pupils' mathematics education. Teaching and learning resources are managed very well.

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 <i>very good</i> 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;

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 welcomes the curriculum evaluation report and its affirmation of the quality of school planning, teaching and learning in Mathematics. The Board appreciates that the Inspectorate recognised the high quality of pupils' learning experiences, the good quality of teaching and the exemplary practices observed with SEN pupils. The Board also appreciates the recognition of the very good organisational and curriculum leadership and the very effective use of whole school planning with teachers commended for their collaborative and reflective practices.

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 Board is happy to confirm that both recommendations made by the inspectorate have begun to be addressed.

We look forward to further enhancing the teaching and learning of Mathematics in our school.