An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Mathematics

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Presentation Primary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Slievekeale Road Waterford
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19955T
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	15-11-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	15/12/2023

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* and the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019).* 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 inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in Mathematics under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes 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.

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) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the Procedures) since the previous report to the board.
3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	15-11-2023
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

Presentation Primary School is an urban primary school in Waterford city. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore and caters for girls from junior infants to sixth class. At the time of the evaluation, there were 446 pupils enrolled. The school had an administrative principal and deputy principal, twenty-three mainstream teachers, two special class teachers, and ten special education teachers (SETs). There were two classes for pupils with specific speech and language disorder that accommodated both boys and girls. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics was very good.
- Pupils' learner experiences in Mathematics were good; teachers had created positive classroom environments conducive to learning and pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning in Mathematics.
- The overall quality of teaching was very good; teachers knew the pupils in their care very well and they consistently implemented agreed whole-school strategies to support pupils' learning.
- Assessment practices were very good; teachers effectively used a wide range of assessment approaches to track learning, to identify pupils in need of support and to set clear targets.
- The principal and in-school management team (ISM) demonstrated a strong commitment to progressing pupils' learning in Mathematics and had undertaken commendable reflective work to guide provision.
- The quality of school planning, including the DEIS targets for Mathematics, was exemplary.

Recommendations

- In some lessons, the learning experiences were not sufficiently differentiated for all pupils. Teachers should share, agree and implement differentiation practices on a whole-school basis that suitably scaffold and/or challenge mathematical experiences for all pupils.
- The pupils demonstrated well-developed mathematical language in response to questions; they were less confident in using this language independently. Teachers should now ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to apply this language during pair and group work to help them to make sense of new mathematical ideas through 'maths talk'.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics was very good. In the lessons observed, pupils demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of the strands and elements of the mathematics curriculum commensurate with their own stages of development. They understood concepts and recalled terminology, number facts and definitions, and could use computational procedures with fluency. They could select suitable algorithms to solve problems. In some classes where learning was exemplary, pupils successfully reasoned and justified their answers. During the evaluation, the pupils responded very well to questioning and demonstrated a notable competence in their understanding and knowledge of the language of Mathematics; they were less confident in using the language independently. Teachers should now ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to apply this language during pair and group work to help them to make sense of new mathematical ideas through 'maths talk'. Pupils recalled previous learning through the use of rhymes and mnemonics. They presented as motivated learners who applied themselves very well to their work during individual and collaborative tasks. During the focus group discussion with pupils, they spoke with enthusiasm and positivity about their learning in Mathematics and how they were able to apply their learning across the subjects of the curriculum as well as real life. Assessment records offered clear evidence of development in the learning outcomes of the pupils as they progressed from class to class.

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

The pupils' learner experiences in Mathematics were good; teachers had created positive classroom environments conducive to wellbeing and pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning in Mathematics. Pupils' mathematical ideas were valued, and they were supported to take risks and to learn from mistakes. Pupils engaged in a wide range of stimulating tasks and used high-quality concrete resources appropriately and flexibly. They had ample opportunities to integrate their learning in Mathematics across the curriculum. Pupils in senior classes worked with younger pupils at various points during the year; this reinforced conceptual understanding and promoted mathematical confidence for all. Pupils recorded their learning in copybooks or on whiteboards. Teachers placed a commendable emphasis on promoting appropriately playful experiences in the junior classes. In all classes, teachers facilitated a very productive focus on oral mathematics activities. Pupils demonstrated high levels of sustained engagement where teachers had purposefully differentiated tasks by outcome or pace to support the varying abilities and needs of all pupils. Teachers should share, agree and implement differentiation practices on a whole-school basis that suitably scaffold and/or challenge mathematical experiences for all pupils. During the focus group, pupils used accurate mathematical language to describe a wide range of integrated learning opportunities that they enjoyed. They expressed a desire for more choice-based activities and practical mathematical opportunities, such as baking and sport. All interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers were respectful and conducive to wellbeing.

The overall quality of teaching was very good; teachers knew the pupils in their care very well and they consistently implemented agreed whole-school strategies. During the inspection, teachers' practice ranged from satisfactory to exemplary. A significant majority of teachers demonstrated high levels of subject knowledge, consistently used high quality mathematical language, and effectively supported pupils in need of additional help in Maths. Teachers promoted the agreed whole-school approaches to problem solving. They made effective use of games, concrete materials and text books to support pupil learning. Most teachers employed effective methodologies, including structured whole-class teaching, individual teaching and small group work, to promote engagement in mathematics learning. During classroom interactions with inspectors and the pupil focus group, pupils highlighted the support given by teachers to ensure that new concepts were made clear. Where exemplary practice was observed, each learning task was differentiated and pupils of all ability levels were appropriately scaffolded and/or challenged. Where practice was satisfactory, learning tasks, questions and activities did not sufficiently meet the learning needs of all pupils; as a result pupil engagement

in purposeful learning tasks was not sustained for the duration of the lesson, particularly for more able pupils.

The quality of assessment was very good. Teachers used a range of assessment approaches, including skill-based checklists, teacher-designed tests, textbook tests, standardised tests and teacher observation. They used the outcomes of this range of assessment to inform teaching and to provide targeted support to pupils in receipt of additional support. Each teacher maintained an assessment folder of pupils' mathematical learning. Teachers and the ISM team robustly analysed the results of standardised tests at whole-school level to inform targeted support in Mathematics.

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

The overall effectiveness of school planning, including DEIS planning, in progressing pupils' learning was exemplary. Curricular leadership was of a very high quality, and the impact of whole-school strategies was evident across settings. Teachers collaborated successfully to provide meaningful and contextualised learning opportunities for pupils. The school team had very clearly reflected on and adapted its mathematics practices to meet the evolving needs of the school community. The school plan provided valuable guidance in relation to the incremental teaching of operations, problem-solving and mathematics vocabulary. The management of resources was very good and an engaging range of materials, games, digital resources and concrete materials was well used and maintained. During interviews with members of the ISM team, their tangible commitment to improving and enhancing pupil learning experiences through the targets in the DEIS plan was evident. Commendably, the school team had begun to consider their plans for implementing the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM wishes to thank the team of inspectors for producing such a fair and balanced report. We are delighted that the hard work, preparation, collaboration and expertise of our staff have been recognised in the report.

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 welcomes the recommendations made and will seek to implement them in the coming months.

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 *very good* 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;