An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Mathematics

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	S N Baile Nora
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballynora Waterfall Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18428O
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	18/04/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	04/10/2024

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 Mathematics 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 through learning 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.

Included in this curriculum evaluation 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>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 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	18/04/2024
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

Scoil Náisiúnta Baile Nora is a rural co-educational national school situated in Ballynora, Waterfall, close to Cork city. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. At the time of this evaluation, 296 pupils were enrolled in the school. The staff comprised twelve mainstream teachers and five special education teachers (SETs), including one teacher based in another school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of learner outcomes was very commendable; pupils presented as motivated learners, demonstrating interest and curiosity in Mathematics.
- Pupils enjoyed very effective learning experiences; in social, secure learning settings, pupils were provided with opportunities to reason and problem-solve.
- The quality of teaching was very good overall, with the practice observed ranging from good to very good.
- The provision of effective self and peer assessment opportunities for pupils encouraged them to take ownership of their learning.
- The effectiveness of school planning and SSE in progressing pupils' learning was very good; a teacher-led committee had commenced implementation of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum (PMC).

Recommendations

- It was evident during this evaluation that pupils with high levels of ability required more challenge; teachers were advised to ensure the provision of mathematical learning opportunities aimed at appropriately extending and challenging these pupils in their learning.
- In almost all classes, the size of image and text used in visual displays prevented pupils from referring to their content; the use of more visually accessible text would enhance the potential of these resources to further support pupils' learning.
- Pupils displayed a good level of accuracy and proficiency in calculation; a whole-school approach to using digital technologies, would further provide pupils with opportunities to model and represent thinking in different ways.

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The quality of learner outcomes was very commendable. Pupils presented as motivated learners, demonstrating interest and curiosity in the subject. It was evident from classroom interactions that pupils perceived themselves positively as learners of Mathematics. When questioned they answered and discussed concepts and processes confidently.

Pupils' understanding of mathematical language was enhanced when provided with opportunities to work collaboratively in relevant activities. They demonstrated a clear understanding of *Number*, recalling and implementing number facts fluently. Pupils' accuracy and competency in calculations were supported and consolidated through lesson-based tasks. The use of a range of digital technologies would further provide pupils with opportunities to model and represent thinking in different ways. This practice would reduce procedural load and encourage the development of higher-order thinking. There should be an agreed approach to the use of calculators by teachers in the senior classes. In junior classes, pupils used the early mathematical activities of classifying, matching, comparing and ordering, to very good effect when exploring *Number*. Senior classes explored the concept of money through project work and the use of travel websites. In these tasks, pupils were encouraged to relate their mathematical learning to their own experiences. In middle classes, pupils engaged actively in measurement tasks. These pupils could describe and explain their problem-solving processes to their peers.

From focus group discussions, it was evident that pupils clearly enjoyed Mathematics. They described how games, outdoor learning and the use of digital technologies supported their reasoning skills. Pupils discussed how extra-curricular activities, like chess and robotics, enhanced their understanding of Mathematics. Some pupils framed real-world information and situations in mathematical terms, connecting their learning in school and their understanding of Mathematics outside of school. Pupils reported that they presented their work within their own classes. Teachers should provide further opportunities for pupils to present their mathematical learning in other settings and to parents, through displays, pupils' presentations and use of the school's website.

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

Pupils enjoyed very effective learning experiences. In social, secure learning settings, pupils enjoyed opportunities to logically explain and justify their thinking. Through pair work and group work, the majority of pupils collaborated in their learning. In junior classes, pupils used rhymes and storytelling to playfully develop their understanding of numeracy. Storybook illustrations offered pupils opportunities to identify elements of *Shape and Space* and *Measures.* Where practice of a very high standard was observed, pupils were assigned roles within their groups and when questioned, clearly understood what was expected of them. Pupils' skills in estimation, measurement and recording were significantly enhanced using this approach. Group work enhanced pupils' learning experiences where commercial websites were used to explore money and directed numbers.

Learning environments in all classes promoted Mathematics through the provision of Maths' areas. In almost all classes, the size of image and text used in visual displays prevented pupils from referring to their content. The use of more visually accessible text would enhance the potential of these resources to further support pupils' learning.

The quality of teaching was very good overall, with the practice observed ranging from good to very good. Teachers cultivated positive relationships with pupils. Their classroom management skills ensured respectful and productive learning settings where pupils readily participated. They consistently modelled mathematical language for pupils. Very good practice was observed where measurement was integrated with Physical Education in an outdoor classroom setting. Lessons in Science, Technologies, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) complemented pupils' understanding of Mathematics. Teachers chose relevant pedagogies to progress teaching and learning and used a range of concrete materials very effectively. It was evident in

lessons observed, that pupils with high ability levels required more challenge. Teachers were advised to ensure the provision of mathematical learning opportunities aimed at appropriately extending and challenging these pupils in their learning.

The provision of special education support for pupils in Mathematics was very good. Early intervention strategies for numeracy were used effectively. Pupils with EAL were supported very well as they developed relevant mathematical language and concepts. Class teachers and SETs collaborated successfully, ensuring inclusive learning experiences for these pupils.

The quality of assessment was very good. Effective examples of self and peer assessment were observed. The provision of these opportunities for pupils encouraged them to take ownership of their learning. A range of formative and summative assessment strategies was used by teachers. Teachers, in some settings, should make greater use assessment data to further inform teaching and learning and to ensure progress for pupils.

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

The effectiveness of school planning and SSE in progressing pupils' learning was of a very high standard. Teachers had engaged meaningfully in the six-step process. They had placed significant emphasis on monitoring the impact of SSE on pupils' learning experiences. The area of focus, at the time of this evaluation. was wellbeing. The school had targeted the informal use of Irish for the school year 2023/24. The teachers were commended on how competently pupils used conversational Irish.

The principal encouraged teachers to use their skills and interests to progress pupils' learning. He very successfully promoted a culture of professional learning and sharing of expertise among staff members. This included trialling the use of peer mentoring among teachers.

The whole-school plan for Maths provided useful guidance for teachers on content to be covered and skills to be developed. Following the school closure day for professional learning on the new PMC, teachers agreed to form a mathematics' committee. This committee consulted with all teachers on new content and relevant methodologies. A very successful online platform of mathematical resources was created, significantly supporting teaching, learning and assessment in this area of the curriculum. The work of the committee had encouraged teachers to progress maths talk and display innovation in the use of concrete materials. Teachers also agreed short-term, preparation templates to support the implementation of the PMC.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the pupils of S N Baile Nora about their learning in Mathematics

18/04/2024

Introduction

Your school had an inspection of Mathematics recently. This page for pupils describes what the inspectors found and gives ideas about what the school could do to make learning in Mathematics better.

Meeting with pupils

The inspectors visited classrooms and talked to pupils about the work they were doing. The inspector also met with a focus group of pupils to hear what they had to say about their learning and experiences at school.

What did the inspector learn about your school?

The inspectors saw many things in your school during the inspection. Here are some main things:

- Learning was very good. Pupils liked learning Maths.
- Teaching was very good overall. The classrooms were very positive places.
- The teachers did a good job at checking the pupils' learning.

What the school could do to make learning in Mathematics better

- Teachers were asked to try to make some lessons more challenging for certain pupils.
- Teachers could use large writing on their posters, which would make them easier to read.
- Teachers could provide pupils with some more opportunities to explore and improve their problem-solving in Maths by using digital technologies.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to the pupils who took part 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