Curriculum Evaluation: Mathematics Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Bhríde Buachaillí
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Church Avenue Blanchardstown Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18046A
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	31/01/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	24/04/2024

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 subject in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector(s) 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

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.

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
Child Protection	*Anti-bullying*
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.	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.

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

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	30/01/2024 - 31/01/2024
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 Bhríde Buachaillí is an urban, boys' school located in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. At the time of the evaluation, the school had an administrative principal, eleven mainstream class teachers, two special class teachers and nine special education teachers (SETs) including one shared post. There were 242 pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was good; pupils demonstrated enjoyment during lessons and were motivated to learn.
- Learner experiences were of a good quality; lessons were enhanced by the use of a variety of effective learning activities.
- The overall quality of teaching was good with commendable emphasis on the development of pupils' mathematical language.
- The quality of school planning was of good standard; action planning was reflected in teachers' practice and learner experiences.

Recommendations

- To enrich the learner experiences, pupils should be provided with additional opportunities to engage with digital technologies.
- Teachers should make greater use of assessment information to provide differentiated learning activities for pupils with high levels of ability.
- Teachers and SETs should ensure that targets in support plans for pupils with special education needs (SEN) are specific and measurable, informed by pupils' priority learning needs.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics was good. The pupils enjoyed their learning and they were motivated to learn. The majority of pupils made connections between their learning and the wider world. Pupils recited mathematical songs enthusiastically and explored the components of number and measure. They explored shapes collaboratively with their peers and were positively disposed to their learning. Pupils were developing a competent understanding of multiplication and of strategies for problem-solving. Pupils discussed their learning in fractions, decimals and area competently. Pupils had developed a good sense of the language of mathematics and were able to communicate their learning effectively overall.

Where the learning outcomes were of a very good quality in observed lessons, all pupils were appropriately supported and challenged in their learning. In a significant minority of lessons, opportunities existed to extend the level of challenge for pupils with high levels of competency in Mathematics. Pupils with SEN made effective progress in their mathematical learning where programmes of support were informed by the identification of focused priority learning needs. There was scope to extend this practice across the school.

During the focus group discussion, pupils reported that they found Mathematics to be interesting and fun. They described that they learn best when playing games and collaborating with their peers. Pupils also reported that they found learning easier when not using textbooks, and when teachers modelled examples for them. Leaders and teachers should consider the development of learning logs for pupils to record and consolidate key mathematical concepts. This would support pupils in their learning as they progress through the school.

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

The overall quality of learner experiences was good. Pupils' learning was supported with attractive and stimulating displays. Pupils' engagement was encouraged during whole-class and group work activities. Pupils were enabled to explore mathematical concepts through playful, active learning methodologies. Pupils were provided with meaningful opportunities to engage in mathematical discussion. They enjoyed maths games, concrete materials and visits by guest speakers on coding and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). In the majority of lessons observed, pupils were provided with meaningful opportunities to use self-assessment strategies to reflect on their learning. Overall, pupils' use of digital learning technologies was not a feature of practice in most lessons observed. During the focus group discussion, pupils also reported that they would like to use technology more during mathematics lessons. Pupils should be provided with additional opportunities to use digital technologies to enrich and consolidate their learning.

The quality of teaching was good. Teachers prepared effectively for their delivery of lessons. Interactions between teachers and pupils were supportive and affirming. Lessons observed were well-structured with commendable emphasis on the enrichment of pupils' mathematical language. Teachers employed effective questioning techniques to enable pupils to justify their answers and approaches. They used a broad range of assessment practices including standardised tests, observations, checklists and teacher-designed tasks and tests. However, the resultant information was not used consistently to inform the provision of differentiated learning activities to appropriately support and challenge all pupils in their learning. In the main, teachers supported pupils effectively who experienced challenge in Mathematics. Teachers should make greater use of assessment information to provide differentiated learning activities for pupils with high levels of ability.

SETs and mainstream teachers collaborated effectively to plan interventions for pupils with SEN. Pupil support plans contained a useful log of actions to gather a profile of pupils' learning. Teachers should place additional emphasis on the inclusion of pupil and parent voice when reviewing and devising support plans. This would further support pupils' learning and enhance home-school communication. In some instances, targets in support plans were too broad and not fully aligned to pupils' priority learning needs. Teachers and SETs should ensure that targets in support plans for pupils with SEN are specific and measurable, informed by pupils' priority learning needs.

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

The effectiveness of school planning to progress pupils' learning in Mathematics was good. The whole-school plan listed mathematical topics with skills and strands to be covered at each class level. It was evident that whole-school approaches on a range of computational skills, and pupils' use of copybooks, provided effective guidance to teachers and informed their practice. The whole-school plan should be further developed to provide additional guidance to teachers regarding the use of assessment information for differentiation. It should also outline incremental approaches to mathematical language learning and the use of digital learning technologies across the strands of the curriculum.

Leaders and teachers had identified Mathematics as a focus for school self-evaluation (SSE). They had outlined targets, actions and criteria for success in the plan in relation to aspects of number and problem-solving. The school had also engaged with outside support agencies to help formulate approaches to improve teaching methodologies and strategies. To support leaders and teachers in monitoring of the impact of SSE on teaching and learning, actions and targets should be collated on a yearly basis.

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

Area 1   Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Scoil Bhríde Buachaillí accepts the findings of the Evaluation Report and is committed to developing an effective response to address each of the three recommendations included in the report.

The Board would like it noted that it is the opinion of the majority of the teaching staff that the observation that 'pupils' use of digital learning technologies was not a feature of practice in most lessons observed' is not a true reflection of usual practice in Maths lessons across the school throughout the year. Digital learning technologies are used by all teachers to support their teaching and to offer pupils a more stimulating platform for learning. The school will continue to examine ways in which to expand this use within the limited financial constraints under which it operates.

Area 2   Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.