

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Mathematics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballyhaunis Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Knock Road Ballyhaunis County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91461C

Date of Inspection: 12-02-2020



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

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.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector 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.

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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	11 & 12 February 2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Ballyhaunis Community School is a co-educational, multi-denominational and multi-ethnic post-primary school. There were 634 students enrolled at the time of this inspection. The school operates under the trusteeship of the Archbishop of Tuam, the Mercy Sisters and Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). It offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) as well as the Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with some very good practices also observed.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students, and among students, were evident in all lessons.
- A very good range of assessment strategies was observed; there was some scope to improve how they are being used to check progress and learning during lessons.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for Mathematics are very good.
- High standards of individual lesson planning were evident.
- Collective and collaborative practices are very good.

Recommendations

- Lesson planning should focus on increasing students' opportunities for active engagement with lesson content to improve levels of learning.
- Assessment strategies should be used more effectively during lessons to assess students' knowledge and levels of learning, and lesson progress should be modified accordingly.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, the quality of teaching was good. Practices were best when expectations for students' ability and knowledge were suitably high and their prior knowledge was elicited to inform the progress of the lesson. In all lessons, additional resources were prepared by the teachers to provide a variety of learning experiences for students.
- Teachers demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm for Mathematics and good subject knowledge. Examples of very good practice were seen where links to real-life examples were used effectively and where links and connections to a range of mathematical concepts were incorporated into the lesson content.
- The overall quality of learning was good. Students worked well together when opportunities arose and were happy to offer suggestions and ask questions. They were diligent when assigned tasks and behaviour was very good in all lessons. Rapport between the teachers and students, and among students, was very positive and all interactions were respectful. There was scope in the majority of lessons for a better balance between teacher input and students' active engagement with the lesson content.
- A very good range of assessment strategies was used in the lessons observed. The range included asking students to reflect on their learning at the end of the lesson, think-pair-share tasks, questioning and peer assessment. Work in copies was monitored regularly in most lessons but there was scope to expand on the levels of written feedback given to affirm what was done well and to guide for improvement.
- There were instances where lessons moved on without checking in sufficiently on the learning. The modes of assessment should be used more effectively to identify and address misconceptions and misunderstandings during lessons before moving on with the lesson content.
- Questioning was most effective when a combination of targeted, global, lower and higher-order questions was used to include, differentiate, elicit prior knowledge, prompt, check for understanding and provide opportunities for students to use the language of Mathematics purposefully and in context. It is commendable that one of the whole-school improvement targets is to focus on allowing sufficient wait-time for students to think and respond. In many instances, increased higher-order questioning combined with wait time would have added to the learning experiences of the students and provided more opportunities for purposeful engagement with the lesson content.
- The think-pair-share strategy was seen in a number of lessons and was facilitated well. Peer assessment strategies were also used in some lessons and students were happy to work collaboratively. There is scope to further develop the use of peer collaboration and support among students while they work on set tasks.
- Support is provided for students with additional needs in small-group withdrawal settings and by team teaching. In mainstream lessons where practice was best, seating arrangements ensured that students had support from their peers and were included purposefully in group

activities. In some lessons, however, seating arrangements did not enhance optimum inclusion in group activities. In addition, there was scope to develop the use of mixed-ability pairings to provide a better learning experience for all.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Mathematics are very good. The students are taught in mixed-ability settings in first year and set into level-specific bands early in second year. The majority of students remain at higher level and are encouraged and supported to continue at this level for as long as possible. Within the level-specific bands, students are taught in mixed-ability groups, which is commendable. First, second, third and fifth-year students have five class periods spread across the week and sixth-year students have four single periods and one double. Timetabling allocation for all year groups meets requirements.
- TY students are taught in mixed-ability settings and have three lesson periods per week. The year is divided into two modules, one of which is the Future Leaders Transition Year Programme developed by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The school uses the resources provided with the programme well to plan lessons and engage students purposefully with real-life mathematical applications. TY students also do a project and are responsible for the regularly updated content on the numeracy board, which is in a communal area.
- School management supports teachers' engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) and is supportive of events and activities organised to promote Mathematics within the school.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- High standards of individual lesson planning were evident for all lessons. Teachers were well prepared and had a range of resources prepared or sourced to support learning. Digital technology was used to support both teaching and learning and many real-life examples were included in lessons which enhanced the students' learning experiences.
- Collective and collaborative practices among the mathematics teachers are very good. The mathematics department holds formal meetings at least ten times per school year. Minutes of the meetings are recorded on common templates, used by all subject departments, and maintained with the departmental plan. A copy is sent to school management and matters arising are discussed between the senior management team and the subject co-ordinator, as necessary. There is regular informal collaboration, discussion and sharing of resources among department members.
- Certificate examination results are analysed each year and improvement targets are set accordingly. It is planned to use the school self-evaluation (SSE) process for including students' reflections and insights to help identify improvement targets and to agree strategies to help achieve them. This initiative is highly commended.
- Co-ordination of the mathematics department is rotated every two or three years. This allows for responsibility to be shared as well as providing opportunities for sharing expertise

and areas of interest. In line with good practice, an outline of the co-ordinator's duties has been documented.

- Digital technology facilities are good and the current drive to support collaboration among the mathematics teachers is being extended to facilitate purposeful interaction with students. This intent to further exploit the benefits of digital technology to support both teaching and learning is a very positive one. It is envisaged that the online shared drive will support teacher collaboration, purposeful reflection, and sharing of methodologies and resources within the department. This endeavour was well advanced at the time of the inspection.

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

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 of Ballyhaunis Community School wishes to acknowledge receipt of this very positive Maths Department Inspection Report. The report affirms many of the excellent practices in existence in the Maths Department and Teachers and Management were encouraged by many of the findings but particularly the following:

- School provision and whole school support for Mathematics are very good.
- High standards of collective and collaborative practices as well as individual lesson planning are evident.
- There is a very good relationship between teachers and students and among students in all Maths classes.
- The use of a wide range of assessment strategies was commended.
- The planned use of the SSE process to include students' reflections and insights to help identify improvement targets was highly commended.

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

Since the initial feedback from the Maths inspection process, the Maths Department has already made some steps to address some of the recommendations:

- Improvements have been made in assessment strategies in relation to checking progress and learning during lessons.
- The introduction of more technologies within the school has allowed the students to become more actively engaged with the lesson content and it has also improved our assessment strategies.

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 of quality 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;