

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Mathematics
REPORT**

**Coláiste an Eachréidh
Athenry, County Galway
Roll number: 76102K**

Date of inspection: 3 March 2016



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MATHEMATICS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	2 and 3 March 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning in the majority of lessons were good or very good with exemplary practice noted in one lesson.
- Students are strongly encouraged and fully supported to study Mathematics at the highest level possible for as long as possible.
- Very good and affirming rapport was evident between the teachers and students.
- Department planning is of a very high standard and is clear, comprehensive and well structured.
- The variation in the quality of homework being allocated and its monitoring needs to be addressed by department members to ensure alignment with the whole-school homework and assessment policies.
- Student seating arrangements did not always provide optimally for collaborative and inclusive learning to occur.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Monitoring of homework and copybooks is an area in need of attention to ensure that full benefit is gained from students' everyday work and that all department members' practice is in line with the school's homework and assessment policy guidelines.
- Classroom layout and seating arrangements should be better organised to facilitate collaborative and inclusive learning as well as to provide peer support for all students.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste an Eachréidh is an Irish-medium post-primary school under the auspices of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB). It is co-educational and multi-denominational with a current enrolment of 154 students. It was founded in 2006 and serves an extensive catchment area. The school offers the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good or very good teaching and learning was observed in the majority of lessons. The best lessons showed very good continuity with prior learning and progressed at a pace appropriate to the cohort. Exemplary practice was observed in one lesson where students worked collaboratively on a graduated but challenging task. The skills required were based on the homework exercise of the previous lesson. Well-facilitated peer learning between students and groups was the methodology in use. In addition to the students being engaged for the full class period, the teacher used the entire class time to check for understanding, support learning and prompt progress. Students who finished the task were provided with supplementary exercises of a more challenging nature. The high standard of learning acquired in this exemplary lesson should inform the standard set for all future planning.
- Best practice was noted where all students were motivated and fully engaged by all classroom activities. They fully understood what was required of them and clearly understood the homework task which was set. In some instances where there was room for improvement, not all students were engaged or fully aware of the tasks being set, either for in-class work or for homework.
- The practice of monitoring copybooks needs to be addressed as they are not being fully utilised to support teaching and learning. Regular monitoring with formative feedback to affirm good work, guide for improvement and allow for review of progress can help ensure copybooks are valuable individual revision documents. The standard of copybooks and the work presented within them ranged from unsatisfactory to very good. Some students used copybooks which included other subject material, graffiti and were in poor condition.
- The mathematics department is building a bank of information and communications technology (ICT) resources which is to be commended as the resources allow students to revisit lessons and self-assess. They also enable the teachers to share resources which they have produced or sourced. ICT was used in a few instances to enhance teaching and learning in the lessons.
- It is recommended that the seating arrangements for students be changed to ensure all students are included and supported optimally in lessons. Carefully considered classroom layout and seating plans will provide further opportunities for peer-support, peer-learning and peer-monitoring which can greatly enhance learning experiences for all students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Mathematics timetabling provision for junior cycle and TY classes is in line with the relevant circulars. All senior cycle classes benefit from an extra mathematics class weekly which is commendable. The benefits of having teacher-based classrooms was

evident as students worked in well-decorated, numeracy-rich learning environments and the rotation of teachers across all levels helps build capacity among department members.

- Teaching and learning is well supported by the provision of resources which are funded by management on request. There are very good ICT facilities available for teachers and students. All classrooms are well resourced with access to online shared facilities, available both within school and outside.
- Management and the mathematics department endeavour to ensure all students work to their potential. Although there are higher-level and ordinary-level classes from the beginning of second-year and fifth-year, concurrent timetabling allows for movement between levels with students encouraged to remain at the highest level for as long as possible.
- TY classes are of mixed ability and have supported students to continue with the higher-level course and on occasion to move up to the higher level for senior cycle. Students with special educational needs or with additional learning requirements are supported in their classes or in small groups where appropriate.
- Management is supportive of and encourages teachers' engagement with continuing professional development (CPD). Teachers avail of as many opportunities as possible both in their own time and school time.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The department members are very committed to the teaching and learning of Mathematics. They have regular, formal, minuted meetings as well as frequent informal collaboration.
- The department is commended for having a comprehensive, clear and well-structured plan accessible online. Specifics on various methodologies employed and the use of resources to help achieve learning intentions should be included to maximise potential. It would also be beneficial to include assessment strategies used for each topic. Although discussed on an informal basis, including these elements in the department plan will help provide a valuable revision document as well as ensuring continuity of practice when new staff join the department.
- A high level of individual planning was evident for almost all the lessons observed. In some instances, this resulted in students working on discovery tasks to progress learning and build on prior knowledge. Relevant resources were provided and clear instructions were given. In a small minority of lessons, there were missed opportunities to further enhance the learning by facilitating more targeted group work culminating in student feedback to the entire class group. More student-to-student interaction to develop the practice of formulating thoughts and reinforcing the use of mathematical language among students is an area for further development.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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