



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Mathematics REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Presentation College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Putland Road Bray Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	61800D
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19/11/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	14/01/2025

What is a 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.

Included in this subject inspection 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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> 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 students.

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	19/11/2024 and 21/11/2024
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 7 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

School context Presentation College Bray is a post-primary school for boys with a current enrolment of 650 students under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust. The school offers the following programmes: Junior Cycle (JC), an optional Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- Interactions between students and teachers were very respectful and positive, and students worked in affirming and productive learning environments.
- Teachers provided effective oral feedback during lessons, but there was minimal written formative feedback in students' copybooks.
- Subject provision and whole school support for Mathematics were very good.
- Most lessons were very well prepared and well structured; in a few lessons, the learning resources provided were very good.
- The quality of subject planning and preparation was good, with planning for transition year and leaving certificate requiring development.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide students with further opportunities to engage with Mathematics through well-structured and purposeful pair and group work so that they can participate in discussion and peer learning.
- Teachers should ensure that ongoing monitoring and assessment is of sufficient depth to enable teachers to identify and address gaps in understanding.
- Teachers should further develop the TY plan to ensure that it is more reflective of the effective practice observed in TY lessons; the plan should include more student-led projects that further promote enquiry-based learning, real life contextual learning, problem-solving, and discovery.
- It is recommended that the mathematics department review their planning documents to further support the implementation of the curriculum specifications and progress students' learning.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with a few instances of excellent practice observed.
- Relationships between students and teachers were very good. Students worked in safe, positive learning environments. They were happy and confident to ask questions, seek clarification, and offer suggestions. Students were willing to risk incorrect responses and understood the value of making mistakes, using them as a learning opportunity. In a number of Mathematics specific rooms, posters reminded students that mistakes are proof that you are trying.
- In most lessons, teachers were well prepared and lessons were well structured. Key words and mathematical terminology used in the activities were explicitly taught. In one instance, the teacher introduced the topic of functions by questioning students on what their interpretation of a function was in the real world. In this lesson, student responses were skilfully used to develop their understanding of the concepts of machines, inputs, and outputs.
- Learning intentions were displayed and shared with the students. In a few cases, teachers explored the intended learning and skilfully used questioning to prompt students to reflect on prior learning. This very effective practice provided context for the learning activities.
- In most lessons, the main methodology used was high-quality teacher instruction combined with individual or pair activities. Teachers used questioning as a very effective method of developing problem-solving skills. There was a good balance of teacher input and student activity noted in the majority of lessons.
- Students in all lessons observed, had opportunities to collaborate with colleagues seated next to them. In the majority of lessons, there was scope to vary students' learning experiences and add greater context to their learning. Teachers should engage students in more structured and purposeful pair and group work so that they can participate more in discussion and peer learning.
- The quality of assessment was good, overall. The majority of teachers monitored student progress and provided assistance where necessary. It was particularly effective when teachers used this assessment to inform lesson activities. In a few lessons, there was a need for deeper assessment to more accurately establish the gaps in students' understanding and learning. There was minimal written formative feedback in students' copybooks, and this should be addressed.
- There was scope, in a few lessons observed, for a better balance between purposeful student input and teacher exposition. In these lessons, students would have benefitted from more active engagement with the lesson content. Opportunities to develop student's critical thinking skills were missed. Teachers should allow time for students to embed new learning and assess student understanding of concepts before progressing onto new content.
- Excellent reflection of student learning was evident in a few instances. For example, in a lesson on fractions students were asked at the beginning of the class if they felt confident in applying their knowledge to verbal problem solving questions. After engaging in a very productive pair activity the question was revisited at the end of the lesson. Students responded using a traffic light system allowing the teacher to effectively assess the level of students' newly acquired confidence. It would be valuable to see this very effective reflective practice further embedded across the mathematics department.
- Students in the focus group meeting described their learning environment as supportive. They reflected very positively on their experience of mathematics in the school.

Students also expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the school's online platform, finding it conducive to learning and revision.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Overall, the quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good. Appropriate time, in line with subject specifications, is allocated to Mathematics at both junior and senior cycles.
- Effective concurrent timetabling was in place for year groups after first year allowing for the placement of students into level-specific classes best suited to their abilities. This placement occurs after the first term of second year and the beginning of the leaving certificate course in fifth year.
- The arrangements for students experiencing difficulty with Mathematics were very good. Individual and small-group withdrawal were the main modes of delivery of learning support in Mathematics. Support was provided by a Mathematics teacher who is a member of the special educational needs (SEN) department. Subject teachers worked closely with the support teacher to design activities which compliment current classroom practice. Student Support Files (SSFs) were available and provided the relevant information required to inform subject teachers of the individual needs of their students.
- Provision of resources for teaching, including digital resources, was very good. Teachers have access to class sets of digital devices and a computer room. All classrooms were equipped with data projectors and interactive whiteboards. Use of visualisers were observed in some lessons. These were all used to good effect as teaching aids. Teachers should further develop the use of technology to facilitate students to explore and discover Mathematics, develop problem-solving skills, and engage in group tasks and projects.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was good, with some aspects of departmental planning requiring development. Individual planning and lesson preparation was very good.
- Subject teachers were very aware of the individual needs of their students which was apparent from their individual planning documents. Personalised learning sheets, designed within the department, were used in conjunction with the SSF information to prepare daily lessons. These embraced a differentiated approach to learning which ensured students of all abilities were suitably challenged.
- Departmental schemes of work were available for all year groups and programmes. These were of acceptable quality and outlined the agreed-upon sequence of topics, timings, and learning outcomes. There was scope to develop schemes of work to further support the implementation of the curriculum and progress students' learning.
- The role of subject coordinator has just been re-appointed. It is good practice to rotate this role between teachers, as this allows for the development of organisational and leadership capacities within the department.
- Members of the Mathematics department worked well as a collaborative team. Formal and informal subject department meetings provided opportunities to discuss teaching, learning and assessment arrangements and organisational matters. The minutes of these meetings were stored online in the subject departmental folder. All planning documents were also stored electronically; this included shared learning resources, and a list of enquiry-based LC activities applicable to each strand. It is recommended that enquiry-based activities are developed for all programmes of study.
- The TY programme was taught in four modules that were rotated every eight weeks. These modules outline lists of topics to be covered which were overly reliant on LC content. It was recommended that teachers further develop the TY programme to include opportunities to participate in student led projects that promote, enquiry-based, active learning, real-life contextual learning, problem solving, and discovery.

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



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of Presentation College about their learning in Mathematics

Date of inspection: 19/11/2024

What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in Mathematics.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



The inspector saw many things during the inspection. The main findings were:

- Teaching and learning were very good overall.
- Teachers and students got on very well together.
- The teachers were very good at planning their lessons but they should give written comments on homework to show students where they can improve.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Mathematics?



- Teachers should plan to do more group activities in class so that students have the opportunity to learn from each other.
- Teachers should continue to ask students if they understand what is being taught in class and help them if they are having difficulties.
- TY Mathematics should include activities and topics that are not on the Leaving Certificate course.
- Teachers should work together to decide how best to improve the learning experiences of students.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
Special thanks to the students who participated 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