

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

**Subject Inspection of Mathematics**  
**REPORT**

**Coláiste Pobail Setanta**  
**Phibblestown, Clonee, Dublin 15**  
**Roll number: 76098W**

**Date of inspection: 28 January 2013**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F**  
**O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N**  
**A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	28 and 29 January 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Discussion with members of the learning-support department</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The mathematics department is very well organised. The mathematics teachers collaborate very effectively and prepare assiduously for their lessons. This was reflected in the quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection.
- Assessment practices in Mathematics are very good and results from very good subject department and whole-school planning.
- Students transferring into first year receive very good support and subsequent provision for students requiring additional support in Mathematics is very good.
- The mathematics department is very well resourced and timetabling provision for Mathematics is very good.
- The learning environment is designed to develop positive attitudes to Mathematics and the atmosphere permeating all classroom interactions was respectful and warm.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Greater care should be taken in framing the learning outcomes to address how the lesson content explores and exploits the links between the different curricular strands and meets the long-term subject goals.
  - The use of *extension activities* should go beyond the development of the students' mathematical skills and should include more open-ended questions designed to engage the students in problem solving.
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## INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Pobail Setanta was established in 2008 and operates under the aegis of County Dublin VEC. The school community is diverse and the needs of students from a range of cultural, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds are catered for. From an initial enrolment of forty four, the school population has grown rapidly and is expected to eventually exceed 1000. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, including programmes such as Transition Year (TY), and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was either good or very good with one lesson featuring teaching of the very highest standard.
- A range of teaching methods, including group, pair work and team teaching, was in evidence and all of the lessons featured very effective resource integration.
- All of the lessons had a very good structure. The lesson activities followed a logical sequence and served to achieve the intended outcomes which were agreed at the outset of each lesson. However, in framing the intended learning outcomes, greater consideration should be given to long-term goals and how the lesson content addressing a particular curricular strand links to, and prepares the students for, the remaining strands.
- Approaches to differentiating the lesson content to address the students' abilities and learning styles were very effective. All of the lessons featured very good teacher movement, excellent teacher questioning and strategies to include all of the students in the lesson.
- More able students were facilitated through the availability of *extension activities*. These are available to students once they have completed their assigned tasks. The activities focus primarily on developing the students' skills set. This innovative approach could be further enhanced if the activities contained more open-ended questions and engaged the students in problem solving.
- Assessment practices in Mathematics are very good. *Assessment for learning* strategies were evident in all of the lessons and an innovative project to engage students themselves in asking quality questions was being rolled out during the inspection. This excellent initiative will develop the students' communication skills, enhance their appreciation and understanding of Mathematics and create a culture of critical reflection.
- The quality of student learning, as evidenced by their responses during lessons, the quality of the work in the homework copybooks and assessment folders and attainment in the certificate examinations, is very good.
- The interactions between teachers and students and between the students themselves were respectful and warm. The learning environment, which featured posters, samples of student work and other subject-related materials, was at once stimulating and safe and encouraged positive attitudes toward Mathematics.

## SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling provision for Mathematics is very good. The time allocated to Mathematics is generous and the scheduling of the mathematics lessons, including the provision of

double classes in senior cycle, facilitates the implementation of the teaching approaches envisaged by Project Maths.

- The mathematics department is very well resourced. The mathematics teachers' classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and all mathematics classes have access to materials designed to facilitate active teaching and learning. The mathematics teachers also use the school's information and communication technology infrastructure as a platform for communication, collaboration and sharing resources.
- As the school has grown, management has taken great care to build the capacity and cohesion within the mathematics department. The vast majority of department members are capable of teaching Mathematics to higher level in senior cycle and all teach Mathematics to more than one class group. Care should be taken that, as the school continues to grow, the department does not become too large and that the existing cohesion is not dissipated.
- Assessment for learning is a central plank of the school's approach to teaching and learning. Very good assessment and homework policies are in place and are underpinned by the desire to place students at the heart of the learning process, to provide them with quality feedback on their performance and roadmaps for improvement.
- Procedures for facilitating student transfer into first year and for identifying their proficiency in Mathematics are very good. The school's *Tús Maith* programme ensures that very good links are maintained with the primary schools and any pertinent issues are dealt with in a timely and student-centred manner. Subsequent provision for students identified as being in need of learning support or with special education needs is very good.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning in Mathematics is very well managed and features an admirable degree of collaboration across the entire department. Two of the teachers voluntarily take responsibility for co-ordinating the department's activities and work as a very effective team.
- The very good assessment practices mentioned earlier in this report result from the careful planning that surrounds this aspect of the department's work. The department works very effectively in preparing common assessments, analysing the outcomes of the in-house and certificate examinations and using the outcomes of the analyses to inform their teaching.
- A very good subject department plan containing detailed schemes of work has been developed. The schemes, which reflect the ongoing change in the national mathematical landscape, will need to be revised when Project Maths is fully rolled out. The learning outcomes contained in the revised schemes should explore and develop connections between the various curricular strands.
- Individual teacher planning, particularly in relation to resource integration in lesson delivery, is very good.
- TY is in its very early stages in the school. However, very good progress has already been made. A very good mathematics programme, designed to develop the students' skills across a range of curricular strands and to engage them in project work and resource development, is in place.

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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. The board of management 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.

*Published May 2013*

# Appendix

## SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

### Submitted by the Board of Management

#### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.**

The Board thanks the Department of Education and Skills and the Inspector for the manner in which this inspection was carried out. The Board is delighted to see the dedication, skill and commitment of our maths teachers fully acknowledged in the report. The board is also proud that the progressive and vibrant learning community we are developing was also evident to and appreciated by the inspector.

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