

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Presentation JNS,
Mullingar, Co Westmeath
Uimhir rolla: 00934G

Date of inspection: 3 April 2014



1. Introduction

Presentation Junior National School is a co-educational primary school in the centre of Mullingar. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath and it reflects the ethos of the Presentation Order. As part of the recent re-designation of schools in Mullingar, Presentation JNS now caters for both girls and boys up to second class. 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.

At the time of the evaluation, there were 388 pupils from diverse backgrounds enrolled in the school, including a large number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, pupils from the Traveller Community and pupils with speech and language needs. Attendance rates pose a serious challenge for the school community and a large number of pupils missed in excess of twenty days in the last school year. It is recommended that a whole-school and multi-agency approach be devised to analyse the problem and to identify and implement strategies to promote good pupil attendance.

During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and seven support teaching settings.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The board of management, principal and in-school management team collaborate conscientiously to provide strong and effective leadership for the school community.
- The school has engaged very positively with the School Self-evaluation process to identify, analyse and implement strategies for the improvement of literacy skills.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí an mhaith sa Ghaeilge. *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is very good.*
- Social, Personal and Health Education is taught very effectively, contributing to the positive school climate and pupils' mastery of co-operative skills.
- All teachers demonstrate proficient teaching skills and very positive classroom management approaches.
- Members of the special educational and support teams provide very effective teaching supports to pupils through a variety of modes including withdrawal, in-class support and station teaching.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a whole-school and multi-agency approach be devised to analyse the causes of poor attendance and to identify, target and implement strategies to promote good pupil attendance.
- It is recommended that improved systems of initial screening be implemented at classroom level to provide for early identification of learning needs in line with the staged approach (Circular 02/05)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In light of the diverse language and learning needs of pupils, it is recommended that lessons in all subjects include greater emphasis on new vocabulary and specific differentiation linked to assessment evidence. |
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3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Board members have a wide range of expertise and these skills are deployed effectively for the smooth running of the school. The board has been very active in the school's recent re-designation, policy development and school- self-evaluation.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is effective and reflective of a collaborative approach. The principal provides strong and caring leadership for the school community and she is highly visible in all school activities. She is ably assisted by a competent in-school management team, whose members discharge a range of curricular, pastoral and administrative duties effectively.
- Resources are managed very effectively. Pupils' learning experiences are enhanced by the availability of a wide variety of concrete materials, educational equipment, information and educational technology (ICT) and rooms specially designated and equipped for the literacy, numeracy and *Aistear* programmes. Ancillary staff members contribute competently to the smooth running of the school.
- The school fosters good quality relations with parents and the school community. The parents' association supports the school through assistance with school events and fundraising activities. The school communicates very effectively with parents through use of newsletters, texts, the school website and the homework diaries. In response to the Inspectorate survey, almost all parents reported that the school welcomes them and that they are happy with the school.
- The management of pupils is commendable. The school promotes very positive relationships among the pupils through its pastoral care and positive behaviour approaches. Relationships between staff and pupils are mutually respectful and co-operative.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. There is evidence of collaboration between teachers and the board in the whole-school planning process. Administrative plans reflect the school's legislative and policy obligations. While curriculum plans are of a good quality, there is scope to adapt some of the plans to reflect the specific school context and to provide more guidance on classroom approaches.
- The school has engaged very positively with the School Self-evaluation process to identify and implement strategies for the improvement of literacy skills. There is evidence that teachers engaged in robust evidence gathering and analysis to draft specific and measurable targets for the school improvement plan.
- The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation are effective. All teachers provide appropriate written planning for their teaching. While some classroom planning was of a very high quality, it is recommended that all classroom planning

documents include specific approaches to differentiate lessons to meet the full range of learning needs in each class.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good, overall, with some very good teaching observed. All teachers demonstrate proficient teaching skills and positive classroom management approaches. Features of best practice included the use of a variety of active learning methodologies, themed approaches, effective linkage and integration of curriculum areas, and play-based learning through the *Aistear* programme. In light of the diverse language and learning needs of pupils, it is recommended that lessons in all subjects include greater emphasis on new vocabulary and specific differentiation linked to assessment evidence.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí an mhaith sa Ghaeilge. Forbraítear scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí go córasach agus sonraítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge tríd an scoil. Léiríonn na daltaí cumas maith ó thaobh labhairt na Gaeilge de agus is féidir leo ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt sa chomhrá beirte. Dírítear aird inmholta ar chothú scileanna réamh-léitheoireachta agus réamh-scríbhneoireachta. Baineann na daltaí tairbhe agus taitneamh as raon filíochta agus amhrán a aithris.
- *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is very good. Pupils' communicative skills are developed incrementally and a positive attitude to Irish is noted throughout the school. The pupils demonstrate good ability in the speaking of Irish and they can pose and answer questions in the paired conversations. Praiseworthy attention is directed to developing pre-reading and pre-writing skills. Pupils derive enjoyment and benefit from reciting a range of poetry and songs.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. While language is developed in all classes, it is recommended that a graded language approach be implemented to further develop the skills, functions, vocabulary and idioms of the pupils' oral language. This should also include a thematic approach to identify instructional vocabulary across the curriculum. Overall standards in reading are praiseworthy and the school's successful implementation of a focussed literacy programme has fostered the pupils' love of reading. All teachers promote good handwriting skills. While the content of pupils' writing is good, there is scope for more detailed exploration of a variety of writing genres. Pupils engage well with a range of poetry and rhymes.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics are of a good quality. Pupils' responses indicate good age-appropriate mastery of the number, measures and shape and space strands of the curriculum. Most lessons were presented effectively through active and discovery learning approaches, collaborative learning activities, and use of ICT and games. In some cases, there is scope to improve practice through greater attention to differentiating lesson content, more careful explanation of mathematical language and relating concepts more closely to pupils' lives and experiences.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education is very good. All teachers present a broad and balanced programme, often

through methodologies such as role play and circle time. Pupils demonstrate understanding of very important health and safety issues and it is notable that this knowledge is applied consistently for the creation of a positive school climate and the fostering of pupils' co-operative skills. The principal and in-school management team reinforce this caring approach through their pastoral care duties.

- The overall quality of assessment is good. The school uses a range of standardised, diagnostic and informal testing to establish baseline information on pupils' attainments. While assessment information is utilised to select pupils for additional support, it is recommended that systematic screening and use of the staged approach (Circular 02/05) be implemented to assist class teachers in supporting children with emerging learning needs. All teachers maintain a range of valuable classroom assessment records on their pupils' progress. The impact of this assessment is most effective wherever teachers align their assessment to curriculum objectives and use the data to direct differentiation and classroom planning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school includes a large number of pupils from diverse backgrounds and with varied learning needs into school life very successfully. A rental scheme is in operation to ensure that all pupils have access to books.
- Members of the special educational support team provide very effective teaching supports to pupils through a variety of modes including withdrawal, in-class support and station teaching. These team members co-ordinate the development of very good learning targets for pupils as part of the collaborative process for individual education planning. Very high quality teaching was observed in the support contexts and pupils are making good progress in relation to their learning needs.

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