

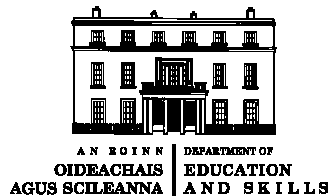
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Freastógáil Muire,
Fermoy, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 178680**

Date of inspection: 21 November 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Freastógáil Mhuire, Fermoy is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Cloyne, in the trusteeship of the Presentation Order and with an enrolment of 253 pupils. It caters for boys and girls from infants to first class and girls only from second to sixth class. There are three classes catering for pupils presenting with autism, one of which is a pre-school class. Presently, forty-nine percent of enrolments is made up of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The work of the board is helped by the professionalism and dedication of members who apply their skills willingly.
- The dedicated principal plays a major leadership role in the school by influencing the positive school atmosphere and practices.
- The in-school management (ISM) team provides notable support.
- A professional and committed cohort of teachers guides learning in the excellent facilities available in the school.
- The high quality of whole school planning is a significant factor in positively guiding the work of the school community.
- The high quality of individual teacher preparedness is a significant strength in the school.
- Teaching and learning in the four subjects observed was of a consistently high standard.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and those with low-incidence special educational needs are taught in a highly caring environment.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board should be informed as to progress in the fulfilment of ISM duties via individual reports.
- Staff in the autism classes should adopt an agreed approach to short-term planning.
- Staff in the autism classes is advised to meet formally in the further development of autism provision.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management oversees the general work of the school in a very effective manner. The chairperson provides committed leadership. Policies are communicated to parents via the school web site. Policies around the safe entry of pupils in the morning and the maintenance of roll books in line with the recent DES circular need to be reviewed. The work of the board is helped by the professionalism and dedication of members who apply their skills willingly. The Presentation Order, as trustees, maintain their strong historic link with the school. Members of the order assist at school ecclesiastical ceremonies and celebrations and serve on the board. One member of the order, though retired, helps with learning support duties.
- The dedicated principal plays a major leadership role in the school by influencing the positive school atmosphere and practices, including very good whole-school planning output. The introduction into the school of a new information technology (IT) school management facility enables her to maintain a clear picture of pupil standards and trends. She has ably led good initial school self-evaluation (SSE) processes. She works closely with the deputy principal who has responsibility for support education and pastoral care and who leads in these roles constructively. Three other post-holders fulfil their duties conscientiously and make good use of the IT system to communicate with staff. Post-holder responsibilities should be reviewed annually, especially in the light of new priorities. A slot on staff meeting agendas should be maintained for the ISM to discuss roles and the board should be informed as to fulfilment of duties via ISM reports.
- Pupils' questionnaire responses confirm positive dispositions to learning and school life. The pupils are fortunate in both the professional and committed cohort of teachers who guide their learning and in the excellent facilities available in the school. The secretary has played a key role in rolling out the school IT management system. The building is kept in excellent condition by the caretaker and cleaners. In addition, the close proximity to the town provides easy access to the local library, the swimming pool and the river Blackwater. Pupils visit the library weekly to exchange books and there is an excellent computer room in the school.
- There is a supportive parents' association (PA) in the school which is not affiliated to the National Parents Council (NPC). During the WSE, interest was expressed in moving the association onto a formal plane by affiliating to the NPC. The board should support this desire by the PA. Parents' questionnaire responses indicate high levels of trust in the professionalism of teachers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The high quality of whole school planning is a significant factor in positively guiding the work of the school community. Administrative policies are unambiguous. Curricular plans effectively guide teachers in their work and ensure continuity and progression in learning. Summaries of school policies are very helpful for teacher planning. Parents have been consulted with respect to planning in key areas. The establishment of formal PA structures will allow for further enhanced collaborative approaches to policy development and implementation. The school has engaged in extensive evidence gathering prior to drafting a clear SSE report and helpful improvement plan.
- The high quality of individual teacher preparedness is a significant strength in the school. In all classes, it is clear that plans are working documents and as work is completed, it is noted. Monthly progress records are carefully maintained. Advice was given with respect

to the development of a summary model of monthly record keeping on a whole-school basis to aid analysis of trends in key aspects of learning.

- 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 professionalism of teachers is a significant factor in the success of the school. Standardised test results in numeracy demonstrate very good achievement and this is particularly impressive given that almost half of the current cohort of pupils use English as a second language. Similarly, literacy scores indicate good general standards though scope for improvement remains with respect to the writing strand of the English curriculum.
- Baintear dea-úsáid as an gclár bán idirghníomhach chun foclóir a mhúineadh agus daingnítear an foclóir múinte go gníomhach éifeachtach. Cleachtaítear scileanna éisteachta go coinsiasach le ceisteanna agus treoracha agus spreagtar tuiscint chruinn sna gníomhaíochtaí. Tá imshaol inmholta de phrionta Gaeilge sna seomraí agus b'fhiú anois an acmhainn seo a úsáid chun saorscríbhneoireacht a chur chun cinn sa scoil. B'fhiú chomh maith an Ghaeilge a shníomh isteach i réimsí eile de shaol na scoile agus den churaclam, eg, fógraí scoile, uimhreacha as Gaeilge sa Mhatamaitic nó logainmneacha as Gaeilge sa Tíreolas.
- *Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard to teach vocabulary which in turn is reinforced both actively and effectively. Listening skills are practised conscientiously with questions, directions, and accurate understanding is encouraged. The praiseworthy environment of Irish print in classrooms should be used to develop free writing in Irish. It would be worthwhile also to weave Irish into other aspects of the curriculum and school life, eg, school announcements, number in Mathematics and local place names in Geography.*
- Teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboard (IWB) to teach phonics sounds and to reinforce work already done in sentence construction. Reading practice is undertaken systematically using purposeful station teaching approaches in junior classes while in the middle and senior classrooms library reading is encouraged effectively. Poems and rhymes are taught well. Free writing should now be encouraged throughout the school. Teachers have developed excellent approaches to imaginative writing where stories written are put into books that are kept in the classroom and pupils are encouraged to take and read them.
- Practical work using practical equipment is a notable feature of practice in Mathematics. Textbooks do not dominate teaching. Recording in copies is neat and this practice should be introduced as early as possible. Oral mental mathematical practice is a positive feature of teaching and emphasis is placed on group work and practical demonstrations. Good use is made of IWB for demonstrations and pupils are given opportunities to use the IWB.
- Teachers link Geography with other subjects positively. Good use is made of the IWB to show maps, develop the concept of making journeys or transmit knowledge. Very

interesting talk and discussion activities, based on charts, are used to introduce topics. These are very good practices and overall standards are very high in Geography.

- A useful variety of assessment modes is used and pupils' work is monitored carefully.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils' presenting with special educational needs is very good and the range of expertise within the school is excellent. The *Reading Recovery* programme is being successfully implemented. Station teaching is used to good effect to support the literacy needs of younger pupils and to promote numeracy in sixth class. EAL support for pupils is well managed and based on effective targeted interventions in line with the *Integrate Ireland Language Programme*. The work of the SEN team is well connected to classroom objectives. The deputy principal plays a key role in effectively co-ordinating the work of the team. Advice was given regarding the need to devise effective interventions for the higher achieving cohort of pupils.
- The overall quality of planning is good in the classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Staff is advised to meet formally in further planning around autism provision. Greater detail in the school plan laying out the core curricular content would be beneficial. The quality of short-term planning varies and staff should adopt an agreed approach to include: clear objectives, learning activity, resources and a record of pupil attainment. The format of the monthly report should be altered to include a tracking system. Many strategies within individual education programmes (IEP) are suitable but some targets are not sufficiently specific. Staff should engage further with the IEP process and develop a more consistent approach to setting specific targets. Parents receive a copy of the IEP. Meetings should be convened with parents to discuss the content in the IEP.
- Learning environments for pupils with ASD are well-structured and good teaching incorporates a range of effective methodologies. ICT is used productively to support pupils in their learning. Pupils' language competence is fostered through the provision of multi-sensory experiences. Social stories are used constructively to further promote an interest in reading. News and roll-call activity are used effectively to support communication and social interaction. Differentiated learning activities are suitably matched to the varying ability levels of pupils and are implemented either in group or in individual settings. Many pupils with ASD integrate successfully in the mainstream classes. Music is a feature of many aspects of teaching and learning across the school and is utilised very effectively in pupils' skill development. Pupils enjoy role play in Drama and this enhances their skills in language, in social interaction and imaginative thought. Staff is advised to develop Maths and sensory trails to complement pupils' learning further. SNA's play an important role in managing the pupils' self-care and social development. Observations are recorded routinely and shared with teachers.

Published March 2014

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management would like to acknowledge the professional and courteous manner in which the W.S.E. was carried out in Presentation Primary Fermoy. It would also like to acknowledge and commend the high standard of work carried out by all members of staff. The Board of Management was very pleased with the findings of the W.S.E.

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

- Recommendations in terms of planning in Relation to the A.S.D. provision are being addressed.
- Duties of the I.S.M team will be reported to the Board of Management.