

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Muire na Freastógála
Assumption G.N.S.
Walkinstown, Dublin 12
Uimhir rolla: 18170B

Date of inspection: 25 November 2010



1. Introduction

Assumption Senior GNS is an eleven-teacher, all-girls, senior primary school of 205 pupils under Catholic patronage on a shared campus with its feeder schools, Assumption Junior BNS and Junior GNS. Nearly all pupils transfer to the second-level school adjoining the campus. The school is in the trusteeship of the Sisters of Charity. Its pupils are drawn primarily from Walkinstown, Drimnagh and surrounding areas. Over one fifth of pupils miss more than 20 days and actions to address this issue should be developed further within the school's attendance policy. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The principal displays highly-developed management and organisational skills and a commitment to the welfare of all pupils.
- Teaching and learning in History are excellent.
- The pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they present as motivated, articulate and confident young learners.
- Integration is a praiseworthy feature of all teachers' practice and they capably use a range of effective methodologies and resources during lessons.
- The board of management and the parents association are very supportive of the work of the school.
- The teachers are effective communicators; they provide stimulating learning environments and work in a collegiate and professional manner.
- The pupils achieve very good standards overall in their personal writing and in their presentation of work.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Closer links should be established with the junior schools regarding curriculum planning, teaching programmes and other relevant information in order to enhance continuity and progression in the pupils' learning.
- A whole-school approach to the effective teaching of reading skills, the use of a graded-reading scheme, phonics instruction and targeted group teaching is required.
- In the current review of special educational needs' provision it is recommended that diagnostic testing more closely informs learning targets, programme planning and delivery, and assessment procedures.
- In Mathematics, there is a need for teachers to tailor short-term objectives and tasks to meet the specific learning needs of groups of pupils; ongoing assessment of each group's mastery of learning objectives is recommended.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions competently, maintains the school to a high standard and engages in policy review and ratification. Meetings between the three boards of management are convened regularly. It is recommended that the board prepare an annual report on the work of the school.
- The recently-appointed principal displays highly-developed management and organisational skills and a commitment to the welfare of all pupils. She is up to date with curriculum advances; she facilitates collaboration and has made progress in advancing whole-school planning.
- The duties of the in-school management team are carried out in a capable manner. In the next review it is recommended that curriculum leadership roles be enhanced to support the cohesive implementation of priority areas for teaching and learning.
- The school has an extensive range of resources, including information and communications technology (ICT) and library facilities. There is scope for development in the use of computers by pupils to support their learning. Classroom environments are visually attractive and some excellent displays which serve to support and reinforce current learning are evident.
- Good communications are in place between the school and its community; these are facilitated by regular newsletters, texts, notes, annual reports and parent/teacher meetings. The work of the school secretary is significant in this regard. The parents' association, representing the three schools, actively and significantly supports this school through fund raising, in-class curriculum initiatives and school-based events. Almost all parent-questionnaire responses state that they are happy with the school, that it is well run and is welcoming of parents.
- The management of pupils is excellent. Practically all pupil-questionnaire responses agree that school discipline is good and that they know the rules and the code of behaviour. The pupils receive a well-balanced education that fosters an appreciation of multi-cultural diversity, Green-School-Initiative activities and excellent engagement with the arts.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school's organisational policies are clear, informative and relevant. Curriculum plans provide varied levels of guidance on important aspects of curriculum delivery. The recent mathematics plan, drafted collaboratively, is commended for guiding whole-school practices and informing classroom planning. The process of school-self-evaluation has been initiated productively by the principal and targeted areas for development have been identified. These should now be supported by action plans. It is recommended that closer links be established with the feeder junior schools to ensure that whole-school planning provides continuity and progression in programmes of learning for pupils.
- Individual teachers' planning is reflective of the structure of the curriculum and provides broad, balanced programmes. This planning needs to be specific on the teaching of reading, group-learning objectives and approaches to assessment. Satisfactory monthly progress records are maintained.

Child protection policy and procedures

School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching is good. Best practice observed involves use of stimulating resources, clear explanation, appropriate lesson pace and structure, and varied learning activities. All teachers competently use integration and linkage. Nonetheless, there is insufficient emphasis on group teaching, particularly in reading and Mathematics. The pupils' learning in these areas requires much greater levels of assessment in order to monitor and raise standards. The pupils are eager learners, and are confident and articulate. All teachers correct their pupils' work consistently. Further feedback for improvement should be provided to pupils regarding the quality of their written work.
- Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán maith i dteagasc agus i bhfoglaim na Gaeilge. Tá sé ar chumas na ndaltaí labhairt faoi théamaí an churaclaim go cumasach. Baintear feidhm éifeachtach as an modh díreach in éineacht le druileanna, aithris agus athrá, agus úsáid teanga i gcomhthéascanna, i gceachtanna áirithe. Úsáideann na hoidí cluichí, áiseanna teicneolaíochta, acmhainní, amhráin agus rainn go hoiriúnach. Léann agus scríobhann an cuid is mó de na daltaí go cuí, bunaithe ar ábhar an téascleabhair. Ba chóir deiseanna scríbhneoireachta agus léitheoireachta pearsanta na ndaltaí a leathnú.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. The pupils are able to discuss the themes of the Irish curriculum competently. Direct teaching involving drills, repetition and the use of language in contexts were effective features in some lessons. Teachers make suitable use of games, ICT, resources, songs and poems. The pupils read and write capably, based on the content of class textbooks. It is advised that personal reading and writing opportunities be extended.

- Many pupils achieve very good standards in their presentation skills, and in their personal and functional writing. Impressive examples of a range of genres including poetry, stories, letters and report writing are exhibited. The writing process is taught well in many classes. Overall, the pupils demonstrate competent oral language skills and most are articulate, confident communicators.
- The teaching of reading is not cohesive throughout the school. Standards of reading vary considerably. Diverse use of novels, library books, class readers and other reading materials is made in the delivery of the reading programme and in fostering an interest in reading. It is recommended that a whole-school, research-based, approach to the teaching of reading skills, the use of a graded-reading scheme, phonics instruction and targeted group teaching be developed, implemented and monitored closely.
- Teaching and learning in Mathematics is satisfactory. Teachers use a range of suitable approaches, for example, teacher modelling, focused talk and discussion, mental mathematics and use of manipulatives. There is an over emphasis on whole-class teaching where some groups of pupils are not appropriately challenged in line with their ability. Some pupils in every class are achieving good standards and many pupils display confidence in operations and number facts. There is a need for teachers to tailor

objectives and tasks to meet the specific learning needs of groups of pupils. In addition to termly assessments, more ongoing assessment of each group's mastery of objectives is required. The school should analyse the outcomes of standardised tests to determine trends, target resources and to implement school wide changes in practice in the pursuit of continuous improvement.

- Teaching and learning in History are excellent. The teachers use a wide variety of approaches and resources effectively including documentary evidence, artefacts, maps, timelines and ICT. Lessons are very well planned and delivered; the teachers display commendable knowledge of topics and most use integration skilfully. The pupils' skills of working as historians are highly developed through cooperative tasks, research activities and presentations. They display very good knowledge of local, national and international history and an appreciation of change and continuity.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL) needs is provided in a caring, encouraging manner. Settings are suitably resourced and attractive. The special needs assistant carries out her assigned duties very well. The SEN teachers, who have recently taken up these positions, are in the process of establishing cohesive provision in this area. To this end it is recommended that diagnostic testing inform more closely the setting of attainable targets and the planning, delivery and assessment of appropriate programmes for individuals and groups. The staged approach should be implemented in all classes and SEN support should be provided in addition to classroom programmes in line with best practice outlined the *Learning Support Guidelines (2000)*.
- The philosophy of the trustees, the Religious Sisters of Charity, is clearly manifest in the quality of supports provided to all pupils in a caring and safe school environment and in a spirit of inclusivity.

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Appendix
School response to the report
Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

On behalf of the whole school community, the Board of Management of Assumption Senior G.N.S. would like to thank the inspectors for their very positive report which we generally consider to be fair and balanced. While we felt the process of WSE to be beneficial, we would welcome a more advisory process from the inspectorate as a whole.

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

The Board of Management in consultation with the principal and staff have noted the recommendations and are taking the necessary steps to implement them.