An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Mathematics
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Presentation College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Headford Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	63040Q
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	26 October 2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	08/02/2023

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.

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.

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:	
Child Protection	*Anti-bullying*
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.	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* and this policy is reviewed annually. 2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the *Procedures*) since the previous report to the board. 3. The school's 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

Dates of inspection	25 and 26 October 2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during eight lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Presentation College Headford is a co-educational post-primary school which operates under the auspices of Catholic Education an Irish School's Trust. It has 842 students enrolled. As well as the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, Junior Cycle Schools Programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching practices observed ranged from very good to weak with significant areas for improvement noted in some lessons.
- Learning was good overall; students' learning experiences and outcomes ranged from very good to weak in the lessons observed.
- Assessment practices were satisfactory; some very effective assessment strategies were observed with scope to extend good practices to all lessons.
- Subject provision and whole school support for Mathematics is very good.
- Planning and preparation was best in lessons where clear learning intentions were achieved through the use of appropriate methodologies and with resources specifically chosen to meet the learning needs and styles of the students.
- Collaborative planning was well supported and relevant documents were stored on a shared digital platform with easy access for all members of the department.

Recommendations

- Teachers should identify clear learning intentions for each of their lessons and plan resources and teaching approaches accordingly to provide all students with purposeful learning experiences.
- Students should regularly collaborate in lessons; opportunities such as group discussion, comparison and working together on set tasks should be planned for and provided.
- Good assessment strategies were outlined in the subject department plan and better implementation of these by teachers across all lessons is recommended.

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching was good. In the best lessons, a variety of approaches was used by the teachers to facilitate learning and to provide students with opportunities to actively engage with the lesson content. The pitch and pace of these lessons were modified as needed to ensure all students experienced elements of both challenge and success.
- There was scope for improvement where the main teaching approach used was the teacher going through textbook questions on the board. In some of these lessons, student input was sought from a few students and incorporated. In others, where practice requires significant improvement, the teacher proceeded without checking in effectively with students. This approach resulted in passive engagement for many and disengagement for others.
- Learning experiences and outcomes were best where students had opportunities to collaborate on well planned tasks, to discuss and compare their work and where good quality differentiation ensured all students were involved purposefully in the lesson.
- In some lessons, participation was made more difficult for students. An example of this was where written text on the board and projected materials were overlapping making it difficult to see either. Another example was when the lesson was hugely reliant on each student having a particular textbook. As it was an optional purchase, not all students had a copy. It is recommended that teachers consider the students' perspectives when reflecting on their lessons.
- A broad range of questioning strategies was used in the best lessons. It included the use of global and targeted questioning with a mix of open and closed questions. Students were prompted and included, their knowledge and understanding was checked and they had opportunities to use the relevant terminology in context when explaining and justifying their answers. Where it was used to best effect, all students were included purposefully and the lesson pitch and pace was modified accordingly.
- The quality of assessment was satisfactory overall. Good assessment strategies were outlined in the subject department plan and better implementation of these across all lessons is recommended. Where in-class assessment was highly effective, students were set up for success. The teachers in these lessons ensured that students understood the tasks to be done, had the requisite knowledge and skills to do the work and provided support where needed.
- There was evidence that written formative feedback was provided on some students' work and tests. However, better consistency is recommended so that all students have a regular written record of guidance on what and how to improve as well as affirmation for what is done well. Teachers should set clear guidelines around how students monitor their own work and maintain their copies.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support is very good.
- The subject department had four meetings at the beginning of the school year and also a meeting each term. The role of co-ordinator is rotated which is commendable as responsibility is distributed and members have opportunities to share their expertise and ideas.
- Students experience mixed ability lessons at all levels and every effort is made to keep students studying at the highest level for as long as possible. Mathematics lessons are well distributed throughout the week.
- The school has a history of students' involvement in a range of events and activites which enhances their experiences of learning Mathematics. These include celebrating Maths Week with a range of in-house activities, many of which are organised by TY students, taking part in the Maths Olympiad and visiting third-level institutions for activities promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
- Management supports continuing professional development and organises whole school events which supplement the subject-specific training members engage with.

- Team teaching is timetabled for lessons where additional support is needed by individual students. This is a valuable resource and has the potential to provide more purposeful engagement and learning experiences for all students, particularly those with additional needs. Careful planning between the two teachers is required to ensure students reap the full benefit of this resource.

3. Planning and preparation

- Individual lesson planning ranged from highly effective to weak. In the best lessons, the teachers had a clear learning intention for the students and planned the tasks and resources used accordingly. Students were enthusiastic, enjoyed a sense of success in these lessons and made progress with their learning. This was evident through the use of questioning by the teachers, through students explaining and justifying their findings and through the types of clarification sought by students in the lessons.
- There was significant scope for improvement when the main resource used was the textbook and it was not evident that the teachers had pre-planned for the lesson by selecting the most appropriate questions.
- The online shared platform allows for easy access to a comprehensive bank of plans and resources uploaded by members of the mathematics department. The facility to allow live changes to plans ensures that all documents viewed are the most up to date.
- Collaborative planning for Mathematics should include action planning for improvement. Whole school strategies outlined in the school improvement plan and the whole school assessment policy should be included. While observedin some of the best lessons, there was little evidence that the strategies were applied by all members of the mathematics department.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges this report's observations on the teaching and learning of Mathematics in Presentation College Headford. It acknowledges the very good practices in subject provision, whole school support for Mathematics, and the quality of planning for Mathematics.

Part B 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 of Presentation College Headford is committed to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report.

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	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	*Very good* applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is *outstanding* and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	*Good* applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	*Satisfactory* applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	*Fair* applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	*Weak* applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;