An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Presentation Primary School,
Waterford
Uimhir rolla: 19955T

Date of inspection: 21 September 2011

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Presentation Primary School is a large, urban, twenty-eight teacher school. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore and the trusteeship of the Presentation Sisters. The school is committed to promoting the ethos of the Presentation Sisters. It is an all girls school, apart from the two speech and language classes, which cater for both boys and girls. The school participates in the Department's *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) programme. The attendance of the 436 pupils is very good. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream class settings and seven support teaching settings. 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:

- All involved with the school are dedicated to the welfare of the pupils and are committed to providing the pupils with a broad range of learning experiences in a happy, caring environment.
- The principal is highly commended for her dedication and her capacity to lead and manage the school. Together with the staff she promotes a culture of teamwork and productive working relationships.
- The school has a high quality DEIS action plan which is impacting positively on the pupils' learning.
- The pupils are very well behaved and engage productively in learning.
- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is commendable.
- The teaching of Mathematics, in particular, is of a very high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In English reading, greater differentiation is required in the use of class texts to ensure that pupils are reading at their appropriate instructional level.
- A more consistent approach to the collection and utilisation of assessment data should be agreed and implemented.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of governance provided by the board of management is very good. It is committed to providing a high quality educational experience for all the pupils. Members are well informed and are assigned roles and responsibilities based on their skills. In particular, its role in ensuring the continued improvement of the school's building, facilities and resources is very effective.

- The quality of school leadership is very good. The principal demonstrates commendable dedication and capacity to lead and manage the school. She successfully promotes teamwork and productive working relationships with the education partners. She is capably supported by a hard working in-school management team. They share her commitment to ensuring high quality teaching and learning in the school and the promotion of the well-being of the pupils. As a means of building on the capacity and commitment of this team in leading learning, its role in evaluating the implementation of the curriculum should be developed further.

- The quality of the school building and grounds is excellent. Classrooms are presented attractively and extensive teaching and learning resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), are used effectively. Questionnaires conducted for the evaluation indicate that almost all parents rate the school facilities as good. The special needs assistants, school secretaries and caretaker contribute effectively to the smooth running of the school.

- Parental involvement in the work of the school is encouraged successfully. A range of worthwhile initiatives is implemented through the school's home/school/community liaison (HSCL) service. This work includes opportunities for parents to work with teachers in the classrooms to support the pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy. The school has an industrious parents' association that organises and supports a variety of events in the school. Parent questionnaires indicate satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school and confirm that the school welcomes parents.

- The management of pupils is very good. The teachers are clearly committed to their general welfare and cultivate a caring and mutually-respectful atmosphere throughout the school. The pupils are commended for their very good behaviour and on their positive attitudes towards learning. Their involvement in a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is successfully promoted. The pupils are also involved in pertinent decision-making through their participation in the *Green Schools* committee.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school has collaboratively developed a range of good quality administrative policies and curriculum plans, which guide existing practice.

- Laudable progress is being made in the use of school self-evaluation practices. In particular, the school is commended for the quality of its DEIS action plan. The adoption of effective implementation and review procedures has ensured that the plan has had a very positive impact on the pupils' learning. The school also recently conducted a review of special educational needs (SEN) provision in the school, leading to the setting of new targets which include developing the range of diagnostic tests used in Mathematics and the development of an improved model for communications among SEN teachers, class teachers and parents.

- The quality of teachers' individual planning is good. Monthly progress records are maintained by all teachers using a variety of practices and approaches. As part of the school's self-evaluation processes, consideration should be given to the advantages of a whole-school approach to the recording of monthly progress reports. This would facilitate the monitoring of curriculum implementation at a school-wide level.

- 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

- Overall, there is high quality teaching and learning in the school. The teachers employ a range of teaching strategies and are open to embracing new approaches and initiatives. The teachers are successful in creating a very positive learning environment for the pupils. Well planned team-teaching initiatives, involving class teachers and support teachers, are a feature of school provision and are implemented in an effective manner. The pupils participate actively in their learning and engage meaningfully in high quality collaborative group work.

- Tá caighdeán na múinteoireachta agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. I bhformhór na ranganna, baintear úsáid as an nGaeilge mar mheán teagaisc i rith na gceachtanna Gaeilge agus moltar an dea-chleachtas seo a leathnú ar fud na scoile. Úsáideann na hoidí raon modhanna múinte go héifeachtach le linn na gceachtanna, ar a n-áirítear obair bheirte, cluichí, rólghlacadh, amhráin agus rannta. Cuirtear béim mhaith ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach. Forbraítear scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta go córasach.

  The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A positive attitude to Irish is nurtured in the school. In most classes, Irish is used as a medium of instruction during lessons and it is recommended that this good practice be extended throughout the school. Teachers use a variety of methodologies effectively during lessons including pair work, games, role-play, songs and rhymes. A good emphasis is placed on the communicative approach. Reading and writing skills are developed systematically.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is commendable. Teachers create appropriate contexts to develop pupils' oral language skills and the pupils display very good ability to communicate across a range of topics and themes. A variety of effective methodologies is used to stimulate pupils' interest in reading. However, as there is such a range of ability levels in each class, greater differentiation is required in the use of class texts, to ensure that pupils are reading at their appropriate instructional level. Due emphasis is placed on the development of writing skills where a high standard is evident. Handwriting and presentation skills are promoted actively and successfully on a school-wide basis. Pupils are given regular opportunities to listen to, read, learn, recite and respond to poetry.

- The teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a very high quality and the school has succeeded in developing a positive attitude towards Mathematics. Concepts are explained clearly, resources are employed appropriately and the pupils' oral mathematical abilities are promoted purposefully. The pupils are accurate at computation work and they can discuss, analyse and solve a range of mathematical problems. The teachers provide learning opportunities that link content from the different strands, while also competently integrating learning in Mathematics with other curriculum areas. This is reflected in the positive responses in the pupil questionnaires in relation to their mathematical abilities.

- The standard of teaching and learning in History is very good. All teachers present lively and engaging lessons that place appropriate emphasis on promoting and developing the pupils' skills as historians. Creditable emphasis is placed on local studies and on

personal history throughout the school, with the pupils displaying a very good knowledge of the history of Waterford and their place within that history.

- The quality of assessment of learning is good. An appropriate range of screening, standardised and diagnostic tests is administered. A variety of class-based assessments and teacher-designed tests is also used to check pupil progress. There are also commendable evolving practices evident that facilitate the pupils to engage in self-assessment. A purposeful analysis of standardised test results at a whole-school level is also undertaken. The recent introduction of pupil portfolios in some classes is commended. However, there is significant variation from one class setting to another regarding assessment practices and it is advised that a more consistent approach to the collection and utilisation of assessment data be agreed and implemented.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality and co-ordination of support for pupils with special educational needs is good. The pupils experience being taught in an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Teacher-pupil interactions are encouraging and serve to build the pupils' self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. Purposeful individualised learning programmes are prepared and implemented competently. There is meaningful communication between SEN personnel, class teachers and parents. The SEN model incorporates both in-class support and withdrawal. The school is encouraged to continue to develop and extend its team-teaching initiatives.

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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

The Board of Management and staff are pleased with our WSE report and wish to thank the Department's inspectors for their thorough, professional and courteous manner in which they carried out the WSE. We are delighted that our school was acknowledged for the high quality of teaching and learning and the promotion of the wellbeing of the pupils. Most pleasing in the report is the teamwork and productive working relationship with staff, parents, parents' association and the Board of Management.

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

- Baintear usáid as an nGaeilge mar mhéan cumarsáide rith na gceachtanna Gaeilge ar fud na scoile ar fad anois.
- Investigating Literacy Lift Off and differentiated texts in English.
- In School Management to lead learning by reference to Cúntas Míosúil as part of school self-evaluation.
- Researching most suitable ways to implement assessment practices using portfolios.