



Presentation College

Headford

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SCHOOL HISTORY

The story of Presentation College Headford began on Friday, August 26th 1942, in a disused army hut behind the presbytery. The founders of the new school were the Presentation Sisters, who had been involved in primary education in Headford since 1906. At first, the new secondary school catered for girls only.

In its opening year, there were seventeen students in first year and twenty in second year. By 1946, the demand for more space necessitated the use of the parochial hall and the convent dining room as classrooms.

The building of the new post-primary school at a cost of £12,000 in 1953 was a landmark. It consisted of six classrooms, a home economics room and a staff room – all still part of the present structure.

The courageous decision to become coeducational marked a new departure, and the arrival of eighteen intrepid boys in 1955 created a truly 'mixed' school. Sr. Vianney guided PCH through this transition and the rapid increase in student numbers during the 'free education' era in the sixties and seventies. This expansion made it necessary to plan an extension, which was completed in 1978, to provide facilities for a wider curriculum. These facilities enabled the school to offer woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, art, computers, music, typing and home economics, as well as the traditional academic subjects. Thus the school broke from the narrow academic tradition and became comprehensive, striving to cater for the needs of all.

In 1982, the then-principal, Sr. Nuala Courtney, backed by the local community and with a loan from the Presentation Sisters, oversaw the building of a modern sports centre, consisting of gymnasium, stage, ball alleys, dressing rooms and shower facilities. This new facility enabled pupils and local people to pursue a wide and exciting range of sports and to enter competitions at all levels.

Sr. Bríd Brennan became principal in 1986 and with Mr. John Boner, then vice-principal, guided the school through the next major phase of development in curriculum and facilities. In 1991 the second major extension to the school building was opened. This new wing included a music room, a canteen, two extra science laboratories, a language laboratory, technical Drawing / technology rooms, an extra woodwork workshop, new general classrooms, extended computer facilities and a careers library. And in the mid-1990s, a specialist area, consisting of rooms for engineering, technology, mechanics, electronics, carpentry and pottery, was added to the gym building.

Mr. Boner succeeded Sr. Bríd as principal in 1999, and in 2004 he oversaw the construction of a Resource Centre, designed specifically to meet children's special learning needs. The unit includes a kitchen, two rooms for small group or one-to-one tuition, an office, computer room and classroom. In 2008, the construction of a major new extension commenced, overseen by Dr. James Whyte, who followed Mr. Boner as principal in 2004. The John Boner Building, which opened in September 2010, comprises a large study hall, two woodwork rooms, eight general classrooms, a meeting room and an office. Subsequently, two new science laboratories were developed in the space vacated by the old woodwork rooms, and in 2013 the Sr. Bríd Brennan library opened at the heart of the main building.

Since the 1960s, while continuing to provide an academic education of the highest standard, Presentation College Headford has been a pioneer in the introduction of various programmes and initiatives designed to meet the varied needs of less academically-oriented pupils and to retain in the education system those students who would be unlikely to persist with a more exclusively academic curriculum. These programmes, which today include the Leaving Certificate Vocational, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme, and the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, have greatly contributed to strengthening retention rates, at both Junior and Senior Cycle.

Our school has always taken the initiative in supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable students. In the 1980s and early 1990s, prior to its formal inclusion in the Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme (which, in the autumn of 2009, fell victim to Government budget cuts), and through the good offices of the Presentation Sisters, the school provided a Home-School Liaison service. And we have long been committed to meeting the Special Educational Needs of the young people in the locality.

From the beginning, as a stand-alone school, Presentation College Headford has striven to meet the varied needs of all the pupils in its catchment area through the development of a comprehensive curriculum and of the necessary facilities and services to provide such a curriculum. This has been achieved through the great enterprise, imagination, hard work and perseverance of many in the school, and through the generosity and good will of the local community and the Presentation Sisters. The work continues today.