

Ballinlough N.S.

School Self Evaluation Report

Introduction

A school self evaluation of teaching and learning in Ballinlough was undertaken during the school years 2011/2014. During the evaluation teaching and learning in the following curricular areas were evaluated.

- Literacy
- Numeracy

Parents were also asked their opinions on Numeracy & Literacy and were asked to identify areas where they felt the school were performing well and areas for improvement.

The following sources of evidence were used to compile the findings of this report:-

- Individual teacher reviews of practice and learning outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy
- Focus group discussions
- Pupils work – samples, copies, displays
- Parental Questionnaires
- Individual Teacher reflections
- Pupil Questionnaires – third to sixth class.
- Assessment records:- Drumcondra Test results 2011-2014

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation on Literacy

The School Context

Ballinlough N.S. is a mainstream co-education primary school, situated approximately 13 kilometers outside the town of Kells, under the patronage of Bishop Michael Smyth, Catholic Bishop of Meath. By and large the majority of the pupils that attend the school come from the immediate surroundings. In recent years enrolment has grown substantially. The present school was opened in 1972, the former school buildings now the community hall. In 2010 an extension was added. We are blessed with large playing surfaces, Astro turf pitch, a Tennis/Basketball court and a grass area, as well as a new added outdoor classroom and a beautiful garden.

Chairperson: Jim McCabe

Principal: Tanya Farrelly

Staff: 4 class teachers, 1 Learning support teacher and an SNA

Pupils: 95 pupils, 48 boys and 47 girls from junior infants to sixth class.

Awards: We have 3 Green Flag Awards, plus 2 Irish Aid Our World awards, Pride of Place awards, and Science Excellence Awards.

Initiatives: Homework Club, Pride of Place, Credit Union Saving Scheme, Music & Tennis lessons and a recently formed Friendship Squad.

Literacy

Preparation for Teaching

Teachers prepare short and long term plans and use their plans to guide teaching and learning. Learning outcomes and teaching approaches, activities and resources are identified in the plans. Curriculum objectives and the school plan are used to devise long and short term plans by teachers. Teachers plan for how they are going to assess the pupils learning.

Teaching Approaches

Teachers employ a wide variety of teaching methodologies appropriate to the development of oral language, reading, writing and digital literacy. Very good use is made of resources including ICT to support pupils in their learning. Teachers differentiate the lessons effectively to cater for the needs and abilities of all pupils. The approaches are outlined in teachers planned notes.

Management of Pupils

Collaboration between class teachers and learning Support teachers takes place on a regular basis and team teaching in class support is being used to support the development of Literacy. A variety of organisational groupings and settings are used in classroom to support Literacy. A positive code of behaviour including an anti-bullying policy is implemented in a fair and consistent way. This is an inclusive school which respects all pupils regardless of background or gender. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of pupils behaviour and learning and they communicate these to them.

Assessment

Teachers employ a large selection of assessment tools to assess learning in Literacy – observations, checklists, curriculum objectives, questioning, self-assessment, classroom tests and standardised tests. A screening test (MIST) is used in Senior Infants to identify children at risk of reading failure. The Drumcondra English Standardised test is administered to all classes from 1st -6th in May each year and results are reported to parents in the end of year report. The Belfield Assessment test is administered to Junior Infants and Micra T to senior infants. NRIT tests are undertaken with 2nd & 5th class each year. The school also avails of the NEPS School Psychologist service. Pupils work includes non-written work and homework is regularly monitored and corrected. Pupils are provided with constructive oral and written feedback.

Learning Environment

The print rich environment is evident around the school. The school provides opportunities for pupils to write for real purposes and audiences using the various genres. The school is decorated with displays of pupils work. There is an agreed approach to the teaching of handwriting (cursive script). The Reading Culture in the school is well cultivated, maintained by a variety of reading activities/initiatives. Children have a variety of learning tools/set of laptops, reading material, this environment is one of encouragement to boost self-esteem.

Pupils engagement in learning

Pupils at all class levels are enabled to engage actively in their learning and the level of pupil interest and participation is high. Pupils are given purposeful and frequent opportunities to engage in independent and collaborative learning. Pupils are enabled to learn skills within the curriculum area. They are suitably challenged in the activities organised for them. Feedback, from pupil Questionnaires show they enjoy reading. Pupils are given additional support as needed. Pupils achieve the expected learning outcomes in lessons.

Attainment of Curriculum Objectives

The overall attainment of pupils with regard to Literacy remains at a high standard in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Primary School Curriculum.

Pupils at risk of underachieving are attaining well and make very good progress. Pupils are able to apply the Knowledge & skills associated with curriculum area independently in a variety of contexts. Pupils enjoy their learning in the curriculum area and are motivated to learn.

Informal assessment is carried out on an ongoing basis by class teachers. Formal assessment in the form of the Drumcondra Reading Tests are carried out in May (1st-6th class). Parents are informed of the outcomes. DES is notified of summary results for 2nd, 4th & 6th class in accordance with requirements.

3) Progress made on previously identified Literacy improvement targets

- There is now a graded reading system throughout the School (Oxford Reading Tree) and training is underway on the Literacy Lift Off programme.
- In 2005 the WSE Report identified a school plan for penmanship (cursive script) which is now in place. Standardised Testing results are now available in one easily accessible document.
- Increased Literacy timetabling has enabled the children to read & write for pleasure (D.E.A.R. – Drop Everything and Read. S.A.W. Stop And Write)
- Training was needed for Building Bridges Strategies and this programme is now in each classroom.
- Samples of Writing genres available.

4) Summary of School Self-Evaluation Findings:

4.1 Strengths

- Attainment levels in Literacy are above national norms, no child scored at/below 2nd percentile.
79% of our pupils score between 51st & 98th percentile
5.8% scored at/above 98th percentile.
- Pupils display a positive attitude towards all aspects of literacy (pupils from 1st -6th class were surveyed and 87% admitted to enjoying reading.
- Pupils use their literacy skills competently in their learning of all curriculum areas.
- Pupils are exposed to a wide variety of reading texts
- Pupils read with fluency
- Parents have been surveyed and are on the whole positive with regard to the development of literacy skills in their child.

- The Parents Association is extremely supportive of the literacy initiative and have provided financial assistance for literacy resources (introduction of Literacy Lift Off).
- Staff are conscious of the importance of CPD, our list of courses completed by staff is updated regularly.
- The Majority of pupils enjoy reading at home.
- Results of Standardised tests reflect the strong literacy focus in the school.

4.2 Areas for Improvement

- Pupils need access to more challenging core texts, differentiation.
- The teaching of the writing process needs to be further developed throughout the school.
- Need for greater use of digital media.
- Improvement in oral language skills.
- Need for targeted intervention Literacy Lift Off.
- The development of vocabulary using a range of tools (dictionary, personal dictionary, etc)

Numeracy

Preparation for Teaching

Teachers prepare short & long term plans to guide teaching & learning. Learning outcomes & teaching approaches, activities & resources are identified in the plans. Expected learning outcomes are clear, relevant & differentiated as necessary to cater for the learning needs & abilities of all pupils. Curriculum objectives and the school plan are used to devise short and long term plans. Teachers plan for how they are going to assess the pupils learning.

Teaching Approaches

Teachers employ a wide variety of teaching methodologies appropriate to the development of numeracy. Lessons are well structured using teacher & pupil questioning, Guided Discovery, Co-operative/collaborative, Talk & Discussion, higher order thinking & Environment based learning. Attention is given to consolidation of the pupils learning at the end of lessons. Learning logs are used. Very good use is made of relevant and necessary resources including ICT. There is progression in the pupils learning in the strands as they move class level. Teachers differentiate the lessons effectively.

Management of pupils

Collaboration between class Teachers & Learning Support Teachers takes place on a regular basis & team teaching in class support is being used effectively. Teachers - pupil and pupil - pupil's interaction are respectful & efforts and achievements are affirmed. A variety of organisational groupings & settings are used in classroom to support Literacy. A positive code of behaviour including an anti-bullying policy is implemented in a fair & consistent way. This is an inclusive school which respects all pupils regardless of background or gender. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of pupils behaviour & learning and they communicate these to them. Pupils contributions & questions are encouraged and respected in the classroom.

Assessment.

The school has a written policy on assessing and reporting on pupils progress. The school policy takes account of curriculum and NCCA guidelines on assessment and the National Literacy Strategy. Relevant assessment practices procedures are identified in the whole school plan for each curriculum. Pupils are involved in assessing their own work, use S.A.L.F. FOLDERS & PORTFOLIOS. Pupils work includes non-written & homework is regularly monitored and corrected. Pupils receive constructive feedback. Standardised tests (Drumcondra Maths) are administered, recorded and reported to the Department as per guidelines. The gathering of information on pupils learning is timely & regular. Assessment information is analysed and used to inform teachers setting of targets and for the school improvement plan to revise and update school improvement targets.

Learning Environment

Concrete materials, posters with mathematical vocabulary and pupils mathematical work are constructively displayed in classrooms to create a mathematics rich environment. Saving is encouraged, the Credit Union Savings Scheme runs each Friday. Pupils have access to ICT and use 'Mathletics' Maths week is also celebrated. Children have comfortable seating & attractive modern classrooms. Achievements are celebrated on the 'Achievement of the Week' board.

Pupils Engagement in Learning

Pupils at all class levels are enabled to engage actively in their learning and the level of pupil interest and participation is high. Pupils are given purposeful and frequent opportunities to engage in independent and collaborative learning. Pupils are suitably challenged in the activities organised for them. Feedback from pupil Questionnaires show they enjoy Maths and are given additional support as needed. Children in Senior classes keep learning logs.

Attainment of Curriculum Objectives.

The overall attainment of pupils with regard to Numeracy remains at a high standard in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Primary School Curriculum. Pupils at a risk of underachieving are attaining well and make very good progress. Pupils enjoy learning and are motivated to learn. Pupils use their knowledge, skills and understanding competently and confidently. They apply these well in the progression from class level to class level.

Progress made on previously identified Numeracy Improvement Targets

- Concrete materials have been purchased and are stored in the resource room clearly labelled
- A strong focus on the introduction and correct use of mathematical language is a feature of most lessons
- Our School participated in Maths week.
- Posters with Maths vocabulary are constructively displayed. Some classrooms have a 'Real Life' Maths table to create a maths rich environment.
- A 'Problem of the Week' initiative has been introduced.
- The R.O.S.E. (read, organise, solve, evaluate) problem solving strategy has been agreed.

Summary of School Self-Evaluation Findings:-

- Attainment levels in Numeracy above national norms, no child scored at/below 2nd percentile.
 - 78.8% of our pupils scored between 51st & 98th percentile
 - 5.6% of our pupils scored at /above 98th percentile.
- Pupils display a positive attitude towards all aspects of numeracy (pupils from 1st -6th class were surveyed) and 86% admitted to enjoying maths.
- Parents have been surveyed and are, on the whole, positive with regard to the development of Numeracy skills in their child.
- Staff are conscious of the importance of CPD and have done many courses in various aspects of maths.

Results of standardised tests reflect the strong numeracy focus in the school.

4.1 Areas for Improvement

- Strategies to support pupils problem solving need to be agreed at whole school level.
- Increasing opportunities for pupils to engage with Maths:-
 - a) Increase the use of Maths in the school environment.
 - b) Creation of Maths trails within and outside the school building.
 - c) Increased use of Maths Games.

- Examine how we can support parents with regard to the content, methodologies and language of Maths – especially topics of subtraction, long division and fractions.
- Examine strategies to provide challenge for more able students in Maths.

Our School has strengths in the following areas with regard to Numeracy:

- Mental Maths is encouraged and given a specific time slot.
- There is an agreed whole school policy on Maths Language and agreed strategies for teaching various Maths topics.
- The school has a good supply of Maths resources centrally located.
- Results of assessments are used to inform teacher planning.