

SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 The focus of the evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning was undertaken with the first years of 2012. Literacy in junior level English was the main focus for the evaluation. A school improvement target of 10% was set across all subjects.

Students were tested on key words and definitions at the end of 1st year (June 2013) and re-tested on the same key words and definitions in Nov 2013 during their second year.

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation

1.2 School context

Sancta Maria College was established by the Sisters of Mercy in 1919 as the first Catholic co-education secondary school in Ireland. Under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST) it is the sole provider of second-level education in the local area and is an integral part of the community. While the original school building has served the school very well, the need for an extension to replace it is fully recognised and work began in that regard more than ten years ago.

The holistic development of students in a caring and affirming school environment is central to the school's Christian inclusive ethos. This caring atmosphere motivates students in developing good interpersonal relationships which promote self-esteem, mutual respect and consideration for others. There are 360 students currently enrolled, drawn from a wide area. A small number of students from local off-shore islands attend the school.

2. Method of procedure

- The students were tested using the Drumcondra standardised test – in order to have an indicator of existing standards and trends. The students standardised test results were analysed by the English dept and Sen department following in-house assessment at Nov and Feb and results were monitored by the English dept, SEN dept, academic monitoring team and year-heads. Concerns were raised by these groups regarding literacy standards . Following this at a staff meeting plenary session it was agreed by all staff to focus on students' understanding of key words and definitions.
- Academic monitoring team = career guidance councillor, SEN co-ordinator, year head, deputy principal and principal – meet each term to review results of all students)
- It was decided that this group would be tested at the end of first year and re-tested in November in second year with an improvement target of 10%.

FINDINGS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Literacy average percentage improvements March 2014

English	10%
Irish	25%
Maths	9%
History	25%
Geography	7.5%
Science	9.3%
Music	19%
Art	10%
French	10%
PE	32.2%
Woodwork	31%
Business Studies	14.2%
Home Economics	26%

School improvement target **10%**

School result: **17.5%**

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

A sample group of 14 students was questioned to survey the learning experience. The following results were noted:

1. Do you have difficulties understanding key words and definitions in subjects?

Yes x 2

No x 1

Sometimes x 11

2. What approaches best help you learn what these words mean

- Repetition usually helps
- Using the word helps very much
- Rhymes sometimes help
- Listen to fast music and keep reading it out to the rhythm of the music
- Write it out rough then neat and read back later
- See it and repeat it very often
- When the subject is made more interesting
- Memorable moments in class i.e. a joke or funny moment related to the subject to keep my attention
- Learning then like learning a poem
- Having the teacher keep the class interesting by talking about an interesting topic
- Using the words in everyday life
- Saying them out loud once and spelling them
- Writing them out in a copy and then reading them after
- Repetition
- Being given a good definition of the word
- Writing it down a few times
- Seeing it a lot
- Repetition and rhymes
- Remembering an easier word which sounds like the word you're learning helps.
- Using the word often in everyday conversation helps
- Rhymes and sayings are very useful for me
- Writing down the word a few times and testing yourself sometimes works and reading sets the word in a more practical situation
- It also helps if you can try and put it in a song
- I would read the word a lot and then try to write it out.
- I would read the word a lot and try to remember it by memory
- I would also try to notice a pattern in the words
- Looking and seeing the word and remembering the page colour or sentence or picture beside it
- Visual
- Looking it up yourself internet or dictionary
- Hearing someone say it with a joke, an event, poster
- Acronyms
- The method where you look, say, cover, write, check
- Something relevant
- Putting it in my own words

- Rhythms and rhyming
- If the teacher is quite enthusiastic, I usually find it easier to learn
- Going over words sometimes helps me
- Watching videos of what we are learning usually helps me
- I read the word and definitions – repetition – over and over until I think I have learned it then I go back a few hours later to see if I still know them .
- I also like to listen to a song and in the test I just think of the song.

Teacher attitude

A sample number of teachers were surveyed to assess teacher attitude.

1. Have you noticed an improvement in students' understanding of key words and definitions?

- Yes. They recognise the terms/key words a lot better now. They use them more frequently in work.
- Yes, they are recalling the words/terms quicker than before
- Can match terms with their definitions
- Yes, students are able to recall key information/concepts orally very well
- Yes I have. The use and re-use of definitions during class time further being reinforced by putting the definitions in poster format on the wall has helped. Students have looked to these definitions whilst completing class exercises.

2. What do you feel could be improved?

- I still feel that the easiness of recall for some students is an issue i.e. they have to think about the terms before using it. Also some are still struggling with the spellings of some of the more difficult terms
- Independent recall with prompting from the teacher.
- Students to be more accurate in recording their responses
- They can match when given 2 lists but need to be more thorough re their written responses.
- Class exercises
- Plenty of practice

3. Any other comments

TEACHERS' PRACTICE

At a Staff meeting held in August 2012, it was decided that a literacy team would be set up.

This team developed a literacy policy in conjunction with the subject departments. Components included:

- Word banks/lists/key words/sequence cards
- Worksheets with questions – learning through games etc...
- Learning days

- Clothes lines of words/images around the room.
- Food pyramid in Home Economics
- Word bingo

It was then decided that a

- Strategy would be developed by the end of the year.
- Learning days would occur between now and the end of the year.

Measuring of strategy:

- Prizes for those who score the highest number of points on learning days.
- Spelling tests based on new words
- Introduce into end of year examination.

It was agreed that 10% of all summer tests for 1st year students in May 2013 would be assigned to measure the strategy looking in particular at definitions of key words in each subject area. It was also agreed that these students would be re-assessed again in November 2013.

CONCLUSIONS

Significant strengths

A target was set of 10% and an overall improvement was gained of 17.5%.

While this was a significant improvement the team felt that the particular year group in question were above average. Therefore a change in target was not felt appropriate for further studies.

Improvements needed

Confusion around the administration was voiced by teachers. A more streamlined approach to the administration of literacy evaluation is needed.

