Sacred Heart Secondary School

Clonakilty

Co. Cork

62170b

School Self-Evaluation Report

June 2014

School Self-Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The Focus of the Evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in Sacred Heart Secondary School was undertaken during the period September 2012 to May 2013. During the evaluation a focus on literacy deficits in students was investigated. Consultation, feedback and surveys informed the direction and focus of the initiative. A Literacy committee was established to direct and to advise on the strategies adopted. The current first year class of 2012-2013 were identified as the study group. Thereafter, the strategies would be adopted by each subsequent year. It was decided that Literacy would be the focus in year 1.

1.2 School Context

Sacred Heart Secondary school is an all-girls secondary school under the trustees of CEIST. Established in 1941 under the guidance of the Sisters of Mercy, Sacred Heart now caters for 525 students. Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate are offered. The school was one of the first to take up the offer of **Transition Year** when the programme became more available in 1984. **Leaving Cert Applied Programme** is offered to students since 1998. It has been a wonderful success for the students who have followed the programme. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme was undertaken in 1994. This is a valuable extra for many students.

The Back to Education Initiative was introduced to allow adult students a second chance in education. This has proven to be a significant milestone in promoting adult education in the area and enabling many to return to work. It now offers a qualification at FETC level 5 in Childcare.

2. The Findings

- Standardised test results in English show that 22% of students in 1st year have a reading age of 15+; 60% students have a reading age of between 11 and 14 and 18% have reading ages of less than 10 years of age. (All percentages are rounded off to nearest percentile.)

- Analysis of standardised test data shows that many average students are progressing to above average, while those in the higher bracket continue to progress and achieve high grades in state examinations.

- Having surveyed 1st years, 59.9% read for pleasure on a regular basis and 72.9% of students have access to newspapers at least once a week.

- Following professional discourse among teaching staff, it is apparent that throughout all classes, there are many students experiencing difficulty writing coherent sentences and errors are being made in spellings and contextual use of subject-specific vocabulary. Teaching staff members agree that more oral and written preliminary work needs to be done to improve this.

- A number of teachers from a wide variety of subject backgrounds partook in a 'Pre-teaching of key words' research study with 1st years. 1.1 and 1.2 were used as focus groups. Teachers involved taught two lessons: lesson one involved pre-teaching key words and lesson two involved teaching words throughout the lesson. 49% of students **strongly agreed** with pre-teaching of key words and 48% **agreed.** Only 3% **disagreed** with the pre-teaching of key words.

Following the first lesson where key words were pre-taught, 87% of students felt confident that they could remember the key words and use them in a sentence. Following the second lesson, where words were not pre-taught, 62% of students felt confident.

All students were happier learning key vocabulary at the beginning of the lesson rather than during the lesson. They cited information-heavy subjects as being particularly conducive to this methodology, for example, Geography, History, Business and Science. They felt that learning vocabulary 'as they went along' would be better suited to English and foreign languages. They also stated that they do not like interrupting the flow of the lesson once the teacher has begun and so learning key words at the beginning would help to prevent such interruption.

The findings on teacher consultation/surveys indicated that there needed to be a focus on;

1. Spelling, with a particular focus on insisting that spelling counts, particularly in exams. A spelling strategy was designed and adopted across all departments.
2. Developing and expanding vocabulary in each subject area.
3. Promoting reading through the increased use of the school library.
4. Promoting literacy through a print-rich environment.
5. Improving both written and oral comprehension.
6. Utilising oral-based assessment in promoting higher oral literacy skills among students.

As part of the consultation, the reading age of each textbook being used was established.

3.   Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets

Improvement Target	Comment
1. A focus on teaching and Learning through the CPD provision of **Differentiated Learning**.	Liz O' Keefe of the PDST, delivered a CPD session to all staff on Differentiated learning to provide ideas and strategies around the effective delivery of differentiated learning in the classroom.
2. Promote the use of **ICT** to assist in the Teaching and Learning process.	The school invested over €100,000 on an integrated ICT system, including a server to enable networking with shared folder facilities, interactive whiteboards and classroom PC's. Teaching and Learning has now a digital platform as an important tool in delivering effective lessons that all students can benefit from.
3. Improve the learning experience in TY through a comprehensive review and restructuring of the **TY curriculum and its assessment.**	The introduction of new modules and subjects to suit the changing profile of the students in TY. Writing skills, cultural studies and Chinese are some of the recent additions to the programme. A credit system, based on the allocation of credits for attendance, course work completion and competencies in various areas, has revolutionized the experience of TY for students and teachers alike.
4. Introduction of additional **assessment progress reports for 6th and 3rd** year students.	Introducing a progress report for all 3rd and 6th years in December.
5. Policy review and formation.	The creation and review of the following key school policies: a)Code of Behaviour Policy b)Anti- Bullying Policy c)Enrolment Policy d) Student Care Policy e) Placement of Student in Class Policy
6. Development of a Virtual Learning Platform. (**EDMODO**)	The development and promotion of EDMODO as the school's virtual learning platform for students and teachers to enhance the learning experience through the utilization of a "social media" site.
7. Academic Tracking of Students	All students in the school are closely monitored through an academic tracking progress system. In total, by the time they complete their Leaving Certificate there are 17 different individual academic results/scores that contribute to the longitudinal monitoring of each student. This data is evaluated at a care team meeting that includes the principal, deputy principal, year heads, S.E.N. coordinator and guidance teacher.
8. Statistical Analysis of the Leaving and Junior Certificate Examination Results.	A comprehensive analysis of the results of students in the state examinations is conducted and compared with the national norms and with statistics from previous years, with a particular focus on English and Maths.

4.1 Our school has strengths in the following areas:

- All students are encouraged to take Higher Level in all subjects. Higher level is the "default level". The number of students taking higher level in all subjects at both Junior and Leaving Certificate is significantly higher than the national norms.

- Students continue to perform above average in state examinations.

- Digital Literacy is strong.

- Oral Literacy is continuously being developed.

- Level of reading for pleasure is high.

- A variety of teaching styles and methodologies are being emphasised and used in the classrooms.

- There is an emphasis on literacy across all departments (where each has its own subject-specific literacy policy).

- D.E.S. pilot testing in Maths and Literacy placed SHSS students much higher against the national norms.

- Existing strengths in literacy were identified in the 2009 PISA report that the school partook in. A summary of the results are presented below.

SHSS compared to the National Average

| | SHSS | | National | |
Characteristic	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Reading Achievement	578	69	496	95
Mathematics achievement	532	64	487	86
Science achievement	568	76	508	97
Digital Reading achievement	566	64	509	87
Non-engagement in reading achievement	19%	NA	42%	NA
Frequency of online reading	-0.62	0.6	0.50	0.9

4.2 The following areas are prioritised for improvement:

Targets	Strategies
1. **To improve the comprehension-based NGRT scores of students by 20% by December 2014.** 2. **To increase 'reading for pleasure' rates by 5%, to 65%, amongst the study group, by October 2014.** 3. **To maintain the high percentage (85%) of students taking Junior Certificate English at higher level.** 4. **To maintain the students' attainment of grades in Junior Certificate English at higher level.** **(Average 2012-2013)** **A: 19%** **B: 42%** **C: 25%** **Footnote:** A measure of high literacy rates amongst students is reflected by two key indicators: a) The high % of students taking English at H.L. for their Junior Certificate. b) The high achievements of students in their Junior Certificate English. Even though English is being used here as a lens through which to examine the literacy standards, this is not to say that level-uptake and attainment across a wide variety of subjects cannot be used as an indicator of literacy.	• Whole-staff C.P.D. and information sessions on effective teaching strategies with particular reference to literacy. These include: -Pre-teaching of vocabulary in *certain* subjects; -Exercises on spelling (Look, Trace, Copy, Cover, Write, Check); -Mnemonics (learning techniques which aid information retention); -Use of strategies such as KWL, BUG (**Box** the Question word, **Underline** the important words, write answer and **Glance** back); -SQ3R; -Determining importance through underlining words and not lines; -Think Aloud. • Information on the above techniques in student diaries as well as an emphasis placed on: -Note-making instead of note-taking; -Determining what I (student) do and do not understand. • 'Spellings count' in house exams; • Encouraging students to use the library and partake in reading leagues and readathons; • Default Strategy for promoting higher level uptake of English at JC and LC level; • Creating a print-rich environment across the school; • Timetabling a literacy class for all TY students; • Scheduling a literacy class for dyslexic students.

Sacred Heart Secondary School SIP Plan

Summary of main strengths as identified in the last SSE	**N/A**
Summary of main areas requiring improvement as identified in last SSE	N/A

Improvement targets

1   **To improve the comprehension-based NGRT scores of students by 20% by December 2014.**

2   **To increase 'reading for pleasure' rates by 5%, to 65%, amongst the study group, by October 2014.**

3   **To maintain the high percentage (85%) of students taking Junior Certificate English at higher level.**

4   **To maintain the students' attainment of grades in Junior Certificate English at higher level:**

(Average 2012-2013)
A: 19%
B: 42%
C: 25%

Footnote:
A measure of high literacy rates amongst students is reflected by two key indicators:

c)   The high % of students taking English at H.L. for their Junior Certificate.
d)   The high achievements of students in their Junior Certificate English.

Even though English is being used here as a lens through which to examine the literacy standards, this is not to say that level-uptake and attainment across a wide variety of subjects cannot be used as an indicator of literacy.

Required actions	• Whole-staff C.P.D. and information sessions on effective teaching strategies with particular reference to literacy. These include: -Pre-teaching of vocabulary in *certain* subjects; -Exercises on spelling (Look, Trace, Copy, Cover, Write, Check); -Mnemonics (learning techniques which aid information retention); -Use of strategies such as KWL, BUG (**Box** the Question word, **Underline** the important words, write answer and **Glance** back); -SQ3R; -Determining importance through underlining words and not lines; -Think Aloud. • Information on the above techniques in student diaries as well as an emphasis placed on: -Note-making instead of note-taking; -Determining what I (student) do and do not understand. • 'Spellings count' in house exams; • Encouraging students to use the library and partake in reading leagues and readathons; • Default Strategy for promoting higher level uptake of English at JC and LC level; • Creating a print-rich environment across the school; • Timetabling a literacy class for all TY students; • Scheduling a literacy class for dyslexic students.
Persons responsible	All staff including the Literacy Committee
Time frame for action	September 2013 onwards
Success criteria	1. Increased performance of students in the NGRT/ESRI literacy tests. 2. Increase reading for pleasure rates by 5% to 65% amongst the study group 3. Maintenance of student uptake of JC English at higher level. 4. Maintenance of high academic grades in JC English.

5. Improved oral literacy.
6. Improved comprehension skills.
7. Improved spelling.
8. Improved ability to articulate opinions in written form.

Review Date	Ongoing with a formal review in May 2015