

School Self Evaluation Report 2013

Introduction

A school self evaluation of teaching and learning in Arles N.S. was undertaken during May and June 2013. During the evaluation teaching and learning in the following curricular areas were evaluated.

- Literacy

Parents were also 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 in Literacy and Numeracy.
- Staff ratings of school plans
- Pupils work – samples, copies, displays.
- Teachers’ observations.
- Parental Questionnaires
- Pupil Questionnaires – second to sixth class.
- The School Strategic Planning framework.

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation.

The School Context.

Patron: Bishop Elect Denis Nulty
Chairperson: Mr. Declan Fenlon
Principal: Ms. Annette Stapleton
Staff: 3 class teachers, 1 Learning support teacher, 1 Shared Resource Teacher and an SNA,
Pupils: 74 pupils, 32 boys and 42 girls, from Junior Infants to Sixth Class

School Mission Statement: We, the staff of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, (Arles National School) endeavour to promote a positive culture of teaching and learning. We will strive for each child to fulfil their potential while respecting difference. We aim to provide equal status of girls and boys and encourage a safe, clean and healthy environment for children and staff . We hope to develop the school as part of a growing community.

Website: www.arlesnationalschool.ie
School Growth: Our school community has grown in recent years.
Awards: We have 5 Green Flag Awards, Active School Flag, Blue Star Flag
Initiatives: Pending and awarded Tidy Schools Award numerous times.
School Choir, Cumann na mBunscol, Laois Education Centre Projects

The Findings of the Evaluation

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. Commercial products are only used with reference to curriculum objectives. 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 media 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.

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 classrooms 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, tests and standardised tests. A screening test (MIST) is used in Senior Infants to identify children at risk of reading failure. The MICRA T English standardised test is administered to all classes from first to sixth in May each year and results are reported to parents in the end of year report. NRIT tests are undertaken with second and fifth class each year.

Learning Environment:

The print rich environment is evident around the school. The school provides opportunities for pupils to write for real purposes and audiences. The school is decorated with displays of pupils work. There is an agreed approach to the teaching of handwriting. The Reading culture in the school is well cultivated and maintained by a variety of reading activities/initiatives throughout the year. Each class has a library.

Pupil's engagement with learning:

Pupils at all class level are actively engaged in their learning and the level of pupil interest and participation is high. Pupils report that they enjoy a variety of activities in English lessons – reading, writing stories and comprehension. Teachers report that some pupils have poor conversational skills, lacking vocabulary or correct language and giving only one word answers.

Parental Involvement:

Parents are very supportive of school Literacy initiatives. The Literacy Plan is available to parents. Parents are encouraged to support their child's reading through listening to reading for homework and paired reading. Parents are encouraged to become involved with book

fairs, visits to the library and paired reading initiatives.

Attainment in Literacy:

Pupils of Arles N.S. have a very good attainment rate in the annual MIST Standardised Tests.

Summary of School Self Evaluation Findings

Our school has strengths in the following areas with regard to Literacy:

- Reading Initiatives to encourage reading – Paired reading, DEAR, Buddy Reading, shared reading and visits to Library.
- New English Curriculum Plan in place
- Commercial products used with reference to Curriculum Objectives
- Good Resources available
- Variety of Assessment tools used
- Print rich environment – lots of sight vocabulary
- Good spiral phonics in junior classes
- Good variety of reading texts used
- Children engage in Listening comprehension activities
- Good variety of reading material available in all Classes
- Diagnostic and standardised tests administered
- The process of writing is fostered and children write for real purposes
- Draft, edit redrafting are at the heart of the writing process
- A variety of writing genres are taught
- Children are given opportunities to write and display poetry
- Good cursive handwriting is fostered from Junior Infants
- There is an agreed source of varied content for spellings and a variety of methods used
- Results of assessments are used to inform teacher planning

The following Areas are prioritized for improvement with regard to Literacy:

- Reading
 - Develop the pupils appreciation, reading fluency and pleasure through the use of a wider diversity of reading material.
 - Continue and expand shared reading and DEAR
 - Increased variety and genres of reading materials for middle & senior classes
 - Structured Phonics programme for middle and senior classes
 - Develop a range of reading comprehension strategies.
 - Teachers will explicitly teach and model comprehension strategies as part of Literacy.
 - Support exceptionally able students through differentiation, accelerated reading,

quizzes, ICT and independent research projects

- Examine ways we can support Parents in terms of reading and the development of comprehension. Include a list of recommended books for pupils to read.
- Comprehension was targeted as it was felt that, while pupils across the board were generally reading at a high level in terms of word reading, sight vocabulary and fluency, their understanding of what they were reading fell short of teacher expectations and this showed up in standardised testing results. Many pupils, whose reading performance in class was regarded as high, did not achieve accordingly in their Micra-T Tests. A Whole-School Approach to the area of Comprehension was felt to be the best way to achieve an improvement and the Principal, Ms Stapleton, attended a seminar on 'Building Bridges of Understanding' by Martin Gleeson of Mary Immaculate College, which details an innovative approach to the subject. She reported to her colleagues at a Staff Meeting and it was decided to adopt the approach from September, 2013. Ms Stapleton gave a report on the seminar. Focus now needs to shift to comprehension skills. The 8 Key strategies detailed were Prediction, Visualisation, Making Connections, Questioning, Inferring, Classifying, Determining Importance and Synthesis. The school purchased the manual and are using the Guided Reading resources to support this initiative also.
- Writing
 - Improve handwriting skills in the school
 - Develop an increased grammatical and spelling accuracy in writing
 - Develop a Whole School Plan for writing.

The following Legislative and regulatory requirements need to be reviewed:

1. Review of Health & Safety Statement
2. Review of Data Protection Policy

The following Curriculum Plans and Policies need to be reviewed over the next 3 years:

- Science
- Visual Arts
- Maths
- Science
- History
- Drama
- SPHE
- Critical Incident Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Swimming Policy