

every child, every chance, every day

St. Joseph's N.S.

Arden View, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

18797W

School Self-Evaluation Report

Evaluation period: September 2012 - June 2013

Report issue date: June 2013

1. **Introduction**

1.1 The focus of the evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in St. Joseph's N.S., Tullamore was undertaken during the period September 2012 – June 2013. During the evaluation, teaching and learning in the following area was evaluated.

- Literacy – focus on reading and comprehension

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

- Analysis of standardised tests 2008-2012
- Analysis of Senior Infant benchmarking results 2011-2012
- Analysis of individual pupil Reading Recovery data 2011-2012
- Teacher questionnaire on comprehension instruction and assessment
- Teacher interview on the Reading Recovery programme extending to Literacy Lift Off
- Parental questionnaire on the Reading Recovery programme
- Pupil questionnaire on attitudes to reading and strategies used

2. School Context

St. Joseph's N.S. is a mixed Junior School with DEIS 2 status. There are currently 356 pupils enrolled. There are 16 mainstream classes, 1 Language unit and 1 unit for pupils with moderate general learning difficulties. There is 1 administrative principal, 25 teachers including 3 learning support teachers, 2 resource teachers and 1 HSCL teacher. There are 2 full time SNAs and 4 part time SNAs.

We implement many initiatives to promote literacy in our school. These include:

- Pyjama party for Infant classes promoting parental reading/bedtime stories
- Junior Infant Story Sacks – in conjunction with HSCL teacher
- Regular visits to school library and visits to town library
- Book Week celebrations
- Author visits
- Storyteller visits
- Write-a-book competitions
- DEAR time
- Participation in Offaly Reading challenge
- Paired reading with Senior School pupils

Structure of Literacy Instruction

In 2007 our first teacher was trained in Reading Recovery. This led to the Literacy Lift Off approach being implemented in Senior Infant classes in 2008. This approach to literacy instruction has since extended to all classes. Teachers received training in First Steps Reading, Writing and Oral language and the First Steps approach is now being implemented throughout

the school. We currently have four staff members trained in Reading Recovery and one link teacher trained in each area of First Steps.

Junior Infants

In Junior Infant classes, pre-reading skills are explicitly taught. Teachers instruct pupils in phonological awareness skills and knowledge of letter names and letter sounds using big books in a shared reading context. In the final term, the Literacy Lift Off format of reading instruction is implemented.

Senior Infants

In the final term of Junior Infants, all children are streamed and placed in four groups according to reading ability. These groups transfer to Senior Infants. During a Literacy Lift Off session children rotate to four work stations:

- Guided reading (Class teacher)
- Word work (SEN teacher)
- Free writing (Parent volunteer)
- Familiar reading (Parent volunteer)

Labelled PM and Oxford reading tree readers are used for literacy instruction. We have a large variety of fiction and non-fiction books from levels 1-25 and sets of novels. Word work is linked to the children's text with no formal phonics scheme being implemented. Writing is linked to the First Steps programme. Children are regularly benchmarked to ensure they are reading at an instructional level. Those children identified as having difficulties in progressing through the reading levels, that meet the age criteria (5y9m-6y6m), complete Reading Recovery assessments. Following these assessments children are then selected for individual instruction on the Reading Recovery programme. In the final term, all children complete the Drumcondra Reading Test. Those children that fail to score 57% then complete the Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy. Based on these results and class teacher recommendations, individual children are targeted for instruction by the SEN team in 1st class.

1st and 2nd classes

The Literacy Lift Off groups transfer to 1st class and class teachers do whole class instruction and small group guided reading instruction. Targeted children are withdrawn for instruction by the SEN team. All children are benchmarked regularly to monitor progress. In the final term of 1st class children complete the Drumcondra Primary Reading Test and based on these results and class teacher recommendations, individual children are targeted for instruction by the SEN team in 2nd class. The same instructional format is implemented in 2nd classes.

2. The findings

Theme: Learner Outcomes

Sub-theme : Attainment of curriculum objectives

Standardised tests:

- Drumcondra Primary Reading Test 2nd class

In 2008 27% of children scored a sten of 1-3. In 2012 this figure had dropped to 18%.

In 2008, 17% of children scored a sten of 7-10. In 2012 this figure had increased to 35%.

- In 2012 48% of pupils are performing above average in standardised tests with 24% of pupils scoring above the 80th percentile. 6% of pupils are performing below the 16th percentile.
- Tests indicate no discrepancy between pupil scores in reading vocabulary and reading comprehension.
- In Senior Infants, pupils' average benchmark in 2011 was 11.3 and in 2012 was 11.2. Average recommended benchmark is 12.
- Reading recovery data identified that on entering the programme children had an average benchmark of 1. On leaving, following a 20 week programme, the average was 18 and after a six month follow-up had increased to 20.

Teacher questionnaires and Teacher interview

- 95% of teachers work on discrete comprehension either on a weekly or daily basis. 89% of these teachers model strategies to pupils regularly. 63% use comprehension prompt cards with 83% finding these useful. 70% of teachers regularly complete reading tasks with pupils. 89% of teachers have read the pupils' text prior to comprehension instruction
- In assessing comprehension, 53% of teachers use PM benchmarking assessments. 47% use read a text and answer questions. Other resources used include First Steps comprehension activities, pupils' verbal responses and reading tasks. 52% of teachers feel that standardised tests accurately reflect pupils' ability. 32% of teachers feel such tests do not assess oral comprehension. Only 11% of teachers are aware of our school's overall results in comparison to national norms.
- The teacher interview revealed many benefits to the Literacy Lift Off method of instruction. The teacher felt that this method ensures all children are reading at their own level, they are exposed to a wide variety of texts and children are motivated to progress in

reading. It allows good linkage between reading, writing and word work and allows for teachers to easily monitor pupil progression. The teacher felt that our reading instruction is now very pupil focused.

Pupil questionnaire

1st and 2nd class pupils completed a questionnaire identifying their attitudes to reading and strategies they used to aid reading.

- 85% of pupils stated that they like to read a lot with 15% stating they don't mind. 68% of pupils understand what they are reading better when they read silently. 10% of pupils like someone to read to them to help them understand. 70% of pupils stated they like to read aloud.
- Pupils identified some skills that make good readers. 25% stated that practice improves reading. 35% felt that the ability to use expression is a skill associated with good reading. Other skills identified are knowing words, understanding your reading and paying attention to punctuation marks.
- The pupils identified many strategies they use when they are reading. 35% identified re-reading, sounding out and chunking as strategies they use. Other strategies identified were blending, looking at the picture and reading on.

Parental questionnaire

Parents of pupils who had completed the Reading Recovery programme completed a questionnaire asking them to assess the effectiveness of the programme.

All parents felt the programme had been a very positive experience for their child. Changes identified were:

- Improved confidence
- Gaining of skills to aid reading
- Choosing to read aloud

One parent stated "Phonics simply didn't work for my child. Reading Recovery found what worked".

Parents identified the homework associated with Reading Recovery as a positive link between school and home. Parents felt that homework was very targeted and suitable for the child to complete independently. They were enabled to identify improvements in their child's reading progress.

3. Progress made on previously identified targets

N/A for year one as SIP not in place yet.

4. Summary of School Self-Evaluation

Our school has strengths in the following areas.

Attainment of Curriculum objectives:

- Standardised test scores have improved significantly in the period 2008-2012. These results are underpinned by a progressive development of key skills involved in literacy instruction as the child moves through our school. Our standardised test scores are now above targets for National norms
- Reading recovery has proven a very successful intervention for targeted pupils with benchmark results revealing rapid progression for pupils in their reading ability.

Teaching approaches:

- Teachers employ a wide variety of teaching methodologies appropriate to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Our staff is highly trained in the areas of Reading Recovery, Literacy Lift off and First steps. Expertise and knowledge are shared and team-teaching/in-class support is utilised to support literacy development.
- Teachers are consistent in their modelling and instruction of comprehension strategies. First Steps reading strategies are taught at all levels and progressed through the school.
- Literacy Lift-Off and guided reading instruction ensure that literacy instruction is targeted to the needs of the individual child. Children's progression in reading is easily monitored and children are now motivated to read our wide variety of books.

Pupils' engagement with learning

- Pupils are actively engaged in literacy lessons and the level of pupil interest and participation is very high. Pupils report that they enjoy reading and can identify skills of a good reader. They can also identify specific strategies they use to aid their comprehension.

Parental involvement

- Parents are very supportive of our school literacy initiatives. They are actively involved in our initiatives including Pyjama party, Junior infant story sacks and Literacy Lift Off volunteers. They identified the Reading Recovery programme as very successful for their children. They identified homework as a positive link between school and home and a good method of monitoring their child's progress in reading.

The following areas are prioritised for improvement:

Assessment:

- Teachers are not satisfied that our standardised tests accurately reflect pupils' comprehension abilities. Many methods of assessment are being used by teachers. Methods of assessment need to be agreed at whole school level.
- Teachers are unaware of our pupils' performance on standardised tests in comparison to national norms. These results need to be shared at whole school level.

Resources:

- Junior Infants require more variety of texts to be used during Literacy Lift Off sessions. These should include both fiction and non-fiction titles.
- Our town library is a valuable resource. To increase our variety of books in our school library we need to use our town library. Regular visits to the town library by classes would encourage pupils to visit.

Pupil enjoyment of reading

- Pupils at 1st and 2nd class level have identified that they enjoy reading aloud. These pupils could read aloud to Junior classes during paired reading sessions.