

**St. Louis Secondary School  
Carrickmacross**

**School Self-Evaluation Report  
Literacy, Numeracy and Improving teaching and learning**

This School Self-Evaluation Report is based on the School Self-Evaluation research findings at the end of academic year 2017/2018 into continuous *Literacy promotion* and *Numeracy promotion and improving Teaching and Learning*.

**Introduction:**

As per SSE guidelines 2016-2020, *Literacy* and *Numeracy* continue to be embedded practices across the curriculum with regular review.

Additionally, for the academic year 2017/2018 investigative and tentative approaches towards group work and team teaching were taken.

**Strengths identified in the School Self-Evaluation Report:**

**LITERACY:**

- Much good practice continues to exist in promoting literacy and the literacy group co-ordinated by Ms. P. O'Reilly continues to carry out great work in promoting literacy among the student body and within a classroom context. (See appendix 1)
- Subject teachers incorporated a key word test into in-house Christmas and Summer Examinations. This key word test was given to all 1<sup>st</sup> year students. This was not just a spelling test, it required students to know the context in which the key word should be used e.g. cloze text.
- DEAR week (twice per annum) continues to be a significant event on the academic calendar.
- The senior prefects have been trained in using the library system and continue to offer opening times during lunch break from Monday to Thursday to junior students.
- Work has begun on clearing out the digital library. Fundraising was undertaken by the parent's association in purchasing equipment for this new venture.
- After retesting a random sample of first years, it was found that student scores for reading and spelling fell within the average range.
- After conducting a survey with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> year students (234 students), it was found that
  - **49% like reading a little.**
  - **84.6% consider themselves to be good at reading.**
  - **48.5% like writing very much.**
  - **46.5% believe they are good at writing.**

- **52.9% agree that teachers provide them with opportunities to use new vocabulary in class.**
- After conducting a survey with staff (15 responses), it was found that
  - **61.5% believe students contribute effectively and appropriately to discussions with 23% saying fair to same question.**
  - **61.5% believe students are good at presenting information orally both clearly and effectively while 38.5% felt students were fair at this.**
  - **61.5% believe students are good at understanding, collating, summarizing, applying and evaluating information from different pieces of text while 38.5 % answered fair to this statement.**
  - **58.3% believe that their students are good at discussing similarities and differences between different pieces of text, 33.3% answered fair to this question.**
  - **53.8% stated students were good at making effective use of subject specific vocabulary in their written work, 38.5% answered fair.**
  - **46.2 % felt students were good at critically evaluating information found using digital sources.**
  - **61.5% stated they were good at creating subject specific presentations using digital media.**

### Numeracy

- Establishing a numeracy group at the beginning of each academic year continues to be a vital part of the promotion of numeracy across all areas of school life. This group is coordinated by Ms. R. Marron. A wide range of activities to promote numeracy throughout the school have been organised over the course of the year. (See appendix 2)
- Numeracy week has now become a set week on the school calendar.
- 1<sup>st</sup> year students sit common exams throughout all 1<sup>st</sup> year which helps with the banding process from 2<sup>nd</sup> year on.
- Maths teachers were surveyed and it was reported that all 1<sup>st</sup> year students use the consistent approach to calculating percentages and calculate the percentage mark for their tests.
- A random sample of twenty-five 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> years were retested in April 2018 using the WRAT IV Maths test. The average scores all fell within the average range.
- A new Maths entrance test was administered to incoming first years. This PDST devised exam was reviewed by the Maths Department in the school before the decision was taken to use the test. The Maths Department were very positive as they felt it would test students on relevant areas of the Maths curriculum and provide a statistical breakdown of Maths areas per student. It identifies area/areas that students may be having difficulty with. Teachers will be made aware of the areas of difficulty and can work on these areas across all subjects. (See SIP for targets). Incoming 1<sup>st</sup> year students will be re-tested in April 2019 using the same exam and comparisons will then be made.

### Improving Teaching and learning

- In-house CPD was given on group work in September 2017. Teachers were provided with packs for their class room and encouraged to use group work within some of their lessons. Feedback was requested and gathered in a survey of all staff at the end of the academic year.

From this survey (15 responses) it was reported that:

- Group work was viewed very positively with 93% stating that they do use it within their subject.
- 53% use group work at least twice a month.
- Comments about benefits – Weaker students benefit; can make a lesson more memorable; confidence grows; be able to work as part of team; great for revision; will ask questions in a group quicker than in front of a big class.
- Examples of how group work is used – Placemat system is very effective allows all students to participate fully; good for pre-teaching a topic to find out what they know and post-teaching a topic to gauge what has been learnt and where there may be gaps; oral exam preparation; planning investigations/experiments; revision of topics where each group is given one aspect and must report back to the other groups; think, pair and share.

Responses to team teaching question:

- 60% of those surveyed said they would be willing to engage in team teaching.
  - 20% said they would not.
  - 20% responded with N/A.
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- Four staff member attended session 1 of the Instructional Leadership Programme run by ETBI.
  - A teaching and learning committee was initiated and established in the school by these teachers to encourage sharing of resources and methodologies. 15 teachers have joined this committee.
  - A section on teaching and learning will be included on the agenda for all staff meetings.

### **Areas identified in the School Self Evaluation Report requiring improvement:**

#### LITERACY:

- After conducting a survey with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> year students it was found that
  - **39.2% feel they don't get the opportunity to read in school.**
  - **35% don't like reading outside school.**
  - **37.2% read less than an hour a week and 21.8% don't read at all outside school.**

- 17.5% don't read any books in a month and 22.2% read less than one book per month.
- 49.3% are not at all confident when speaking aloud in class.
- 36.2% state that they are unable to search what they are looking for using the internet.
- 50% agree that they can use digital media to create their own texts/presentations.
- 40.3% report that they can use ICT appropriately and responsibly.

**General comments: Requests by students for:**

**more groupwork,  
more use of computers for class,  
assistance for students reading aloud within a class.**

- After conducting a survey with staff, it was found that
  - 46.2% feel that students are fair at making notes and summarizing ideas through written work.
  - 7.7% said students were poor at making use of subject specific vocabulary in their written work.
  - 53.8% reported students to be fair at critically evaluating information found using digital sources.
  - 15.4% stated they were fair at creating subject specific presentations using digital media.
  - Comments in relation to oral work – Some are very good while others are very shy and reluctant to share information, some rarely contribute to discussions, not comfortable with it, being destroyed by Americanisms and phone-speak.
  - Comments in relation to reading – literacy levels low, very small percentage count reading as a hobby and this comes against them in school.

#### **NUMERACY:**

- The SSE target of improving 1<sup>st</sup> year students understanding of how mathematical terms may have different meanings in different subjects/contexts posed to be difficult for some teachers. There was failure in some regards to meet this target. Feedback was given informally to the SSE coordinator and the Principal throughout this academic year. It highlights the issue that numeracy is still viewed by some subject teachers as being a standalone topic that is only related to certain subject areas and not to others. The Principal did address this during the year and organised CPD from a PDST advisor which aimed to give staff strategies to help them embed numeracy practices within subject contexts. It is evident that, as a school, we need to continue to develop numeracy links with all subject areas and offer support and advice to teachers who are struggling with this.
- The SSE Coordinator met with the Maths Department Coordinator and she confirmed that Maths teachers are consistent in using mathematical terms relating

to particular topics to enable students to develop an understanding of how these terms may be used interchangeably. It was also confirmed, from this meeting, that students are also using a consistent approach for calculating percentages and working out the percentages of their own tests.

- New Maths Entrance test outlined the following 3 areas that students had difficulty with; Problem solving, VAT/percentages & probability

### **Whole School Initiatives:**

Based on the report findings for 2017-2018, we plan to implement the following whole school initiatives for the coming academic year:

#### **Literacy**

- Promoting reading for enjoyment among students. Classes will continue to be encouraged to go to the library to read and to borrow books. Students will be encouraged to review books both in writing and orally in class.
- Literacy group will organise a Readathon for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Years in the weeks leading up to DEAR week. Record sheets will be created for all students and they will be collected during DEAR week and prizes will be awarded to those who have read most books.
- Transition Year Students will continue to be provided with a dedicated library period where they can borrow/renew books and read for pleasure.
- First year students will have a dedicated library class once a week
- All teachers and students will continue to engage in DEAR week twice yearly.
- The school will seek to improve oral skills through public speaking and debating. Competitions will facilitate this as both junior and senior level.
- The school will seek to encourage creative writing and will publish students work on the school website. The literacy group will run essay writing competitions for first years and encourage a high standard of written work.
- The literacy group will continue to promote literacy skills through displays on the literacy landing and a spelling bee competition for first years
- The school library and the digital library has been updated and senior prefects will continue to be trained in using the library system. They will continue to offer opening times during the lunchbreak to junior students. Students will be encouraged to use the digital library with during their library period (if applicable or during lunchtime).
- We endeavour to provide some oral workshops for Junior Cycle students in preparation for their CBA oral presentations. It is hoped that these workshops will improve student's skills in public speaking and improve confidence in this area.

- Well-being and managing stress/anxiety – each year group will have one period per week which will focus on developing strategies to help them cope with stress and anxiety. 1<sup>st</sup> years will take part in the Relax Kids programme during induction days at the beginning of the year. It is hoped that 3<sup>rd</sup> years will also have the opportunity to take part in the same programme in the run up to their mock examinations.
- The Digital library will be ready for September 2018. Teachers can book to bring their class.
- Use of computers in the classroom – by September 2018 all but a few teachers will have a Surface Pro, screen beams and 15 staff have been trained as digital leaders using the surface pro. The remainder of the staff will receive in-house training during the academic year 2018/19.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> years have ICT periods on their timetable.
- The computer rooms will be maintained over the summer months and all repairs carried out.
- The school technician is setting up Office 365 accounts for all students this will allow for the sharing of class notes, homework to be submitted digitally etc.
- CPD opportunities for ICT courses will displayed on the notice board in the staffroom and inhouse training will be provided by the Digital Leaders.
- Fundraising was undertaken during the year and two class sets of chrome books (10 per class) will be purchased with the money. This will improve the digital literacy in the school.

### **Numeracy**

- The numeracy group will continue to promote numeracy using the numeracy noticeboard and by organising extracurricular activities such as countdown.
- The common approach to calculating percentages will continue to be used and staff will be encouraged to use it.
- Work will continue within subject Departments on making students aware of mathematical terms that could be used within their subject area and display these on the numeracy notice board in each classroom.
- Maths teachers will display key mathematical terms and explain appropriately. They will encourage students to use these terms interchangeably between topics.
- Work by all subject departments on problem solving and VAT/percentages, & probability, where applicable, per Maths entrance test (See SIP).

### **Improving Teaching and Learning**

- CPD was given on Group work in September 2017. There will be a continuation of the development of group work throughout the school year and this will be facilitated by the newly established teaching and learning committee.

- 60 % of teachers surveyed indicated that they would be interested in participating in team teaching. It is envisaged that CPD on team teaching will also be delivered during this academic year with the view to having some team teaching by the year end.

### **Subject Based Initiatives:**

Each subject department in the school will continue to devote meeting time to the promotion of literacy and numeracy standards within its own subject. Each subject plan will contain a section on these topics. Among the initiatives undertaken will be the following:

1. Displaying key words and subject specific terms/jargon on wall charts or on the whiteboard in relation to literacy and numeracy.
2. Writing new or difficult words on the whiteboard during a lesson.
3. Encouraging students to pronounce technical terms or complex words correctly.
4. Developing listening and oral skills among students.
5. Differentiating both by task and outcome for varying standards of literacy among students.
6. Each classroom will have a numeracy noticeboard to improve numerical visibility within the classroom

**This information will be communicated to all subject teachers again at the beginning of this academic year.**

### **Measurements and Evaluations:**

- Towards the end of the academic year 2018/19, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> years will be re-surveyed to assess progress made in the area of literacy.
- In April 2019, a random sample of first year students will be retested using literacy standardised tests. It is hoped that with continuous emphasis on literacy both reading and spelling scores will fall into the high average range. It is also hoped that student's standards in the NGRT II will remain constant or improve.
- Also in April 2019 the same random sample, of 1<sup>st</sup> years will be retested using the PDST Maths test. It is also hoped that student's standards in the 3 areas that have been identified as being weak in the entrance test will have improved with intervention and support across all curricular subjects in these areas
- First year students and Maths teachers will complete a numeracy questionnaire.
- Surveys will be conducted among staff, students and parents to identify current strengths and areas for improvement.
- An evaluation will be carried out to assess the school wide initiative on the use of group work and team teaching. Further CPD may be given as deemed necessary.

The School Improvement Plan will be reviewed in May 2019.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Report from TY Literacy group 2017/2018**

One of the many fantastic opportunities in Transition Year of St Louis Secondary School included being a member of the Literacy Committee. This was a team of seventeen dedicated TY students and their teacher whose sole aim was to promote literacy and reading in our school.

The Literacy Group organised many activities and initiatives to achieve their goal. One of the most successful initiatives was DEAR Week, where students Dropped Everything And Read their favourite book each day for up to forty minutes. DEAR Week was about promoting literacy throughout our school and encouraging students to read more. Various activities were organised for students during this time; such as 'Booktasting', 'Starbooks', 'Escape the Library' and much more.

Aside from DEAR Week, Various competitions were held within our school. These included our First and Second Years designing the door of their classroom to the theme of a character or scene from their favourite book or play. This was greeted very enthusiastically by our girls!

Finally, the literacy group were also involved in updating the literacy noticeboard located in our school. We had great fun drawing our favourite book characters and making paper flowers to make sure our board caught everyone's attention! Our 'Poetree" was placed beside the notice board. This was a small tree on which students hung leaves with either an original or their favourite quote or poem.

Overall, the Literacy Group was hugely beneficial to both its members, and our school community and our Louis girls are now aware that reading can actually be great fun! Reading can give you the power to be whomever you want. To quote Dr. Seuss, 'The more that you read, the more that you'll know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go'.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Report from TY Numeracy Group**

Our school set up a Numeracy Group this year to promote numeracy in our school and to show how important numbers and maths are in everyday life. The Numeracy Group completed many tasks and activities to achieve this aim.

As part of this group we made every classroom in our school numeracy friendly by placing clocks, lists of emergency numbers, lists of roman numerals in all the classroom.

We also set out to organise an action packed Maths week to show how fun and useful maths/numeracy can be. This included Maths treasure hunts, Maths quizzes, Daily Maths puzzles, and Maths games for all students and teachers to enjoy.

The biggest project we undertook was to number every door in our school to make it easier to find your way around, especially for new students.

Along with many other projects such as designing all the Maths teacher's doors and updating the numeracy notice board on a regular basis, the numeracy group succeeded in making the school number friendly.