OUR SELF-EVALUATION REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In the last year, we have looked at teaching and learning in our school to find out what we are doing well. This is what we discovered:

Because students often do not approach academic tasks in a planful, strategic manner. They might lack knowledge of an appropriate strategy, or they might make use of inappropriate or ineffective ones. Whatever the case, the result is that they often perform poorly on academic tasks or fail to complete them in a timely manner, if at all. Therefore, students need to be explicitly taught how to strategically approach academic tasks in order to gain and use information effectively. In other words, they need to be taught effective study strategies, often referred to as study skills. The science of learning plan below lists several study skills strategies that can help students address and tackle academic demands in a more effective, planful manner.

Oral Literacy

At its most basic level, oral language is about communicating with other people. It involves a process of utilising thinking, knowledge and skills in order to speak and listen effectively. As such, it is central to the lives of all people.

Oral language permeates every facet of the primary school curriculum. The development of oral language is given an importance as great as that of reading and writing, at every level, in the curriculum. It has an equal weighting with them in the integrated language process.

School Self –Evaluation process which is underway in Cashel Community School. The SSE is being conducted and directed by the existing school development planning committee. The SSE process will focus on improving standards of Literacy, Numeracy and Teaching and Learning.

A number of parental surveys have been electronically conducted to access trends and attitudes to numeracy. Similarly a staff survey is being developed to attain teacher’s perspectives towards numeracy within their curriculum.
This is what we did to find out what we were doing well, and what we could do better:

Survey Teachers.
Student Observation
Parental Feedback.
Study Skills plan with Junior Cycle /developed by the Guidance Team.
Study Skills plan with Senior Cycle /delivered by external expert.
Review Homework policy.
Numeracy, Literacy and Teaching and Learning (SIP) (Differentiated Teaching/Assessment for Learning (AFL)/Science Dept. collected the 2nd Year Science projects for display.
Raising awareness/Numeracy team launch History Timeline
Blooms Taxonomy signage to be displayed in each classroom.
In-house review system
  • Committees
  • Teacher survey/Planning and resource tool
  • Programme review
  • Focused priority review

The Principals report also provided details on a series of initiatives which are currently running or planned to promote Differentiated teaching and Learning, standards of Literacy and Numeracy.

Management wished to acknowledge the great effort from students and teachers with the 2nd Yr. Science Projects this term. The standard and presentation of the projects and the array of chosen topics was to be admired. Indeed many of the parents and incoming students commented favourably on the displays and content on the Saturday morning before the entrance assessments. In addition, the displays provided a welcoming educational environment and a positive platform for your subject.
This is what we are now going to work on:

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“Perhaps one of the most important skills students need to learn is how to learn”. Sturomski, 1997

Although effective study skills strategies are critical for academic success, for many reasons students are seldom taught them. Perhaps chief among these reasons is simply that teachers assume students already possess such skills. For this reason, study skills instruction improves the academic outcomes of all students.

How the teachers effectively engaged in teaching study skills strategies?

If students are to succeed academically, they must be able to use different types of study skills strategies (e.g., comprehension strategies, note-taking). However, students need to be explicitly taught specific study skills strategies as well as when, where, and how to use them. When the student is able to use a strategy fluently, a student no longer has to use his working memory to recall the steps of the strategy at the same time he is processing the information being learned. To make sure that the student learns to use a study skills strategy in an automatic or fluent manner, the teacher needs to use strategy instruction, instruction designed to teach students the elements or steps for implementing strategies successfully.

- **Explicit instruction**: Teach the specific steps of a strategy and also discuss how, when, where, and why to use the strategy
- **Modelling**: Demonstrate, while thinking aloud, how the strategy is used
- **Guided practice**: Provide ample opportunities for students to practice the strategy, making sure to offer guidance and corrective feedback
- **Independent practice**: Allow students to use the strategy independently and continue to monitor performance and provide corrective feedback
- **Self-regulation strategies**: Encourage students to be self-directed in their learning by teaching them to use strategies such as self-monitoring and goal-setting
- **Maintenance and generalization**: Incorporate activities that encourage students to continue to use the strategy and to use it in other settings
Increase vocabulary,

Asking open ended questions (questions in which there is no right or wrong answer and to which the adult does not “know” the answer) helps teachers assess children’s comprehension but also helps them learn more vocabulary words.

A very important consideration in using any questioning technique is the “wait time” given to children as they formulate their response. In addition to giving children ample time to formulate answers, how teachers respond at that point can encourage or discourage future participation in discussions.

Naturally, the ability to listen is also a key component in learning. It is the way students take in information through hearing and interpret that information. Students can be taught to be good listeners. A primary way of helping students participate as listeners and speakers in conversations is for teachers to model good listening and speaking techniques themselves.

Oral Reports

Increase the opportunity for Oral Reports in our classrooms to give students the experience in selecting and organising information that will suit specific purposes, situations and audiences. Reports can be planned such as reporting on a project (1st year Business project). Oral reports will be based on a shared focus of interest being studied at that particular point in time.

“Narratives help students to connect what is happening in the classroom with the real world; they provide a way of understanding, organising and communicating experiences” (Ewing and Simmons, 2004).

These are the non-verbal behaviours we hope to work on

Use of voice: The use of intonation and pauses that convey meaning and attitude

Volume: Volume depends on the needs of the situation, purpose and audience. The use of varying volume will help to create emphasis or drama when recounting events, telling a story or persuading an audience.

Pronunciation: Pronunciation refers to the way words are said. Some students may have difficulty in pronouncing the sounds in some words and will benefit from hearing those words modelled in meaningful contexts. Pronunciation varies across regions. It is important that pupils know the accepted pronunciation of words in Standard English.

Proximity: Proximity is the amount of personal space between people who are talking. The relationship between them, their personalities, and their culture or whether the situation is personal, social or public will all affect the amount of proximity needed

Eye contact: Eye contact is the use of the eyes or gaze in face to face communication. The level of eye contact often depends on the relationship between the communicators and affects both the speaker and the listener
This is what you can do to help:

Develop a whole school study skill culture

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Provide platforms and vehicles to promote and encourage active participation

Promote all the highlighted skills and plans in the Students Record Book 2017/18
Here is some information about how we are carrying out our work and about what the Department of Education and Skills requires us to do.

**School time and holidays**

The Department requires all post-primary schools to have **167 school days** each year, and a **28-hour school week**.

This year we had 167 school days, from 30/08/2016 to 02/16/2017. Our school week is 28 hours.


The Department sets out a **standardised school year and school holidays**. This year we took all our school holidays within the permitted time. YES

The Department sets out arrangements for **parent/teacher meetings and staff meetings**. This year we had 5 parent/teacher meetings and 3 staff meetings, all in line with the Department’s regulations.

**Looking after the children in our school**

The Department requires schools to follow the **Child Protection Procedures** it has set down.

Our board of management has agreed in writing to do this. YES

All teachers know about the **Procedures** and we have told all parents about them and how we follow them. YES

Our Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is John Gallagher

and our Deputy DLP is Margaret Moore

**Enrolment and attendance**

The Department requires schools to have and publish an admissions policy, to record and report attendance accurately, and to encourage high attendance and participation.

We have an admissions policy and it is published. YES

We reviewed and update our admissions policy on: 28/06/2016

We keep accurate attendance records and report them as required. YES

We encourage high attendance in the following ways:

Developed a School attendance strategy and policy
The aims of the attendance policy in Cashel Community School are to:

- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
- Develop links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identify and remove obstacles to school attendance and offer support to students who need it.
- Highlight the need to keep good records of attendance
- Develop and encourage more parental responsibility regarding attendance.

*Non-attendance is lower if teaching and learning are personalised, if students feel “missed” and if students like to be at school.*

“Good attendance is a habit learnt”

NEWB report 2008

All of the school initiatives in relation to school attendance are outlined in a detail Attendance Policy and supported by the Attendance Officer/Whole Staff/Parents and EWO.

This is how you can help:

**Develop Parental Responsibility**

It is well documented that the culture of good attendance is fostered initially in the home through parental attitudes to schools and education. It is imperative that early patterns of nonattendance are acted on with appropriate interventions. Cross school and cross service co-operation is vital to encourage attendance. Open communication between school and parents is encouraged in our school.

Parents are asked to make regular checks on student’s attendance by speaking about it at parent teacher meetings, checking it on term reports, contacting school when necessary and being open to communication from school about attendance issues.
PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

Subject teachers take registration using Facility E-portal at the start of each lesson.

The class tutor monitors and checks absences during the week and especially during Pastoral Care time on Monday at 1.45pm. During Pastoral Care time (1.45pm on Monday) the Class Tutor will endeavour to match notes to days absent. Explained absences are entered into Facility Eportal. Notes are sought for all absences.

The Class Tutor will notify Year Heads of concerns about student’s absences and emerging patterns. Students with 3-5 days unexplained absences will be referred.

The Year Head of each year group tracks the attendance records of the students on a weekly basis.

This helps to identify, at an early stage, students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.

Students who reach 5-7 unexplained absences are referred by the Year Head to the Attendance Officer, Mr. T.J.Quinn

The Attendance Officer meets with the students who are referred to encourage them to attend. The Attendance Officer will detail to the student the notes that are required. An informal chat is usually the initial step taken with further monitoring of the students attendance afterwards.

Further absences will result in one or more of the following actions

1. Letters and/or phone calls home
2. Interview by Attendance Officer
3. Student and/or parents invited to fill out the Questionnaire on Attendance

The Attendance Officer obtains a report from Facility Eportal at regular intervals, usually once a week, showing the list of students who have been absent for over a certain number of days.

The Attendance Officer will provide attendance workshops to all of the first year classes in 2016/17
COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Parents are routinely informed of their son/daughter’s attendance and punctuality record through the mid-term and mock examination reports.

A letter L1 is sent to parents/guardians once a student has been absent in excess of 5 days (Appendix 1) and again when a student is absent in excess of 10 days L2 is sent (Appendix II).

Individual subject teachers can track a student’s attendance for their given subject using Facility E-portal and are encouraged to contact a parent/guardian if concern arises about absenteeism for a particular subject.

When a Year Head has a specific concern about an individual student he/she may arrange a meeting with parents/guardians.

When a Class Tutor or Year Head notes that a student has not presented signed notes explaining his/her absences to the office, the Year Head will contact the parents/guardians bringing their attention to the matter and requesting that explanations be presented.

Teachers have access to the attendance records of all students through the use of Facility E-portal.

Teachers can access the specific attendance record for each of their teaching groups using Facility E-portal.

If information is received from parents in relation to a student’s absence, teachers are notified of this through the noticeboard in the staff room or through regular updates distributed to staff by the Attendance Officer.

Positive behaviour for a happy school

The Department requires schools to have a code of behaviour, and asks us to consult parents and students about it. We do this. YES

Our code of behaviour describes and supports positive behaviour. YES

We have a very clear and high-profile anti-bullying policy in our school. YES