

Cashel Community School
Our Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan 2018/19



1. Introduction

This document records the outcomes of our last improvement plan, the findings of this self-evaluation, and our current improvement plan, including targets and the actions we will implement to meet the targets.

1.1 Outcomes of our last improvement plan from Sept 2017 to June 2018

The highlighting of an appropriate strategy towards the development of a student's learning skills was initiated; students have been explicitly taught how to strategically approach effective study strategies. The *science of learning* plan has been promoted within the entire school body.

The concept of addressing *oral literacy* in the classroom on a practical bases has commenced. The development of oral language is given an importance as great as that of reading and writing, in the curriculum.

The initiatives championed have allowed students the opportunity to express their *learning styles*. The students have showed improved teamwork, research and presentation skills. Whilst creating excellent outreach initiatives to local businesses in the community.

Teachers have begun to *collectively plan* for learning activities that enable students to make a more meaningful and challenging connections between learning environments.

1.2 The focus of this evaluation

Teaching & Learning Practice: We are continuing with the consolidating and reviewing the pedagogies and methodologies associated with developing a conscious culture of *differentiated teaching* within our classrooms which we as a school community undertook during the period *September 2016* to June 2018.

Engagement in Learning: In addition the student practices that had been developed in 2016 /18 to raise awareness of the Science of Learning will continued to be reinforced in the classroom and communicated to the all stakeholders in our community. The focus this year will be to develop the research and design aspects of this programme thereby enhancing student's higher cognitive engagement, analysis and evaluation skills. It is envisage these initiatives will promote and nurture student self-directed learning whilst complementing and extending opportunities for students to actively participate in differentiated learning experiences. Further light will be shed on an emphasis on teachers working with each other to support student learning needs during these activities.

Formative Assessment Practices: It is planned to be involved in the implementation of next year's focus on SSE, which is within the area of AFL. A selected action group has explored aspects of AFL under the umbrella structure of the Forbrait programmes action learning network. This has laid the foundation for a whole school collectively developed plan that promotes the development of teachers oral and written feedback to students.

2.1 This is effective / very effective practice in our school

List the main strengths of the school in teaching and learning.

The Inspectorate found during its last 4 visits to the school that in general there was a very high level of class preparation, with a large amount of good practice in operation.

Teaching & Learning

Highly Effective Teaching & Learning

1. Learning intentions well defined. Teachers deliver highly effective instruction which is directed at eliciting deep student engagement. Teachers skilfully manage their own input to optimise student participation and response.
2. Good supportive material and resources were incorporated into the lessons (Visual, slides and video clips).
3. Homework was identified and transcribed into the Student Journal. Strong emphasis on communication between parents and teacher reflected in the Student Journal. Teachers work very effectively with each other and with parents to support students with identified learning needs.
4. Teachers enable students to make meaningful links between lesson material and their learning in other subjects, and to transfer their learning to unfamiliar experiences
5. Lessons were sequenced and scaffolded which facilitated differentiated learning and led to whole class participation within the classroom.
6. Evidence of strong affirmation throughout the majority of lessons, which encouraged students to further their involvement in the lesson.
7. Differentiated teaching was prevalent and skilfully engaged in most lessons.
8. Strong emphasis on learning evident, with strong links drawn from the student's experiences, clear explanation and student understanding.
9. Clear and coherent structure/ evident and review of learning .highly efficient Teachers regularly provide students with constructive, developmental oral and written feedback. Teachers use feedback to work with students on clear strategies for improvement
10. Very good teacher /Student relationship

Effective Teaching and Learning

1. Greater collaboration between students during class time should be encouraged and developed, this practice would allow for practices such as peer assessment, problem solving, teamwork, think and share.
2. Greater monitoring of individual student progress, they suggested teachers move around their classrooms more to encourage this practice.
3. Promotion of the student voice within the lesson, exploration of the topic, encouraging the development of oral literacy and space to develop thought and response.
4. Provision of opportunities for students to ask questions.
5. Exploration of alternative methods for lesson summaries/conclusions, as they should not be teacher led.
6. Teachers need to explore methodologies to maximising the impact of cooperative learning.
7. Teachers need to be conscious to respond to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary.
8. Create an environment of enquiry where students were comfortable to participate in the knowledge that its ok to get it wrong.
9. Encouraged to develop Formative feedback
 - Questioning
 - Peer assessment
 - Mind mapping /study skills reinforced
 - Oral Presentation/Oral literacy

2.2. This is how we know

- Teacher surveys, meetings and discussions.
- Teacher Junior Cycle Dot Survey
- Minutes from Departmental Meetings.
- Recommendations from the Inspectorate contained within their inspection reports.
- Face to face meetings with teachers and students on the process of learning and study.
- Minutes from Parent Association meetings expressing concerns over students self-learning skills.
- DES Inspectorate inspections 2 incidentals and 1 subject and 1 Whole School inspection
- 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 Differentiated teaching within the school.
- A number of parental surveys have been electronically conducted to access trends and attitudes to numeracy. Similarly a student survey was conducted to attain the student’s perspectives on numeracy within the curriculum.
- Numeracy, Literacy and Teaching and Learning (SIP) (Differentiated Teaching/Assessment for Learning (AFL)/Science Dept. collected the 2nd Year Science projects for display.
- Numeracy

The findings

- *Our school has strengths in the following areas:*
- Good uptake of higher level Maths at Junior and Senior cycle
- Analysis of results was in keeping/above national average
- Maths week is promoted and events are inclusive for all levels
- Common testing is practiced with all year groups
- Option of Maths Tutor program is offered
- Base classrooms for Maths are print-rich, in keeping with the literacy initiative.

The following areas are prioritised for improvement:

- Reduce poor attitude to Maths from 63% to 55%
- Improve test scores for percentage, ratio and fraction section from 45% to 55%
- Improve parental awareness re Project Maths from 42% to 55%
- Encourage students/teachers to engage with the scoil net site for percentage resources.

2.3 This is what we are going to focus on to improve our practice further

Formative Assessment Practices:

The SIP committee have overseen the process in determining the teaching and learning needs of the teachers and students. *Assessment for learning* (AFL) teaching practices has been identified as the main focus for the forthcoming academic year. Senior Management will actively seek assistance from external agencies such as the PDST to assist in whole school delivery of CDP in this area.

Teaching & Learning Key Skills:

The SSE process for the forthcoming academic year 2018/19 will focus on a review of *differentiated teaching* methodologies. It is envisaged that these professional conversations and practices will be discussed and conducted initially within in subject departmental meetings where teachers will be given the opportunity to reflect on their differentiation practices in their classroom. This collaborative reflective process will review how effective the centralised ICT file management system complimented and encouraged the sharing

of information. Focus groups will be held with a cohort of students and teachers to gain feedback on their experience in the classroom of differentiation. Parents will also be surveyed on this initiative.

Engagement in Learning:

Science of Learning

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

We in Cashel Community School believe that our 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.

We as a school will consolidate the *Science of learning programme* with Teachers and students as independent learners by reinforcing the core elements of study skills and nurturing their learning styles and identified learning strengths. We hope to promote “Study Strategies at their fingertips”

This initiative was chosen in order to respond to the following identified Key Skill deficiency in our students

“Using Digital Technology to access ,manage and share content.” Poor

“Using Digital Technology to manage myself and my own Learning” Poor ***JC Dot Survey***

How:

The Introduction of computing skills for 1st and 2nd Years ,an ICT Teacher in association with a member of the Guidance Dept. will take class groupings with their associated teachers to the computer room for Double classes and introduce ,register and promote ICT visual graphical ICT tools.

- Quizlet
- Coggle
- Development of the School Guidance Page on website

1st year students

They will be exposed to the concept of learning tools and their importance through active learning and whole school initiatives. The focus will be on *graphic organisers* which are visual learning tools which facilitate the students’ ability to learn and understand better. Graphic organisers are suitable for all student ability and thereby offer an ideal opportunity to support differentiated learning as it helps students organise information into concise visual maps. That said both Senior Management and the guidance team realise the effectiveness of these graphic organisers depend on the involvement of the subject teachers championing them and to reinforce the benefits of using these tools.

2nd Year Students

Research and Design are the fundamental areas that we as a school would like to support and nurture. And will include the following:

- Amnael group Science Project
- MP1 project (1st Mechanical Project)

As a school we understand its importance as a tool for building knowledge and efficient learning and a seed to the love of reading, writing, analysing, and sharing information. Furthermore there is a desire within the Guidance Dept. to develop the work commenced last year on the effectiveness of flash cards as a learning tool that encourages active and interactive learning experiences.

- Our students are the main benefactors of *flashcards*. They develop skills such as memory association, verbal, cognitive, interaction and listening skills. The reinforcement of the use of flashcards will offer the teaching body a variety of ways via teacher-directed study, self-paced student study, and by helping team up student partners, teaching them to work with the fronts and

backs of flashcards for enhanced learning. Flashcards are creative outlets for teaching thus offering further opportunity to exercise differentiated teaching practices.

- Senior management believe that the students and teachers exposure to “Quizlet” will offer an IT incentive to actively engage with this practice and recognise its value to all learning experiences.

Finally, Parents benefit by having tools to help their children with learning and assessment preparation whilst offering them an opportunity to participate with a meaningful process with their child’s education.

First Year		
Term1	Term2	Term 3
Mind Maps	Project /Research Business Mind Maps Reinforced in Classroom/Homework	History Project /Graphic Organisers Time line Mind Maps Reinforced in Classroom/Homework
Second Year		
Term1	Term2	Term 3
Project /Research Science Graphic Org Reinforced in Classroom/Homework	Design \Prototype Challenge Flash Cards/Note taking Note taking Reinforced in Classroom/Homework	Note taking Reinforced in Classroom/Homework
Third Year		
Term1	Term2	Term 3
In House Study Seminar SQ3R Reinforced in Classroom	SQ3R Reinforced in assemblies	

Role of the Teachers

If students are to succeed, 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 there is a processing of 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.

Reflective Learning:

Literacy

The expansion of the Literacy initiative will revolve around the continuation of the good practice in the expansion of students vocabulary in the area of reflection. Self-reflection is an intrinsic part of developing independent lifelong learners.

We as a staff conducted a dot survey on the key skills they felt our students lacked being able to reflect on their own learning and evaluating their learning. Also the introduction of the Junior Cycle Programme has placed further importance on this key skill. The JCPA aims to capture student achievements in a number of both assessment elements undertaken over the three years of junior cycle and to include broader aspects of reporting in this section or areas such as personal and social development and learning dispositions. Teachers found that students didn't have the vocabulary to articulate their emotions, feelings, aspirations and achievements. Therefore there will be a greater emphasis on personal reflection within our school.

To assist, promote and encourage the utilisation of this vocabulary and reflective practice a number whole school of initiatives are in place

- Glossary of reflective words and meanings will be at the students and teachers disposal in their Student Journals
- Students will be encouraged to capture their experiences throughout the year with their journal to capture their personal achievements using the vocabulary to reflect their emotions and experiences.

2017/18 saw the introduction of the connectives literacy initiative. In order to expand this methodology of constructing the written word we will encourage the utilisation of a Literacy map which will be embedded in the Student Journal to encourage students to build on their sentence construction. It is envisaged to extend students ability to construct sentences.

This year literacy focus will be:

Written vocabulary and comprehension

The Literacy committee encouraged the teaching staff to concentrate on developing student answers by insisting on using published and recognised whole school connectives in their answer assisted with a specific word count thereby informing the student of the required content detail, whilst simultaneous introducing the language of exam questions. The following assistance will be offered to all parties

- Publication of connectives/Student Record Journal
- Publication of Exam Keywords and concepts
- Exemplars produce for all parties to aid comprehension of the initiative.
- Copies of Both connectives and exam words published and advertised within the classroom to promote the initiative
- Literacy committee to convene and develop initiatives to support the goal.

2017/18 saw the introduction of the connectives literacy initiative. In order to expand students written work by extending their ability to construct sentences by encouraging the utilisation of a literacy map which will be embedded in the Student Journal.

Finally the establishment of a lunch time Book Club will hopefully encourage student to reengage with the look of reading to scaffold the expansion of their vocabulary.

Teacher questioning techniques

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.

Listening Techniques:

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.

The expansion of the *Literacy* initiative will revolve around the continuation of the good practice in the expansion of student’s vocabulary in the area of reflection. Self-reflection is an intrinsic part of developing independent lifelong learners.

It was identified on a *dot survey* conducted by staff that:

Our students *lacked* “Being able to reflect on their own learning”Reflecting on and evaluating their learning.

Achievement JCPA element with the new JC certification also highlighted a deficit within our students literacy. On completing the task teachers found that students didn’t have the vocabulary to articulate their emotions, feelings, aspirations and achievements.

To assist, promote and encourage the utilisation of this vocabulary and reflective practice a number whole school of initiatives are in place. This year there will be a greater emphasis on personal reflection within our in school applications for the following scholarships

- scholarship applications
- TY application
- Links Application
- Meaney Scholarship
- Godolphin Applications
- Lourdes Carer
- Glossary of word associated with reflective language in SRB

Numeracy

The concept of whole school Numeracy will be further developed this year. A whole school approach is essential for the successful implementation of the developing numeracy. Bearing in mind that whole school collaboration is key to consistent approaches to numeracy across subject departments .This year it was agreed that the concept and relevance of percentages would be the focus of our numeracy programme. Each Department will implement best practices developed by the PDST as a common starting point that will enable a consistent approach to this important numeric process. Resources to support this initiative are available in the SSE folder on the shared drive.

Activities in numeracy should be based on the student's own everyday experiences, since numeracy is meaningful for students only when it is made relevant to the life and experience of the student. Numeracy has much to offer the student who wants to make sense of the world around them. An understanding of numerical concepts may open student's eyes to exciting colours, shapes and patterns. For another, it may enable them to gain a functional understanding of objects.

The following has been recommended by the PDST useful for schools are adopting a common approach to various areas of numeracy:

- It is recommended that the common approach be agreed upon by the maths department first, before being implemented at whole-school level.
- It is envisaged that these approaches should be used across the curriculum to enhance consistency in the teaching and learning of numeracy across all subjects.
- The common approaches should be printed out as charts thus creating a supportive numeracy rich environment.

