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SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT FOR ST. PETER'S N.S. PHIBSBOROUGH

EVALUATION PERIOD: JUNE 2018 TO JUNE 2019

REPORT ISSUE DATE: June 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The focus of the evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in St. Peter's National School was undertaken during the period June 2018 to June 2019.

- The school prioritised Literacy, Numeracy and attendance for the S.I.P. (School Improvement Plan). Literacy and Numeracy were chosen as a result of staff discussion by the Literacy and Numeracy strategy as outlined in Circular 16/2018. This is a report on the findings of the evaluation.

1.2 School Context

- This is a vertical co-educational primary school
- There are currently 457 pupils
- There are 26 teachers including an Administrative Principal
- It is a DEIS Band 2 School

2. THE FINDINGS

Literacy:

There was a specific focus on Reading Comprehension for the academic year 2018-2019

Areas of concern:

- Reading Comprehension was identified as an area to focus on having completed a detailed analysis of the Drumcondra English tests in May 2018. As a result a greater emphasis was placed on developing reading comprehension skills throughout the school as well as continuing with vocabulary promotion through the use of 'Word Walls', 'Dictionary copies', 'Vocabulary Book Marks'. The pupils were also immersed in a wide range of vocabulary each week and these 'Word Banks' were reinforced on a regular basis.
- Developing pupils' reading comprehension skills (from 4th-6th classes) was flagged as an area to include in our SIP for 2019-2020.
- Continue with Reading Comprehension assessments on a bi-monthly basis from October 2019.
- An emphasis to be placed on the promotion of vocabulary development from 1st-3rd classes (2019-2020)
- More focus needs to be placed on the importance of classroom libraries.

2.1 Pupils' Attainment

- Having analysed the Drumcondra English tests in May 2019, we found that further emphasis on vocabulary development is required from 1st-3rd classes and a greater focus will need to be placed on reading comprehension skills (4th-6th classes).
 - Standardised test results in English show that on average most pupils are performing at or slightly above the national norm. However, there is a small group (16%) scoring below the 20th percentile and a group (24%) scoring above the 80th percentile.
 - The majority of pupils including those with special education needs, have made progress from last year (up to testing in May 2018 as results have fluctuated due to the new standardisation introduced in May 2019). Analysis of standardised test data over the last three years (2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018) shows that we have decreased the proportion of pupils scoring in the low average band from 21% to 16%, increased the proportion of pupils within the average band from 35% to 36% and increased the proportion of pupils scoring in the above average range by 4%.

2.2 Teaching and Learning

- Throughout all class students write in a wide variety of genres based on the First Steps writing genres. Their writing shows an improved use of vocabulary but the school will continue to promote more oral and written preliminary work to ensure that their writing has a logical flow. A continued focus is required with regard to vocabulary extension (1st-3rd classes) as per the "Five Components of Effective Oral Language Instruction". Sources to help with Vocabulary Extension include use of the "Five Components of Effective Oral Language Instruction" booklet, English readers, novels, dictionaries, creating word walls/banks, pupils' individual dictionary copies, newspapers, semantic mapping etc.
- Having completed a reading comprehension survey in a number of classes, 90% of pupils surveyed stated that they are good readers, while the majority of pupils believe that there are good books to read in their libraries. 78% of pupils look for clues when they don't understand a story. The most common comprehension strategies used are predicting, visualizing, connecting and comparing. At home, 100% of pupils surveyed state that they spend at least one hour per week reading while 19% of pupils read for more than 3 hours per week.

- Responses from a parents' reading comprehension survey indicate that the majority of parents (88%) believe that their child likes reading. 88% of parents surveyed indicated that their child can explain what has happened in a story. 74% of parents stated that their child likes answering questions based on a story. They remarked that re-reading, looking at clues (pictures etc.), reading on and asking an adult were the most common strategies used by their children when attempting to answer a question.
- Focus groups revealed that across all classes, students have a positive attitude towards reading and writing. The "Power Hour" in Junior Infants, Senior Infant, 1st and 2nd Classes and the "Guided Reading" in the fourth classes have been very positive experiences. Children reported that they mostly sound out, 'look at the picture' and 'blend' when they come to a word or passage they don't understand.
- Teachers' literacy lessons incorporate a variety of teaching methodologies, including talk and discussion and teacher questioning
- The teachers in St. Peter's conducted a Reading Comprehension survey in November 2018. 95% of teachers aim to develop reading comprehension strategies in their classes by means of discrete teaching methodologies, while 100% of teachers explain difficult comprehension passages in more simplified language. All of the teachers surveyed highlighted the importance of parental involvement in helping to improve the pupils' reading comprehension skills. It was suggested that a list of reading comprehension strategies which could be employed at home would be of benefit to parents and pupils. Teachers believed that 'questioning', 'talk and discussion', 'written tasks based on texts', 'consistency in reinforcing a strategy', 'retelling stories/passages', 'termly tests based solely on developing comprehension skills' and 'devising comprehension skills checklists' were some of the key methodologies for **assessing comprehension development among pupils**.
- With regard to improving reading comprehension in our School Improvement Plan for 2019-2020, 45% of teachers felt that trying to cater for pupils with EAL was a key obstacle in improving proficiency. 7% of teachers felt a lack of pupil knowledge of the strategies was a key stumbling block to improvement, 11% cited insufficient practice and 32% indicated that pupils displayed an inability to implement reading comprehension strategies effectively. Teachers stated that they use simple language, visualization, pictures, lower order questions and placing an emphasis on questioning words as key strategies for helping pupils with additional language needs. Discussing characters and stories beforehand, using video clips to accompany comprehension and scaffolding children's language were also used as methodologies. In relation to improving comprehension proficiency in general, teachers cited the use of buddy reading schemes, displaying comprehension strategy cues in the classroom, varying reading materials and texts, prior questioning, utilising

word walls, use of school-wide comprehension text types (as per our bi-monthly comprehension tests), varying and differentiating questions, modelling and demonstrating 'read-aloud' skills and integrating reading and writing (as per our First Steps Timetable).

- A high percentage of teachers also stated that a review of the general graphical representation of all pupils' Standardised Tests Scores (with regard to Reading comprehension) over the next two years would be beneficial to see evidence that the pupils are at least showing a 'maintenance of place' on the 'normal curve of distribution'. Ideally it would also show evidence of a gradual improvement in scores with the 'normal curve of distribution'. This review of the graphical representation of standardised test scores would become a feasible target for our S.I.P. We will continue implement bi-monthly comprehension assessment tests from October 2019 (1st- 6th classes)

Numeracy:

Findings:

Numeracy: Areas of Concern.

There was a specific focus on:

- **Problem solving with special reference to measures Weight, time, capacity and money.**
- **Fractions in junior Classes (to 2nd Class).**
- **Fractions/Decimals/Percentages in Senior Classes (3rd to 6th).**

We prioritised these areas because analysis of Drumcondra tests in May 2019 revealed that these were the main problem areas.

As a result of these findings, the **following actions took place:-**

- More extensive use of concrete materials in Maths was promoted with each class receiving increased volume of materials - leading to increased emphasis on discovery learning.
- Maths Trials were re-introduced.
- Concrete materials for fractions were increased - fraction walls/cubes/pie/fraction units/number fans/counting sticks.
- Continuation of RAVECCC to aid problem solving.
- Introduction of fortnightly tests - 6 computational sums and 4 'word problems'.
- Analysis of standardised test results.

Teaching and Learning

- In all classes there is an increased focus on the use of concrete materials. Each class now keeps maths materials on a 'maths' table in their own room.
- Teachers when surveyed - expressed satisfaction with the availability of concrete materials. They also felt that the focus on ORAL maths was beneficial to their teaching.
- Fortnightly assessment tests were also regarded as positive as it helped focus on areas of difficulty.
- Power hour for junior classes also received positive reviews.

3. Progress made on previously identified targets in the current Literacy S.I.P.

- **Target 1-** We will set a baseline for pupil attainment in the bi-monthly reading comprehension. For the first test in October 2018, 50% of pupils will achieve 2 or more correct answers out of 5 in their comprehension test (1st and 2nd classes) and 50% of pupils will achieve 4 or more correct answers out of 10 (3rd-6th classes). This proportion will be increased from 80% to 82% by December 2019 and improve by an additional 1% in each subsequent assessment.
- **Target 2-** to reduce the number of pupils scoring **at or below the 20th percentile** in the Drumcondra reading test by 1%. Due to the new standardisation in May 2019, 16% of pupils scored at or below the 20th percentile. We will aim to maintain or decrease this proportion to 15% in May 2020
- **Target 3-** to increase the number of pupils scoring at or above the 80th percentile by a further 1% in **May 2020 (to 25%)**. 24% of pupils scored at or above the 80th % in May 2019.
- **Target 4-** **Even though all pupils surveyed indicated that they read outside of school, 45% of pupils stated that they don't like reading. We will seek to reduce this proportion by 3% to 42% by May 2020.**

4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings:

4.1 Our school **has strengths in the following areas:**

- Children's results in Standardised tests for English show an improvement over the last three years (2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18) prior to the new standardisation in May 2019
- Children report liking and enjoying reading and writing and feel that they are good at it. Our First Steps displays of writing in the different genres are testament to this.
- The majority of children surveyed report reading for pleasure at home. (This has tied in with our shared reading/CAPER programmes).
- Children are generally able to recite, recall and sequence stories orally and in written form.

- Children are able to confidently speak and write about a topic of personal interest.
- Children are being taught explicitly at all class levels and can write on a wide range of genres. They also have a good grasp of grammar, syntax and punctuation.
- Parents are informed as to their child's progress through the annual parent/teaching meeting, the annual school report issued in June and through incidental individual meetings held during the course of the year.
- Teachers report that they use a variety of teaching approaches including talk and discussion and teacher questioning
- Our monthly school attendance averages at 97% due to stringent and consistent attendance monitoring. .
- Parental involvement is greatly encouraged and a number of parents are involved in Maths for Fun, Science for Fun, Shared Reading/CAPER programme, St. Peter's Strings' project, Story Sacks (literacy), computer classes, Art and Craft classes, school tours etc.
- Results in Drumcondra Tests show very positive improvement in the last year.
- The increased availability of concrete materials in all classes and support settings
- The 15 minute daily ORAL maths lessons.
- The increased use of 'pair/group work'.
- The fortnightly assessment tests in Maths at each class level and bi-monthly comprehension tests.

4.2 The following areas are **prioritised for improvement in Literacy**:

Pupil Attainment:

- Vocabulary development (1st-3rd classes) was flagged as an area for improvement in May 2019. Following an analysis of the Drumcondra Reading tests in May 2019, this area will need to be addressed again in 2019-2020 as improvements were noticed in only some classes. Vocabulary development will also improve written work (all classes will continue with the implementation of 'word walls'/oral language displays, individual dictionary copies and utilise oral language boxes as much as possible).
- Some pupils display significant weaknesses in the area of Reading Comprehension Strategies (4th-6th classes). A renewed focus on Reading Comprehension skills will be required (see teacher surveys' findings) as some classes tested in the Drumcondra Reading tests showed a drop in test scores in the comprehension section. A common approach (as per the First Steps Integrated plan) to the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies will be required. Bi-Monthly assessments of comprehension from 1st- 6th class will be continued from October 2019. We will set a baseline of achievement and seek to improve upon this over the course of the year (see previous targets-i.e. that 80% of pupils (3rd-6th classes) will achieve 4 or more correct answers out of ten in the first bi-monthly comprehension test).

Teaching and Learning:

- Pupils need to learn a variety of comprehension strategies (as per the First Steps Timetable) and be enabled to use them independently to make sense of texts.
- Teachers will engage pupils in more collaborative and co-operative work within each classroom in order to enhance the pupils' comprehension and vocabulary development skills.

- Penmanship-a continued focus needs to be placed on the explicit teaching of cursive writing in all classes. Cursive writing was introduced in Junior and Senior Infant level. **We will also aim to focus on the development of grammar, syntax and punctuation in the coming year.**
- Writing lessons need to be explicitly taught based on errors evident in the children's writing. Senior class pupils need to be able to confidently write across a range of genres independently and evaluate how effective their writing is.
- Introduction (on a pilot basis in one class (phased manner)) of SALF (Self Assessment and Learning Folders) as a means of pupil self-assessment and reflection.

With regard to Numeracy, the following areas are prioritised for improvement:

Prioritised Areas for the Improvement in Numeracy

- Further increase the availability of concrete materials in each class.
- To increase opportunities for pupils to engage with maths in the school environment further enable them to relate maths to everyday life e.g. maths trials.
- That 80% of pupils from 1st to 6th classes will demonstrate at least a 50% competency in word problem solving in the first fortnightly test in September 2019.

4.3 The following legislative and regulatory requirements need to be addressed:

All addressed.