

St. Michael's School

SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION: CYCLE 2 REPORT SIP 7 2019-22

School Context

St. Michael's School is a centre for Special Education. It has a Catholic Ethos and is located small rural town. Its catchment area has changed considerably in recent years and currently encompasses all counties in Connaught.

St. Michael's caters primarily for students with intellectual disabilities in the moderate range. Students may also have autism, physical or sensory disabilities. St. Michael's also caters for students who have intellectual disabilities in severe profound range. In exceptional circumstances and, in the absence of a practical alternative, the school will enrol a pupil in the mild range of intellectual disability subject to a psychological recommendation and planned review.

Students are aged between four and nineteen. The school continues to be recognised as a primary school and therefore works within the primary framework. However, a full post primary programme with national certification is provided for second level students. The school is an accredited QQI centre. A range of facilities specifically accommodate and support students with disabilities. Additional staff allocations further enhance teaching and learning in the school.

The school responds positively to the needs of the catchment area by acting as a resource centre for teachers, families and students. The school maintains a healthy level of activity and participation at all levels appropriate to the pupil population at local and national level. Integration and inclusion projects are on-going.

There is a Parents Association in the school and strong lines of communication between home and school are maintained.

Key Focus Area 1: Mathematics: Initial Engagement*

Key Focus Area 2: Primary Language Curriculum Implementation

****N.B. Initial engagement with the Mathematics curriculum was deferred following postponement by NCCA/DES. As an alternative the school prioritised Well being Child protection and Level Two Learning Programmes for attention.***

Teaching and Learning Quality Framework

Aspects of Practice:

Learner Outcomes:

Attainment of Curriculum Objectives

Teachers' Practice:

Teaching Approaches

Preparation for Teaching

Assessment

Evaluation Methods

- Teacher Survey
- Review of Planning
- Teacher reflection
- Standardised tests
- Parental Feedback
- Collaborative review of Teacher Practice
- Action research
- SNA reflective practice

Tools:

Review/ reflection Schedules
Written plans
Trials
Checklists
Remote learning evaluation
Focus Group schedules

Evaluation Criteria:

Learning outcomes
Teaching practice & preparation

Evidence Gathered

- Short term plans were reviewed by all teachers and implemented in line with PLC. Further engagement is subject to training provision 2022.
- Focus group evaluation of new Reading Resource pack (S/P) informed by analysis of reading baseline (objects of reference)
- Final version PPP document implemented. Teacher focus group reviewed IEP record system and compared with mainstream Student Support File
- Handwriting Tracking template available for Trial by all teachers
- Emergency pandemic procedures introduced collaboratively
- IT engagement researched and used to inform expansion of resources
- Information gathered for correlation of PLC and L2LP outcomes and themes
- Pilot project Aistear (Teacher Learning Log) delayed by Covid restrictions
- Well being in the curriculum: Staff Self evaluation Questionnaires
Teacher and SNA review and action research in relation to bullying.
- NCCA evaluation focus (teachers and parents)

Summary of Findings

1. Reviews of IT remote learning highlighted that 98% of families were able to engage with online provision (Parental Survey Report). Most students needed some assistance but levels of engagement were consistent and 75% of students recorded engagement at a level appropriate to their skills (Remote learning Analysis Report) An IT Audit conducted in 2020 (ref IT plan 2017-18) and review of Apps/resources was undertaken. Findings generated a framework for resource acquisition and planning which commenced in January 2022.
2. Long term evaluation (Ref SS April 202) conducted in relation to the skill of Subitise, as targeted in Cycle 1, showed considerable improvement in Student attainment levels.

Pupils able to Subitise up to 5 in test conditions

2014 2%

2021 26%

It was concluded that performance has significantly improved; that the learning outcome has been sustained and that it is now embedded in teacher planning and practice. Automaticity has been achieved and the process is now complete.

3. School use of the online communication solution Seesaw was researched (14.5.20 Ref BF). It has now been approved for continued use by 100% of parents surveyed (PT meetings 2022).
4. 36% of pupils write independently. A review of Handwriting assessment practices provided data for the design of a tracking template (Ref SS 2021). Standardised testing indicated that additional tracking steps to be included. (Ref JC 2022 RACE/DASH)
5. The impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic continue to be visible in school. A wellbeing pack was compiled and shared with families and was used to support learning in Term 1 2021-22. A Wellbeing survey in school (2019) focused on student voice and generated recommended whole school actions for 2021-22 and 22-23. Research into possible indicators of bullying behaviour indicated very low levels of bullying. (This was possibly influenced by high supervision levels). Policy review was undertaken.
A research action project commenced in 2021 -22. It linked with snack time and implemented by SNAs. The initiative supports student voice and the development of positive relationships to stem bullying behaviour. The interim review report indicated that the practice was successful.
6. Aistear: The process of adapting the Aistear programme for use in the Junior classes has been ongoing. A focus group examined practice and generated a support document to enable teachers to record engagement levels in relation to the learning goals prioritised for the cohort of pupils in St. Michael's.

Summary of Strengths

- The school community is committed to continued use of Seesaw following formal evaluation and consultation with parents. An online programme (Blossom) was accessed to provide for enrichment of learning via IT. It also prioritised the area of Wellbeing. Use of live or recorded video lessons was not required during the school closure. However, very good examples of video presentations were shared with the school community via the school blog, primarily by SNAs under teacher direction. Policy was reviewed. A planned improvement in IT resources has commenced.
- Teachers show a strong commitment to literacy and to vocabulary enrichment in particular. Engagement with the PLC is very good. Parents report a high level of satisfaction with progress and levels of home –school communication. School emphasis of communication skills and functional maths is in line with parents views.
- Evidence of pupil attainment is available and pupils work is monitored. In St. Michael’s information on pupils’ learning is gathered mainly via the IEP process but also through testing (Gillham etc.) and recording (IPR). This is now being aligned with mainstream structures (Student support Files). Teachers are now training in the use of VB Mapps in partnership with the PDS psychology team. Assessment of writing skills for Junior Cycle will enhance current monitoring of writing in the school (Ref JC).
- Teachers plan effectively for the delivery of the curriculum in a consistent and comprehensive format. Appropriate focus on differentiation, expected outcomes, and reflection is sustained. Planning was temporarily amended to reflect online provision. Short term Planning Templates have been reviewed in line with the PLC and will be modified in line with ongoing training.
- The Aistear programme has been researched and adapted for use and guideline documents have been compiled to support effective engagement.
- The Pandemic Crisis response generated useful developmental opportunities: Innovative staffing solutions (e.g. Task specific allocation of SNAs) have been extremely successful; Also opportunities for outdoor education have been well developed in recent months; Hygiene practices have improved; and IT skills have been highlighted.
- All mandatory policies have been reviewed and approved by the BOM 2021-22
- A package to record attendance has been purchased. It has added value to the school for pupil progression records and will further improve Data protection standards (ref teachers GDPR training in 2021)
- 2 Staff (BF, SS) are now certified and experienced to act as a Professional support team for the Droichead Induction programme for newly qualified teachers.
- The process of compiling Personal Pupil Profiles has now been completed for all students.
- An innovative project, implemented by SNAs, has been very successful.

Areas for Development

- Whole school research showed that 27% of students are still copying and not writing independently. Although this may be reflective of learning styles and abilities, it was concluded that a more systematic approach was required in relation to handwriting strategies. A tracking document has now been created to facilitate a more comprehensive assessment of pupil progress. Four phases have been identified aligned with the recommended organisational phases (Ref SS 2021). It will provide a framework for the identification of appropriate pedagogical approaches. This will now need to be implemented by all teachers.
- The Adapted Aistear programme was trialled in junior rooms (Ref SL 2020). Guidance Documents to inform implementation are available. The Adapted Aistear 4 year strategy is due to commence in 2022-26.
- The use of the IEP format in school was reviewed and a new Student Support File (SSF) template was created. It is available on the school's Aladdin system and will begin to form the basis of student record keeping from Spring 2022. Portfolios of work have been reviewed and rationalised. Evidence will be stored with the SSF. This process will need to be sustained in 2022-23.
- The progress in relation to L2LPs needs to be embedded in teacher practice. A comprehensive and formal structure has been established to support this process by tracking progress and ensuring consistency from primary through to post primary levels (Ref BF May 2021). Engagement will need to be monitored as part of teacher record keeping using the school's online system (Aladdin).
- The range of IT Resources has been increased to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and establish a baseline for an in-school evaluation of Digital Learning to develop our Digital Learning Plan. This will need to be reviewed in the context of school broadband being connected and the school extension constructed.
- A number of teaching and learning initiatives were delayed or deferred due to Covid restrictions (e.g. Sensory Room activities; Hydrotherapy sessions; Splash reading programme; and Reverse integration) can now resume. Room re-assignments (i.e. cookery room, therapy room, lunch room, GP room) were undertaken to maximise efficient use of the school during the Pandemic. It will be important to re-designate these allocations as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so. However this may be impeded by the slow pace of construction on the approved extension. Good practice in relation to outdoor learning and well being, stimulated by the pandemic response, needs to be sustained.
- The Communication and Language Policy will need to be brought in line with the PLC when staff training has been completed satisfactorily.
- Training planned for Behaviour management will provide a basis for review of the Code of Behaviour policy in 2023.
- Commendable involvement in the NCCA forum is sustainable.
- Successful outcomes observed as part of the Action research project (Star Snack time) will need to be formalised from 2022- 23 to become embedded across the school community (REF NOC 2021)