

St. Michael's School

SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION REPORT 2015

School Context

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

St. Michael's caters for students with intellectual disabilities in the moderate range. Students may also have autism, physical or sensory disabilities. St. Michael's has two Special classes for Students in severe/profound range of intellectual disability. In exceptional circumstances and, in the absence of a practical alternative, the school will enrol a pupil in the mild range subject to psychology input 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 comprehensive second level programme leading to national certification is provided.

A range of facilities is provided which specifically accommodates and supports students with disabilities. Additional staff allocations further enhance teaching and learning in the school particularly in relation to Autism and for post primary students.

The school responds positively to the needs of the catchment area by acting as a resource for teachers and students alike. The school maintains a healthy level of activity and participation at all levels appropriate to the pupil population at local and national level. The school provides a second level programme and is an accredited centre for FETAC.

Integration and inclusion projects are ongoing.

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

Update June 2015: The school has prioritised Information and Communication Technology during the year and has been recommended for an Award of Excellence as a Digital School of Distinction; Staff have undertaken an Intensive Course in Positive Behaviour Support; St. Michael's was chosen by Roscommon County Council

Tidy Schools as “the best school with over 5 teachers”. The school was also a regional winner in the Irish Aid awards competition.

Key Focus Area for research: Social, Personal and Health Education

Teaching and Learning Quality Framework

Aspect of Practice 1 Learner outcomes
 Attainment of curriculum objectives

Aspect of Practice 2 Learning Experience
 Engagement in learning

Evaluation Methods

- Analysis of Student’s Files (Parent teacher meetings)
- Evaluation of Teaching
- Teacher reflection
- Parent Questionnaire

Tools

Questionnaires Focus Group schedules

Prompt Questions Teacher designed tests

Evidence Gathered

Evidence was gathered regarding parental views (questionnaire and parent teacher meetings) teaching strategies; teachers reflection; review of pupils files; staff discussion/review groups

Summary of Findings

Parents Feedback

100% of parents felt that the school is assisting their child with Social Personal and Health Education. This confirms good practise in the school. In order to inform planning and aid triangulation of evidence parents were invited to identify specific aspects of SPHE that were of particular relevance for their child.

40% of parents chose personal care as the main priority need. Others prioritised RSE and Social Skills (30% and 20% respectively). This corresponds closely with areas identified by teachers' focus group and by the whole school evaluation. It is interesting that the issue of personal care and hygiene had been flagged in an earlier parents questionnaire (2012/13).

The results have highlighted that there is no one big area of weakness. Areas currently prioritised in the school are all felt to be significant by parents. As expected, a number of parents expressed a need for students' learning in relation to life and social skills with some evidence of a focus on relationships and sex education.

It is encouraging that evidence has shown that 100% of parents are satisfied with the level of information given by the school in relation to their child's education in SPHE.

Board Of Management

As part of the school self-evaluation process the Board of Management in St. Michael's School identified priority areas by comparing our performance with the benchmark identified in the booklet: *"Looking at our school". An aid to self-evaluation in primary school. Area 1 Quality of School Management and Aspect B School ownership and Management component (i-iv).*

Our evaluation identified that a specific priority area for attention was our ability to respond to disadvantage as part of poverty proofing. In the context of St. Michael's School poverty proofing is understood as it relates to special needs and also in relation to socio-economic disadvantage.

Primary indicators of disadvantage evident in school are dress and hygiene and diet and health. Current responses to disadvantage include informal communication systems; facilities and interventions. Ideas/areas for development could include practical strategies additional time formalisation of systems.

Parent Teacher meetings

A review of parent teacher meeting notes indicated that students needs include issues relating to

Personal care 60%

Social training 55%

Health issues 35%

A review of teaching in relation to RSE indicated some strengths in relation to class groupings and timing of sessions.

86% of the students tested progressed in their knowledge of RSE.

14% of the students tested remained at the same level pre and post teaching.

Two students remained at the same level pre and post teaching are in the severe range.

Results from the St. Michael's School self evaluation questionnaire for parents regarding SPHE showed that approximately 20% of Parents who replied believed that RSE was the most important topic in SPHE for their child.

Evidence of parental views informed the decision to evaluate the acquisition of personal care skills at whole school level.

Areas of strength

In relation to personal care it was found that for many pupils personal care was a key issue and this became a focus for attention at whole school level. The following strengths were identified:

A comprehensive range of appropriate resources is available

High expectations

Appropriate teaching strategies

Good levels of support and assistance

Parents reported high levels of satisfaction

Areas for Development

Research identified two barriers that impact on learner outcomes.

Consistency: Staff identified that communication of approaches and observation/recording of performance needs to be improved. Lack of consistency and communication of progression can impact negatively on learner outcomes.

Time: Staff reflection and sharing highlighted that time constraints can impede pupil attainment. It is possible that the allocation of time and the planning of timetables may need to be reviewed to maximise opportunities for learning.

Indicators for school planning include the capacity to build on strengths identified and to further develop existing practice. To improve the learning experience for students in St. Michael's it can be concluded that there is scope to review policy and procedures in relation to SPHE to increase structures in the current framework of provision.

This issue is further reflected in the findings of research conducted in relation to Poverty Proofing.