

St. Michael's School

## SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION: CYCLE 2 REPORT 2018

### School Context

St. Michael's School is a centre for Special Education. It has a Catholic Ethos and is located small rural town.

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. A comprehensive post primary programme is delivered, and national certification is achieved. The school accredited centre for QQI, the national state agency responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland.

A range of facilities are provided which specifically accommodate and support students with disabilities. Additional staff allocations further enhance teaching and learning in the school especially for second level pupils.

The school responds positively to the needs of the catchment area by acting as a resource for schools, 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. Recently the school has received awards for involvement in various national initiatives. 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: Primary Language Curriculum

Key Focus Area 2: Evaluation Cycle 1

Teaching and Learning Quality Framework

Aspects of Practice: Learner Outcomes: Attainment of Curriculum Objectives

Teachers' Practice: Teaching Approaches

Preparation for Teaching

Assessment

### Evaluation Methods

- Examination of short-term planning templates
- Review of Planning (cycle 1)
- Teacher reflection
- Standardised tests
- Professional study groups for PLC implications
- Evaluation of Target Implementation
- Research and trial literacy and numeracy software
- Gather Parent Feedback

Tools:

Review/ reflection; Schedules; Learning outcomes; Written plans; Teaching practice; Checklists; Literacy; Focus Group schedules; Focus of Learning

In St. Michael's school reading for pleasure, for information, and for functional development has consistently been prioritised for pupils. Phonics, Reading Schemes Interactive readers and Dolch words are approaches favoured by teachers throughout the school.

The Splash paired reading programme was introduced by teachers as a direct result of SSE research in Cycle 1. At the pre reading level Object/Visual schedules are

utilised for a variety of reasons relating to the individual needs of pupils. Research indicated that this form of reading is used by 100% of students in the Junior classes ;40% of students in the Middle classes and 71% of students in the Senior classes. A focus group of teachers recommended that to achieve consistency, it will be important to investigate good practice already established at the various ability levels within the school. This will form a baseline of quality teacher performance and inform decision making for the necessary amendments.

## Summary of Findings

### Analysis of Features of IEP Documents

- Language and Communication Targets were common in the IEPs of 100% of students indicating that there is a clear focus of teaching on Literacy Development.
- Vocabulary enrichment was prioritised as an IEP Target for 40% of students in 2010. This expanded to 60% of students in 2011 which shows an increase in attention being given to this area of literacy development in St. Michael's. this area is a strength for development.
- Handwriting samples in Pupils' portfolios were analysed to identify key stages of progression for assessment of teaching and learning in relation to handwriting.

### Aspects of practice recorded

- Object/Visual/ written schedules
- Phonics
- Reading Schemes
- Dolch words
- Splash paired reading programme
- Interactive reading schemes
- Visual/auditory learners and teacher practice

In the Junior classes 100% of students use a object/ picture/word schedule; 40% of students in the Middle classes manipulate a schedule; 71% of students in the Senior

classes follow a schedule (Visual/timetable) This evidence will support future evaluation.

- A review of IT literacy resources accessed generated a reference report for school improvement planning.
- Student attainment levels relating to letter names and sounds had improved according to analysis of test results. However further research is necessary, and this will form part of the work for school improvement

### Review of Teaching

- Planning documents included reference to all aspects of provision required to maximise achievement including objectives, methodologies, resources, and differentiation. However, assessment methods lacked coherence and consistency and may need to be prioritised for development.
  
- Short term plans included ten key strategies found to be useful by teachers. 100 % of teachers agreed that direct daily teaching of vocabulary was an effective strategy. This is a strength that may be built upon.
  
- A whole school teaching opportunity (at assembly) was identified as being a valuable strategy in supporting classroom-based literacy teaching by 75% of teachers. This may be further developed.
  
- Assessment of learning in relation to vocabulary was limited to a record of content delivered which was indicative of a need for improvement. Pupil self- assessment was found to be sporadic and incidental only. These may be areas for development in St. Michael's.

## Additional Evidence

- A standardised test was conducted to provide a baseline for future evaluation of St. Michael's School Improvement Plan.
- Teacher designed checklists were compiled to support an analysis of planned strategies.
- 73% of parents who responded felt that the school is assisting their child with Language and Communication. This confirms good practice in the school. Eighty per cent of parents chose communication and speech as their main priority for literacy. Others prioritised reading and writing.
- 85% of parents are satisfied with their child's reading skills. 15% disagree with this and would like more emphasis on functional reading. This may indicate an area of development for St. Michael's.
- Speech and Language reports highlighted a strong focus on vocabulary and comprehension for 70-75% of students
- SNA s identified numerous ways in which they support the achievement of learning outcomes in relation to literacy. They highlighted the incidental and informal learning opportunities which arise frequently throughout the day that contribute to the transfer and mastery of language development. Their key role in reinforcement and revision was confirmed.
- Literacy strategy documents (2012-13) show clear evidence of a strong commitment to the attainment of curriculum objectives and to the delivery of literacy targets across all areas of the curriculum. DES Guidelines are fulfilled (ref: checklist)

## Summary of Strengths

- Use of visual schedules is extensive, and this is valued by Language therapists
- 36% of pupils write independently
- Teachers show a strong commitment to literacy and to vocabulary enrichment in particular.

- 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 information is shared with parents through parent teacher meetings and annual reports.
- Teachers plan effectively for the delivery of the curriculum:
  1. Pre-planning includes correlating strand/strand units of curriculum subjects to maximise cross curricular linkage, aimed to enable progression and consolidation of lesson content for the development of knowledge and skills.
  2. Uniform Long term and short-term plan templates are utilised to guide teaching and learning which clearly indicate expected outcomes of lessons (objectives) differentiated according to the learning needs and abilities of the students in the classroom; Teaching approaches and Resources to be used to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes are identified.

Teachers are consistent in their use of teaching approaches and deliver lessons in a focused, stimulating manner relevant to the pupils needs, age and interest. There is evidence of progression and of the purposeful development of literacy and numeracy within and between all curriculum areas. Differentiation is evident in content, approaches, and resources.

- Teachers have the availability of subject specific sets of resources to support and enhance learning in the area of maths, science and RSE.
- The school is fully compliant with the requirements outlined in the National literacy and numeracy strategy at this time.

## Areas for Development

- A more systematic approach may be needed to the teaching of writing as there is a very wide range of strategies in use currently.
- Assessment lacks consistency in relation to vocabulary enrichment. School policy review in relation to this is required to facilitate the analysis and application of the information.
- Pupil Self-Assessment needs to be introduced on a trial basis in order to identify appropriate techniques for each group in the school.
- The proposed improvement for linkage opportunities outlined in the school's Literacy Strategy Document in relation to literacy and curricular areas is consistent with research indicators. Its implementation will contribute to ongoing development.
- Vocabulary has been identified as a need for pupils. A consistent, systematic, and themed approach should be introduced to focus work already being done. The action should include a recommended list of vocabulary; a multi-pronged approach involving SNAs, Therapists and parents where possible. In particular, the unique role of the SNA needs to be explored without infringing on the care aspect of their duties.
- The range of good quality IT Resources need to be increased to enhance and increase literacy development. This will be the next stage in the e-learning plan.
- A Baseline of attainment needs to identify against which improvement can be measured. This may need to be investigated by teachers to clarify and establish the core attainment and progression levels which can be applied. This is an area that will require professional collaboration.
- A set of resources needs to be identified relevant for literacy levels. This may include whole school teacher designed tests.
- The current method of tracking student progress (Communication Profile) has been found on reflection, to be too vague to be effective in the transfer of information relating to attainment and learner outcomes. A new template will be formulated that will include specific and detailed information.

