

St. Colman's N.S.
Clara
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School Self-Evaluation Report
Literacy

Evaluation period: **September 2018- June 2020**

School Self-Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The Focus of the Evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in St. Colman's N.S is being undertaken during the period September 2018 to June 2020. During the evaluation, teaching and learning in the following curriculum area is being evaluated

- **Literacy:** Handwriting (Development of a Cursive Script)

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation so far:

1.2 School Context

St. Colmans NS is a mixed school under the patronage of the Bishop of Ossory. The school currently has eight mainstream classes from Junior Infants to 6th class. We also have two full time special education teachers. The current enrolment is 216.

Having had a very successful Whole School Evaluation in November 2012, we met our inspector on January 14th 2013 for our School Self Evaluation seminar. With her advice, we decided that while our standards in literacy were high we would concentrate on specific areas when looking at school self evaluation. We spoke in detail of the difficulties facing some children when it comes to spelling. Even though our standard scores show high achievement in English it was a concern for all staff that children be given every opportunity to develop their full potential in this area. Our first S.S.E. in literacy took place in the area of spelling and we have now decided to look at handwriting.

We decided on the following approach to develop a cursive handwriting script in our school handwriting in our school

- Standardised Approach from Junior Infants to 6th class
- Junior Infants and Senior Infants will use a pre cursive handwriting scheme, called Just Write from educate.ie. There is a practice copy with scheme also which is used for homework
- Go With the Flow handwriting scheme introduced from 1st class to 6th class in September 2017
- As we were introducing a completely new scheme we decided that 1st class would use the senior infant book and this pattern would continue right throughout the school
- A questionnaire was distributed to pupils and parents to enhance our understanding of the school's handwriting profile

2. The findings – Literacy

2.1

Pupils' Attainments

Our strength with regard to pupils attainment in literacy are:

- The pupils' attainment in standardised Drumcondra English Reading Test compare very favourably with national norms with 72% of pupils performing at Sten of 6 and over.
- Standard of writing and presentation in copies was highly commended during our W.S.E in 2012

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- Pupils are motivated to present neat writing and illustrations in the relevant copies.

Pupil questionnaire responses indicated that

- ❖ 82% of children like handwriting, 8% don't know and 10% dislike handwriting
- ❖ 88% find it easy to form letters properly, 6% don't know and 6% find letter formation difficult
- ❖ 78% of children think they are good at handwriting, 16% aren't sure and 6% feel they aren't good
- ❖ 92% of children enjoy presenting neat handwriting, 6% aren't sure and 2% do not enjoy presenting neat work.
- ❖ 47% of children got help with handwriting from their parents, 5% didn't know and 48% didn't get any help with handwriting
- ❖ Every pupil in 1st and 3rd class liked handwriting and every pupil in 1st class felt they found it easy to form letters.
- ❖ Every pupil in Senior Infants felt they found it easy to form letters
- ❖ Every pupil in Senior Infants and 6th class enjoyed presenting neat handwriting
- ❖ 1st class pupils got more help from parents than any other class
- ❖ 6th class had as many pupils who weren't sure of the quality of their handwriting as Junior Infants to 4th class together.

Parental questionnaire responses indicated that

- ❖ 91% of parents think their children like handwriting, 1% don't know and 8% think their children don't like handwriting
- ❖ 87% of parents think their children are good at handwriting, 3% don't know and 10% think that their children aren't good at handwriting
- ❖ 61% of parents feel that they help their children with handwriting, 1% don't know if they help and 38% say that they do not help with handwriting
- ❖ 76% of parents feel that their children are consistent in their approach to handwriting, 2% don't know and 22% think their children aren't consistent with their handwriting
- ❖ 100% of parents see a value in neat handwriting
- ❖ 93% of parents think that the handwriting activities given are appropriate, 6% don't know if they are and 1% feel the activities are not appropriate

Interesting comparisons between the pupil and parental questionnaires are:

- ❖ 9% more adults felt their children liked handwriting than the children themselves indicated
- ❖ Almost identical figures believed the children were good at handwriting
- ❖ 61% of adults said they helped with handwriting, 47% of children thought this to be the case
- ❖ 100% of parents saw a value in neat writing and 92% of children enjoyed presenting neat writing

Areas requiring improvement with regard to pupils' attainment are:

- 16% of pupils aren't sure of their ability to produce good handwriting.
- Some pupils, despite very neat writing, need to develop their cursive writing skills
- We need to affirm and continue to promote the benefits of neat handwriting among some pupils

2.2 Teaching

Our strengths with regard to the teaching of literacy are:

- The teachers use a variety of teaching approaches that successfully stimulate and challenge the pupils
- Creative, collaborative and investigative activities which promote higher order thinking are fostered consistently
- Handwriting activities and the encouragement of neat writing are part and parcel of almost every subject
- In S.E.S.E. subjects we have a standard copy from 3rd to 6th class where the children are encouraged strongly to present their illustrations to high standards.
- Dictation exercises are regular features in our junior classes
- There is excellent collaboration between the SEN teachers and class teachers with both in – class support and withdrawal in small groups taking place from infants to 6th.

2.3 Learning

Our strengths with regard to pupils learning of literacy are

- Achievement in literacy is of a very high standard
- Most pupils are able to discuss and explain their learning and experience success in literacy
- There is clear progression in pupils' learning in most cases

3. Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets

- It is a school aim that children read with fluency and competency. Our shared reading programme from Junior Infants to 2nd class and our Read at Home Programme from 1st to 6th class are being highlighted in a very positive manner by teachers and parents.

4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings

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

- Attainment of curricular objectives:

72% of pupils in St. Colmans NS scored a Sten of 6 or higher on Drumcondra Standardised English testing in May 2018. This is significantly above national norms of 50%

43% of pupils in St. Colman's NS score between Sten 8-10 in Drumcondra standardised testing in May 2018.

Teaching Approaches

A variety of strategies are used to cater for differentiation, both for extension and reinforcement

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Teachers reflect critically on the impact of their practice through high quality classroom – based assessment and regular whole-school consideration of pupil achievement.

- Reporting/Communicating with Parents

Parents regularly sign the weekly spelling tests

All parents from Infants to 2nd are encouraged to read with their children every night and sign a reading log

All parents from 3rd to 6th class sign a reading log also

The school report card includes the sten score of the standardised English test – the Drumcondra test

4.2 The following areas are prioritised for improvement:

- To continue to improve the positive attitude of children towards handwriting
- To ensure all teaching of handwriting follows a standardised approach to cursive writing from Junior Infants to 6th class
- To introduce a 'Good Work Presentation' Board for all classes in September 2018
- To continue to support parents in their role as partners in education in the teaching of handwriting and presentation of neat work
- To continue to develop our own understanding as teachers of new methodologies which will enrich our teaching of the various areas of English

4.3 The following legislative and regulatory requirements have been addressed:

- The administration of Drumcondra testing has been moved to May in line with reporting requirements
- Provisions have been made for sending our results of Drumcondra tests to the Department of Education

