**Step 4: School Self-evaluation report on Literacy – June 2013**

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| **WHO was engaged in the reflective enquiry and/or consulted?**  Teachers, Ancillary staff, Parents, Pupils, BoM, Inspectorate (namely Máirín Ní Mháirtín), personnel from PDST (namely Dr. Fiona King and Orla Finnegan) and Lincoln University, UK (namely Professor Howard Stevenson). | |
| **The six-step school evaluation process and the teaching/learning framework were used**  Over the course of monthly staff meetings teachers became familiar with the SSE teaching/learning framework with its focus on three key areas: **learner outcomes; learning experience and teachers’ practice.**  After gathering evidence (step 1); analysing evidence (step 2); and drawing conclusions (step 3) the staff agreed to focus on literacy. A School self-evaluation report was drawn up (step 4); an improvement plan was written (step 5) and the plan continues to be implemented and monitored (step 6). The process was also followed with a group of eleven teachers as part of a *Collaborative Learning Initiative (CLI)* under the direction of Professor Howard Stevenson, Dr. Fiona King and Orla Finnegan. This CLI group reported on progress made at monthly staff meetings. | |
| **WHEN?**  **Pre 2011 and ongoing** | |
| **Step 1**  **DATA used as evidence:**   * Minutes of school development planning days * Minutes of staff meetings * Teacher questionnaires (e.g. Jenny Mosley questionnaire *I’m OK, You’re OK* ) * School self-evaluation questionnaire for parents on literacy (English and Irish) and numeracy (March 2012) * School self-evaluation questionnaire for 3rd – 6th class pupils on literacy and numeracy (March 2012) * Standardised tests * Teachers’ yearly and fortnightly plans * Teacher-designed tests * Teachers’ monthly reports * Teachers’ reflections * Outcomes of teacher dialogue at teacher class level meetings | |
| **Step 2**  **Analysing evidence:**   * Compared to their peers nationally, children in Scoil Mhuire are scoring ‘above the national average’ in both English and Mathematics in standardised tests. There is no clear difference between scores in comprehension and vocabulary. With an intake into Junior Infants (2013) of nearly 50% of children with English as a second language, we will strive to maintain this ‘above average’ level. It should be noted that many children with English as a second language scored ‘above average’ in both English and Mathematics standardised tests. * Teachers in Scoil Mhuire have for many years planned very effectively together. Strong relationships are nurtured and there is a high level of trust. Teacher collaboration and planning together is highly valued by staff and consistency in practice and sharing of ‘good practice’ indicate that this is impacting positively on teaching and learning in classrooms **(see attached quality statement on *Preparation for teaching* – Appendix A).** * Teachers on the Special Needs team were losing valuable teaching time, when calling to classrooms to withdraw children for support. While acknowledging that withdrawal meets the needs of some pupils, alternative models of in-class support were explored, in particular station teaching and in-class support. * Using children’s copies, concerns were raised over some children’s poor comprehension levels and general ‘writing skills’ (staff meeting 26th Oct., 2011). Programmes such as *Building Bridges* and *First Steps* were explored and evaluated with a new whole school plan in comprehension strategies implemented. | |
| **STEP 3: DRAWING CONCLUSIONS**  **STRENGTHS**   * Teachers are thoroughly prepared in terms of practical and written planning for the delivery of the curriculum through the lessons they teach **(see attached quality statement on *Preparation for teaching* – Appendix A).** * Every day teachers do their best to have a ‘happy learning environment’ in their classrooms (**see attached quality statement on the *Learning Environment –* Appendix B***).* * The school has a strong body of parents who are ‘more than willing’ to support teachers. * Five teachers in the school have a post-grad diploma in Special Needs education. * *Lift off Literacy (Power Hour)* is used by teachers on the special needs team and improved reading skills, among weaker readers involved in the programme, is evident (commenced in 2011) * *Paired Reading* where older and younger/ stronger and weaker readers are paired to read to each other is enjoyed by the children and increasing interest levels in reading. * Senior pupils were runners-up in the county English debating competition run by Carrick-on-Shannon Education centre. * Some teachers are purposefully developing ‘critical thinking’ in their classrooms. Others are using ‘station teaching’, group work and peer tutoring. * Teachers are open to increasing ‘in-class’ support for weaker students in preference to withdrawal. However, for some individual withdrawal is the strategy that best meets his/her need (For example, a child with Occupational Therapy needs who needs to do exercises in the Sensory room). * The *AISTEAR* curriculum introduced in 2012 is motivating children to ‘learn through play’ in the infant classes. The activities are organised in a special room equipped for play by teachers on a rota basis. The programme is meticulously planned, using a themed approach and monitoring of the programme is on-going. * ICT is used daily in the school to enhance learning (interactive white boards, laptops, iPads and iPods.   **AREAS REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT**   * Teachers find differentiation and their efforts to meet the needs of a wide range of abilities in the classroom a challenge * Children in busy households with the attraction of TV, computers, mobile phones are coming to school with poor communication skills, poor listening skills, a limited vocabulary and weak verbal ability, highlighting a need to focus on ‘Oral Language’. * Parents indicate that they would like more information on what is happening specifically in their child’s classroom. * There needs to be more of an emphasis on learner focused assessment where the student’s opinion is encouraged and recorded with the purpose of improved learning and self-awareness of ability. * Teachers don’t always share the learning objectives/outcomes of a lesson with the children. * There is no school library or reading area and many classrooms are too small to hold a classroom library. * Teachers in 1st class are finding it a challenge to hear all the children read individually. * Teachers’ reflection on teaching and learning in numeracy and literacy is recorded by some teachers in monthly reports. This could be developed. **See quality statement on *Preparation for Teaching* attached – Appendix A.** | |
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**Step 5 - SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP) 2012 – 2015**

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| **Areas requiring improvement focusing on**  **Learner outcomes**  **Learning experiences**  **Teachers’ practice** | **Evidence used to elicit ‘what we do in Scoil Mhuire’ – start of 2012** | **How will we know that we are doing things better in 2015?**  **Evidence criteria** | **September 2013**  **When and Who?** |
| **Teaching approaches**  **Teachers find differentiation and their efforts to meet the needs of a wide range of abilities in the classroom a challenge**  **Management of students**  Alternative models to withdrawal such as in-class support/group work/station teaching need to be explored.  **Management of students**  1st class teachers are finding it a challenge to hear all children read individually | **1ST PRIORITY 2012 - 2013** | | |
| Although the level of in-class support has increased in Scoil Mhuire over the years, it could not be said that it was embedded in the school or was the ‘way we do things here’. | Evidence of more in-class support and team teaching in 2015 than in previous years (evidence in time-tables and teacher reflections)  Evidence of more group work and/or *Station teaching* in literacy and numeracy in 2015 than in previous years (evidence available by comparing time-tables of teachers in 2012 and 2015). Teacher reflections in monthly reports.  September 2013 – Nine parents are supporting teachers to hear class reading on Wednesday mornings (3 parents in each of the three 1st classes). This will be monitored and reviewed at the end of the year. | Dr. Fiona King gave a presentation to teachers on differentiation in Sept. 2013.  **June 2013:** *Station teaching* is now happening in all classrooms. All teachers on the Special Needs team spend more time supporting pupils in classrooms than withdrawing pupils. The practice is being monitored, and will be reviewed at the May 2014 staff meeting. |
| **Assessment**  Need for more of **a focus on learner focused and self- assessment**  **Assessment of Oral Language using Drumcondra Profiles** | Teacher dialogue and discussion identified a need to focus on pupil self-evaluation.  The principal found the teacher reflection section on the monthly reports informed her of the classroom context, the real and genuine needs of the teacher and pupils as well as the daily challenges faced and good practice. | **2nd PRIORITY 2012 - 2013**  Evidence of self-evaluation in pupils’ work. Children record progress and evaluate their work using a tool similar to SALF folders, depending on the age and ability of the child.  Evidence of more ‘teacher reflection’ on teaching and learning in monthly reports …  Use of teacher reflections to improve teaching and learning in the school overall.  Teachers will use Drumcondra Profiles to assess oral language skills, focusing on 3 children representing ‘average’, ‘above average’ and ‘below average’ abilities in their classrooms. | Teachers are using a range of tools to encourage pupil self-evaluation such as:  SALF – reflections, learning logs, conferencing, learning journey, KWL charts  Rubrics, Mind-mapping, traffic lights, 2 stars and a wish  Play diaries, red/green faces, green/orange/red cubes, questionnaires, oral evaluations, thumbs up/down, WOW wall, seeking child’s view of progress, photo diaries  May 2014:- a copy of each teacher’s monthly reflection on learning and teaching, with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, is given to the principal every month.  **Review in June 2015** |
| **Learning to learn/ Engagement in learning**  **Oral Language**: children coming to school with poor communication and oral language skills | Following review of current practice, Oral language was identified for attention.  Following further review of planning documents in school and teacher dialogue *Listening skills* was prioritised for attention (2012). | **1ST PRIORITY 2013 - 2014**  We now have a clear definition of discrete oral language which was included in the reviewed literacy plan May 2014. Teachers are aware of the importance of modelling good listening/speaking skills. They are familiar with the *gradual release of responsibility* model.  The special needs team and principal have observed listening skills in infants and 3rd/4th classrooms using rubric designed by team. Lesson plans for infants and 3rd/4th classes have been designed by team on developing good listening skills. ***Children’s listening skills were assessed again after lessons were taught.***  In 2013 – 2014 teachers on the 2012 CLI team shared their learning and lessons on ‘Oral Language’ with the rest of the team.  A thematic approach linking Aistear themes and the *deich téamaí sa Ghaeilge* have been devised and included in the English plan. Vocabulary based on these themes, have been listed for each class level using a spiral approach.  Lessons for developing listening/speaking skills have been developed at each class level and included in a pack on ‘Oral Language’ to be taught to all class levels from Sept 2014. | 2012 – 2013 Invitation from PDST to get involved in CLI project with support from Professor Howard Stevenson (Nottingham University), Fiona King and Orla Finnegan.  12 teachers involved. Teachers used blogging to discuss practice, teaching and learning.  June 2014  **Review June 2015** |
| **Learning environment**  School Library | Up to 2013, there was no school library or reading area in the school. | All library books in the school have been recorded on the school DATABIZ LIBRARY system. This system will identify reluctant/avid readers, popular authors/titles etc. Classroom libraries will be stocked with 150? books from the central school library. Resource rooms will be stocked with 30? books from the central library. Stock can be renewed/replaced easily from this central library. | **June 2014:**  The BoM will arrange substitute cover for teachers to learn how to keep track of books on the system. Parents have offered to help with the library and this support will be availed of. |
| **Learning to learn/ Engagement in learning**  **Comprehension strategies** | Following a review of literacy, **Comprehension strategies** was identified by staff as a priority. | **2nd PRIORITY 2013 - 2014**  A whole school plan for developing comprehension strategies has been developed. The whole school plan in English has been revised with the updated version put on the school website. | **June 2014**  It is hoped that standardised test results at the end of June will show an improvement in comprehension abilities of the children. |
| **Learning to learn/ Engagement in learning writing in different genres** | Following a review of literacy, **writing in different genres** was identified by staff as a priority. What evidence was used? | **3RD PRIORITY 2013 - 2014**  A two-year plan for teaching writing Genres has been developed | **June 2015**  Teachers will design/decide on tools to assess children’s understanding of the different writing genre and report on same. |
| **Attainment of curriculum objectives**  Teachers don’t always **share the learning outcomes of a lesson with the children.** | Learning objectives were stated in all long-term plans but were not stated in some short-term plans.  Teachers did not always share the learning objective with the children before they taught them.  Some teachers used strategies such as KWL and WALT. | **3RD PRIORITY 2012 - 2013**  Learning objectives will be stated clearly in all long-term and short-term plans (evidence in planning documents)  All teachers share learning objectives with the children. (evidence in planning documents).  Teachers and children ask daily “What are we learning today”, “What I **K**now already? What I **W**ant to know? What I have **L**earned?” (evidence in planning) | **Is being implemented by all staff.** |
| Parents would like more information on what their child is learning in the classroom. | Parent surveys indicated that parents needed to be better informed. | A newsletter goes home to parents 2-3 times a term. Prior to 2012 a newsletter went home once a term. Teachers at each level provide a synopsis of the work that is/will be covered that month.  Teacher will write a positive comment once a month in each child’s diary (Two stars and a wish for example).  Using reading logs, spelling lists, notes from teachers, parents will be informed of the targets children are being set. | **Newsletter going home three/four times a term.**  **Information evenings on what is happening in the classroom will be held in October 2013.** |