



SCHOOL SELF EVALUTATION PLAN

Colaiste na Ríochta

Church Street

Listowel

Co Kerry

School Roll Number: 70500P

Introduction

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in Colaiste na Ríochta was undertaken in 2013/14. The focus of this review was Literacy with a focus on reading ages of students entering Colaiste na Ríochta

The School Context

Colaiste na Ríochta is a co-educational, multidenominational secondary school under the patronage of Kerry Education and Training Board located in Tralee, Co Kerry. The school is a mixed setting with enrolment in 2013/14 being 77 students at post primary and 188 PLC students. In 2014-2015 the enrolment is 71 at post primary and 170 PLC students.

Colaiste na Ríochta is the only co-educational school in Listowel. Two other secondary schools exist in the area – St Michael’s College and Presentation Secondary School. Enrolments have increased over the past five years. The school has 10 feeder Primary Schools, three are urban and seven in rural settings.

The school has DEIS status. The school has access to a HSCL one day per week and also receives support from the North Kerry School Completion Programme. The school has an ASD unit with six students. This opened in 2010. These students are fully integrated into the mainstream school. The school also has an EBD class sanctioned by the NCSE. We are also part of the APP Project since the start of 2013/14 where the focus is on team teaching in the area of Literacy and Numeracy. This has had a beneficial effect on the quality and level of engagement of student learning.

A high number of our students have special educational needs, how the school operates an open and inclusive environment.

A full curriculum is now on offer at both Junior and Senior Cycle. Programmes on offer include JCSP, Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The school also provides additional QQI Certification in level 4 in maths to our senior cycle students.

The school uses the CAT3 tests on enrolment and the Group reading tests along with the maths competency test to ascertain the cognitive ability of incoming first years.

The schools administrative structure at present is 2 A Post holders, 3 special duties posts and a Director of Adult Education.

The school has two qualified SEN teachers and 4 SNA staff at present.

Inspection reports during 2013

We had two inspections in 2013 - an incidental inspection in October (verbal feedback was given to the Principal and Deputy Principal) and also on November 18th the school had a DEIS Evaluation, which took place across three days, with feedback on the 5th day. Feedback from the DEIS inspection was very positive. Inspectors noted the range and breadth of initiatives in the school and the range of instructional strategies in the classroom. The main recommendation was to further develop targets linked to specific actions.

The Findings:

During the academic year 2013-2014 during staff planning sessions and subject department meetings the entire staff identified the gaps between chronological age and reading ages as an area needing to be further improved. It was identified from the GRT's that students were having difficulty comprehending texts, utilising vocabulary in the correct context, understanding examination key words (compare/contrast/evaluate for example) and did not read for pleasure.

Evidence was gathered from the GRT (administered to all Junior Cycle students), Reading Attitudinal Surveys (parents/students) and House Exam Results. This evidence was discussed at whole staff planning sessions.

As a result, a literacy team was put in place to support planning and target interventions across the year groups in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning team.

These are the findings of work carried out already on literacy and teaching and learning in Colaiste na Ríochta.

1. Entrance results on literacy (25% of our first year students September 2014 and 32% in second year have a reading age below 10 years.)
2. Teacher analysis of first and second years showed significant 65% have difficulty around fluency and reading comprehension.
3. English teachers conducted a motivation to read survey with first years in 2012-2013. 75% of our students read for less than 30 mins a day.
4. Discussions with parents at parent teacher meetings and parental questionnaires also confirmed this trend.
5. 85% of all staff found that poor literacy levels were a contributory factor for the motivation of students, the work ethic of students, student organisation, non completion of homework, behavioural issues in classrooms, poor attendance.
6. NBSS classroom sessions with first and second year students identified behaviour for learning strategies such as the 9 step classroom routines as essential with the focus on literacy acquisition.
7. Following the staff reflection on the overview of existing practice there was general agreement that the area of student written work was in need of improvement. All classes are of mixed ability and samples of written work across the curriculum were gathered and an error analysis was conducted under the following headings: spelling, punctuation and grammar, use of subject specific vocabulary, sequencing and development of answers.
8. Our first and second year students cannot meet the literacy demands of their subjects – written work is of a poor standard with many careless mistakes and subject specific language can be a challenge.

Actions Taken:

All JCSP initiatives were chosen with a focus on literacy. Additional resources were purchased for the school library with student input. JCSP initiatives like the keyword strategy, DEAR are used throughout the school by all teachers and are a focus for teaching and learning.

The school working with the NBSS got relevant staff trained in Catch Up Literacy. This programme involves 15 minutes of reading intervention for targeted students.

A visit for Junior Cycle students to the local library was arranged. Where students were able to get library cards, take out books and create links with the local library.

The school held its first literacy week in February 2014; which saw students competing in writing competitions, poetry competitions, DEAR initiative and book reviews.

The school also joined the DES APP project with a focus on literacy and numeracy. Two teachers are employed in the school with this focus and on Team Teaching and raising standards in English and Maths classes.

Greater concentration on the mechanics of literacy will be supported in class and in resource settings. Such as: Identify Greek and Latin roots, Synonyms and Antonyms- build on previous knowledge, associated reading boxes per subject- Reading classes in English, Morphemic analysis and Semantic Maps. These techniques will be shared by the English Department to all staff.

Summary of SSE Findings

School Strengths

1. JCSP initiatives are excellent practices used throughout the school with a clear focus on teaching and learning.
2. The school is part of the DES App project with a focus on literacy and numeracy supporting students through team teaching approaches.
3. The school has introduced NBSS Programme catch up literacy to identify students in need of intervention in first year.
4. As a Kerry ETB school we have had several staff trained in instructional leadership techniques. Trained staff members share their experiences with other staff to try to embed improved teaching and learning techniques. Our survey of students on Teaching and Learning strategies showed increasing understanding of techniques used in class.
5. The school has a welcoming atmosphere and restorative practice is a key part of the school's code of discipline.
6. Word of the week / literacy notice board Break down words into smaller parts & Catch Up Literacy
7. 90% of all first year and second year students enjoyed literacy week.
8. The school atmosphere is positive and restorative practice is at the core of the school's code of discipline.
9. Survey of students in 2014 showed increasing levels of engagement with teaching and learning strategies and understanding.
10. The school has strong links with parents and the wider community – Tidy Towns, local GAA, local farmers' market, and the local community centre.
11. All teachers across all subject areas use a range of literacy strategies.
12. The students' standardised test results and report cards from primary school were analysed by the career guidance teacher. STEN scores at entry of both our first and second years are below the national norm.

Areas for improvement:

1. Teachers to focus on the development of basic mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax etc.)
2. Need for written work/homework in all subject areas and increased expectations and standards in writing across the curriculum.
3. Teachers need to develop effective comprehension and group work strategies across all subject areas – whole school focus.
4. We need to eliminate the number of students taking foundation level at junior cycle and increase the number of students taking higher level subject in all areas by 25%
5. To increase the number of students who read for enjoyment each week as 40% of our students in first & second year do not read on a regular basis. Exposure to literacy & the development of positive attitudes towards reading will improve the school experiences of all students.
6. Teachers will instruct students in vocabulary by teaching words with a variety of methods- differentiating and increasing vocabulary acquisition such as: Give students opportunity to read aloud to improve word recognition, fluency and understanding of punctuation. Give students opportunity to pre-read texts and identify unknown words. Use of 'find the word' exercises to encourage use of synonyms and extension of vocabulary
7. Key words to be pre-taught using JCSP key word boards/resources
8. Learning Outcome Boards, Keyword Resources graphic organisers
9. Using Mind maps and Graphic organisers in class to organise the learning and support vocabulary skills Increased focus on literacy with JC students - raise the standards of tasks, coordinated approach Re: expectations, oral presentations etc.