

School Self Evaluation Interim Report for Assessment September 2015 – May 2017

1. Introduction

A school self evaluation of teaching and learning was undertaken in this school during the spring term of 2016. The use of assessment as a tool to enable our students to become self-directed learners, was the subject of this review.

A teaching and learning team was created which represented a cross section of all subject areas.

The members of the team are as follows;

- Marianne Ryan (Chairperson)
- Breege Keohane (Secretary)
- Darragh O'Donnell
- Selena Whelton
- Lee Healy
- Martina Maunsell
- Marie Sheehan

The team met three times as a whole group and a number of sub-committees met also. A different approach to this strand of school self-evaluation was decided on by the team and school management. It has been decided to examine the state of learning and assessment in the school in the spring term and analyse and present the findings to staff at the staff meeting in May. A decision on which areas to focus on for improvement will be made in early September. The team members will pilot a number of initiatives in their own classrooms and will share their experiences with the team and with the wider staff. A decision will then be taken on whole-school initiatives that teachers can implement. This decision will be taken in the Spring term of 2017.

This is an interim report on the findings of the evaluation.

2. School Context.

We are a co-educational post primary school in a rural area, under the trusteeship of CEIST. There are currently 510 students including 19 students with low incidence special education. 27 students diagnosed with high incidence special education and 4 students receiving learning support.

3. The Research

The team decided to gather evidence from students and teachers.

- A subcommittee was formed to create and administer a teacher survey in order to ascertain what methods of assessment are currently in use in our school.
- A separate subcommittee took on the task of doing focus groups with the students. Four focus groups, each with six students, were held. These focus groups were made up of the following:
 - First Year students
 - Second and Third Year students

- Transition and Fifth Year students
- Sixth year students
- Finally, a student survey, that was administered to all students in the school 2 years ago, by a member of the team who was at that time completing her Masters, was also used as evidence for our evaluation. The survey looked at teaching methodologies used in classes and student engagement in learning.

The Findings – Theme 2: Student’s Learning Experiences

Sub-Theme: Students Engagement in Learning

The findings were:

- 80% of teachers are using student presentations in their classrooms as a method of assessment.
- 72% of teachers are using practical work to assess their students.
- 100% of teachers use group or pair work to assess students.
- 96% of teachers use class discussion as a method of assessment.
- 80% of teachers use project work to assess students.
- “Written class test” is the most popular form of assessment used by teachers.
- Students identified a significant number of teachers were handing out the plan of work for the year and that they found this helpful.
- Students believed the use of key-words in classes helped them to get to grips with various topics.
- Students identified the use of visual aids in classrooms as particularly engaging and helpful. This was supported by further evidence from the student survey – use of internet and other resources were identified as helpful.
- Teachers who move about the room and give individual help enable students to stay focused.
- 90% of students said that teachers spent time “reading the book” often in class.
- A large majority of staff are using Edmodo in their classrooms but not as an assessment tool.
- The majority of teachers were unaware of the large variety of online tools that are available to aid teaching and learning, e.g. Quizlet and Kahoot.

Sub-Theme: Learning to Learn

The findings were:

- When giving feedback 96% of teachers insist on pupils correcting their errors.
- 88% of teachers target corrections to a specific area of work to enable students to focus on a particular skill.
- 76% of teachers use Oral Q&A sessions, between students, as a method of assessment.
- Students liked being able to re-do work to improve on their grades.
- Students identified questioning at the start and end of classes as a good way to help them to know if they have learned something during the class. This was supported by evidence from the student survey. 58% of students said that class

discussions were helpful and 48% of students identified Q&A sessions in the class as helpful.

- Students wanted to be given adequate time to get to grips with difficult chapters – to move more slowly through the work.
- Students wanted to see a wider variety of teaching methodologies in each class to suit the different styles of learners in the class.
- Students wanted more feedback on their tests and the possibility to redo if necessary.
- In the student survey 62 % of students said they would find it very helpful if they could complete revision work in a way that suits them, rather than in a way prescribed by the teacher.
- 60% of students said that they find relating school work to examples from the real world very helpful.

Suggested Areas of Improvement

- Teachers giving plan of work to students at start of the year.
- Integrating ICT into assessment – e.g. using Edmodo or another platform to assess students or enable students to assess themselves.
- The following suggestions were identified as good practice by teachers who completed the survey:
 - Getting students to fill in appraisal forms where they can highlight what they found interesting/easy/difficult/need more help in. This may also inform teacher methodologies used as well as getting students to take responsibility
 - The use of mini whiteboards
 - Students correcting each-others work using a marking scheme discussed in class
 - The use of role-playing/hot-seating to assist in learning but also getting a sense of levels of engagement and knowledge of the information
 - Graphic organisers

Further Actions:

- The group will meet to discuss areas for improvement.
- These areas will be piloted by the team and regular feedback will be given to colleagues.
- The school improvement plan will be drafted.