

## **Introduction**

### **The focus of the evaluation**

A school self evaluation of teaching and learning in Holy Family School was undertaken during the period of February 2012 to June 2012. After a period of analysis and consultation, one new initiative in numeracy ( Maths Blitzing)and a further initiative in literacy (Oral Language Development) were selected as curricular areas of learning to be focused on for the year (2014-2015) in accordance with Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (circular 56/2011).

### **School Context**

Holy Family School is a Catholic ethos, urban, mixed school established in 1976 under the patronage of the Bishop of Kerry. The school currently has 10 mainstream classes from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. It has two learning support teachers and two resource teachers. The current enrolment is 254 pupils comprising 73 girls and 181 boys.

The school administers Drumcondra/Micra-T standardised tests in English and Sigma-T standardised test in Mathematics from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, NNRIT to 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes.

Holy Family School has a broad spectrum, parent base which encompasses the full range of family situations encountered in a large urban town.

### **The Findings Evaluation approaches and methods used to gather evidence**

Data was gathered on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative enquiry.

The following sources of evidence were used to compile the findings of this report

Individual teacher views of practice in the respective numeracy and literacy areas

- Pupils' work and ability
- Observations of the learning support/resource team

- WSE observations and recommendations
- Existing approaches in targeted areas
- In-depth analysis of Sigma-T and Drumcondra/Micra-T standardised test results
- Pupil+parent questionnaire responses (Oral Language area)
- Comparison of the outcomes of standardized tests with national norms
- Middle Management discussion on best practice in teaching approaches in the targeted areas
- Informal discussion with pupils regarding approaches to the targeted areas

The following is a summary of our findings:-

### **Preparation for teaching**

Teachers prepare short term and long term plans and use these plans to guide teaching and learning. Monthly progress reports are completed and stored centrally. Curriculum objectives are adhered to and the Plean Scoile is used to guide policy.

### **Teaching Approaches**

Teachers utilise a broad range of resources, including information and communications technology (ICT) to good effect to support pupils in their learning. Teachers successfully employ a wide variety of teaching methodologies and approaches appropriate to the development of the various strands of numeracy and literacy ; these include number, measure, shape and space, algebra and data in numeracy and in literacy - oral language, reading, writing and digital media

literacy. A variety of organisational groupings and settings are used in classrooms to support Numeracy and Literacy . Teachers differentiate lessons effectively to cater for the needs and abilities of all pupils.

### **Management of Pupils**

This is an inclusive school, which respects all pupils regardless of background or gender. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning and they communicate this to them. A positive code of behaviour , including an anti-bullying policy is implemented in a fair and consistent way. It is reviewed annually. Pupils with SEN receive in-class support or are withdrawn from class for learning support in numeracy and literacy. The needs of pupils with low incidence teaching hours ( LITH ) are met through collaboration between the class teacher and resource teacher in adherence to each pupil's IEP.

### **Assessment**

A large selection of assessment tools are used to assess learning in numeracy and literacy— observations, checklists, curriculum objectives, questioning, self-assessment, tests and standardised tests. The school administers Drumcondra standardised test in English and Sigma-T standardised test in Mathematics from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, NNRIT to 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes. The Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy is used in Senior Infants to identify children at risk of reading failure. Jackson and Marino/Schonell tests are also used.

### **Learning Environment**

A print rich environment is evident in classrooms, in resource rooms and around the school. The school is decorated with displays of pupils' work. Positive attitudes towards numeracy and literacy are fostered and there are many initiatives which challenge pupils' interest such as Khan Academy, maths trails ,problem solving and tables tests in Numeracy and in literacy - Lift-Off Literacy,Literacy Boxes, SRA cards, silent and paired reading ,

library reading and visits to the local library . Enabling the pupils to acquire the necessary numeracy skills and concepts across the 5 curriculum strands is central to maths

attainment levels. Formal writing is well taught and pupils are facilitated to write in a variety of genres. The importance of oral language development is emphasised

- Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets
  - Greater emphasis placed on the school book fair as a means of inviting parents into the school to promote the purchase of appropriate reading material for enjoyment
  - A resource room was developed to store resources centrally
  - The development of pupil folders to highlight discrete areas of pupils' classwork which are passed on from class to class.
  - Uniform child friendly signage was developed throughout the school interior
- The development and purchase of Jolly Phonics Programme from Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class.
- Professional advice was sought regarding the implementation of Jolly Phonics Programme and staff seminar to be arranged
- Information regarding Jolly Phonics Programme is disseminated to parents
- The research and development of a Lift-Off Literacy Programme including investment and staffing
- The improvement of literacy skills of children in the various percentile bands as itemised in the standardised test results;
- Station Teaching of literacy skills in Junior and Senior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Lift-Off Literacy programme)
- The purchase and incorporation into classes of Folens Literacy Boxes and SRA Reading Labs to enhance literacy
- The organisation of support for pupils in need to include in-class support as well as group withdrawal.

### **Summary of school self-evaluation findings**

The following areas were identified as strengths with regard to numeracy and literacy:

## Numeracy

- Very positive progress was reported from the pilot programme in Maths Blitzing for 2013/14
- The standardised tests would show that those pupils with better understanding of **data** (in the 51<sup>st</sup> – 84<sup>th</sup> Percentile Band) increased from 35% -to 41%
- Those with a better understanding of **shape & space** increased from 39% to 41% in the same Percentile Band
  - In the 99<sup>th</sup> – 100<sup>th</sup> Percentile Band the percentage of pupils increased from 10% to 21% in **shape & space**
  - In the 99<sup>th</sup> – 100<sup>th</sup> Percentile Band the percentage of pupils increased from 15% to 21% in **algebra**
  - The percentage of Holy Family School pupils on the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile or below is reported as 10.3% as compared with 16.0% nationally
  - The percentage of Holy Family School pupils on the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or above is reported as 33.6% as compared with 16.0%
- Very positive feedback was received from children using the on-line **Mathletics Programme**
  - The web based programme **Khan Academy** being used by 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> classes yielded very positive results

### Literacy : Oral language

### **PARENTS** (based on questionnaire)

- 87% of parents reported that their child could express himself/herself well
- 82% reported that their child could follow verbal instructions easily
- 86% reported that their child could describe an event/story in a logical way
- 74% expressed a view that their child listened well to both themselves and others
- 78% of parents listened to their child's reading and spelling each evening
- 86% stated that their child could distinguish between speaking to their friend as opposed to another adult/teacher/guard
- 70% of international families reported that English was also spoken at home
- 100% of international families reported that their child was capable of starting a conversation in English with another child
- 73% of international parents reported that their child uses English when using multi-media

**PUPILS** (based on questionnaire)

- 71% of pupils reported that they like speaking in front of the class
- 95% reported that their opinions and feelings are respected when shared with others at home
- 76% felt that their opinions and feelings are respected when shared with others at school
- 87% reported that they get a chance to give their opinion at home
- 77% felt that they get a chance to give their opinion at school
- 71% reported that they enjoy reading aloud in class
- 75% reported that they could follow a series of instruction or directions without having them repeated
- 82% reported that they could give a series of instructions or directions so that they could be clearly understood

The following areas are prioritised for development with regard to numeracy and literacy:

**Specific areas of focus (2014-2015)**

Maths Blitzing

This initiative was piloted in the 2013/14 school year. It yielded very positive results and has consequently been incorporated into the Learning Support schedule for 2014/15. It is evidence based support given to groups of pupils whose classroom performance and Sigma-T scores indicate problems in their understanding of **number, measure, shape and space, algebra and data**. This targeted intervention is timetabled into the Learning Support provision and through a process of consultation is aligned to the classroom teacher's short term planning in the chosen strand. 6 different groupings were targeted from September to May.

Maths

blitzing with senior infants was in the form of Mata

sa

Rang.

Oral Language development

Discrete Oral language lessons in each class based on the 5 components:-

- Listening and speaking skills
- Auditory memory
- Variety of spoken texts
- Vocabulary and conceptual knowledge
- Language learning environment
- Oral language cues to be displayed

### **Legislative and regulatory requirements**

Holy Family School is currently meeting these requirements

### **School policy requirements**

The following policies need to be updated:-

- Maths
- English
- Code of Behaviour
- Assessment