

School Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan

1. Introduction: This document records the
 - outcomes of our last school improvement plan (2012-2016)
 - findings of self-evaluation (March 2018 – November 2018)

and our current improvement plan 2021-22 (including targets and the actions we will implement to meet the targets).

This is a working document.

We now have a new target in English (handwriting), a renewed focus in Maths (tables) and a range of targets in a new subject in this school improvement process: SPHE.

ENGLISH: Target 1: In 2012, the school adopted a 'whole school approach' to the learning of the **comprehension strategies** using the 'Building Bridges of Comprehension' programme i.e prediction, visualisation, making connections, questioning, monitoring comprehension, determining importance, inferring and synthesis.

Target 2 (specific to Junior and Senior Infants) That children will attain selected curriculum objectives in pre-reading, reading, pre-writing, writing and learning grammar.

Target 3 related to **English grammar**

- 1st class will be enabled to identify and use nouns, verbs and pronouns , adjectives sentences and phrases.
- In addition 2nd and 3rd class will be enabled to identify and use collective nouns, comparative and superlative adjectives, adverbs, syllables and contractions.
- 4th class will be enabled to identify and use prepositions and conjunctions, prefixes, suffixes and homophones.
- 5th and 6th class will be enabled to identify and use the verb ' to be', compound & continuous verbs subject and object of sentence and possessive pronouns.

Target 4 was a straightforward one: Pupils will improve their **dictionary skills**

Target 5 Children will be able to identify and use **writing genres**.

In St. Brigid's National School, there is a comprehensive approach to the teaching of genres i.e. recount, report, explanatory, procedural, persuasive and narrative writing. We have a 'whole school' approach. Teachers from 2nd class up, all teach the same genre at the same time e.g. in September we teach 'recount. In teaching the genres of writing, the students also encounter the genres through reading and being read to, teacher-modelled writing, shared writing, guided writing, leading to independent writing. These five targets are now embedded in '**whole school approaches**' in St. Brigid's NS., i.e. the continued use of 'Building Bridges of Comprehension,' 'Jolly Grammar', New Wave English and the teaching of genres.

At a staff meeting on 16th March 2018, staff *initially* decided that **our new target** in English was that each class would work on creative writing skills with a particular emphasis on **poetry. As detailed later on in this document, this was to change.**

MATHS: Since the SSE process started in 2012 **these have been our targets in Maths**

Target 1 – Build a 'solid number foundation' in Junior and Senior Infants.

- Implement "Ready, Steady, Go" Programme.
- Increase use of concrete materials
- Teach 1-1 correspondence, conservation of no, positional language, cardinal aspect of no
- Include more maths games in learning

Target 2 The Learning of Tables

- Children in 1st class will learn doubles, tenners, teens and near doubles.
- Children in 2nd classes will learn all addition and subtraction tables to 12.
- Children in 3rd class revise addition and subtraction tables to 12 and learn multiplication and division tables to 12.
- Children in 4th, 5th & 6th classes revise all addition, subtraction, multiplication and division tables to 12.

Target 3 Place Value

- Children in 1st classes will be enabled to explore, identify, order and record numerals 0 to 99, 2nd class to 199, 3rd to 999, 4th to 9999.
- 3rd class will be enabled to explore, identify, order and record place value in decimal numbers to one place of decimals in 3rd class and to two places in 4th
- 5th class will round decimals to two places and to three places in 6th.

Target 4 JI – 6th Estimation

- Children will be enabled to learn steps involved in estimation. Teaching children that an estimate is just 'their best guess' and doesn't have to be right.

Target 5 Language The language used in St. Brigid's for the four main mathematical operations will be standardized across the classes. Teachers will make sure that they use the same terms and vocabulary.

Once again these five targets remain embedded in the learning and teaching in the school.

1. **Outcomes of our last improvement plan from 2012 to 14th March 2016 (INTO directive)**

The net effect of the school's self improvement plan was that these targets in Maths and English, became substantially embedded in the curriculum that is delivered in St. Brigid's, and the planning that each class teacher does.

1.2 **The focus of this evaluation**

We undertook self-evaluation of teaching and learning, beginning with a staff meeting on 16th March 2018. We evaluated the following aspect(s) of teaching and learning:

- The teaching of **English**: Staff felt that our previous engagement with SSE with its emphasis on English grammar, comprehension, dictionary skills and writing using genres had meant that for the most part creative writing, particularly poetry had received less attention.
- **Maths**: The ongoing importance of learning tables
- **SPHE**: Staff acknowledged the importance of the wellbeing of the children in our care, teaching the 'whole child' and the significant role SPHE has in this.

2. **Findings** (Investigation Stage initiated at Staff Meeting 16th March 2018)

ENGLISH

Having worked on a SWOT analysis (**s**trengths, **w**eaknesses, **o**pportunities and **t**hreats) of the teaching of English in the school, teachers said they felt confident and competent in the area of teaching of creative writing and poetry. However staff wondered if this was to be the focus of school improvement, how measurable targets in poetry would be? The school principal attended a meeting on school self evaluation. The importance of targets being SMART was emphasized. SMART targets are **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**elevant and **t**imely.

Increasingly teachers felt that children's fine motor skills and handwriting needed attention. On account of changes in lifestyle children don't have the manual dexterity

they once had. This appears to be a result of societal/lifestyle changes: people not writing letters, keeping diaries. The use of screens and technology has contributed to this.

Pencil grip is taught explicitly yet by 2nd class how many children are holding their pencils correctly? Teachers also felt that for the SSE process, improvements in handwriting (and particularly functional pencil grip) were more measurable and that meaningful SMART targets could be devised for improvements in handwriting and functional pencil grip.

The PDST advisor made an interesting point: given children are being taught pen grip and handwriting explicitly in the earlier years in the school, where is the foot being taken off the pedal? At what point are children using a non functional grip? At what point are the children stopping using cursive writing and starting to print?

MATHS

Staff felt that learning tables is so fundamental to successful outcomes in maths, that the importance of tables was an area that needed revisiting. Staff find unless they keep on focusing on learning tables, year after year, children's knowledge of these number facts slip back.

A SWOT analysis showed that teachers see the value of knowing tables and number strategies; if a child knows their simple number facts then they can give their full attention to methodology when being taught new maths e.g. long division and fractions. However it appears that some parents do not see the value of tables. Some children cannot memorize tables. They would benefit from aide memoires and learning strategies. Some children are not motivated to learn tables. Teachers and parents cannot learn the tables for the children. Children need to be motivated to learn them. Teachers are motivated to teach tables as they see their value.

SMART (**s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**elevant and **t**imely) targets could be devised for the learning of tables. In order to assess tables, the Ballard Westwood One Minute Test is easily administered. Teachers felt addressing knowledge of tables in the school improvement process would act as a reminder to staff, parents and students of the importance of learning tables.

SPHE

Identifying area to be prioritised: S.W.O.T analysis results;

Strengths	Concerns	Opportunities	Threats
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R.S.E programme Atmosphere & environment in school Bullying policy Equality Stay safe Mindfulness Charity work Fundraising Road Safety Walk Tall Yoga Healthy eating policy Respect prioritised	High level of anxiety Inclusion SEN Over involvement Support for teachers Lack of resources Building resilience Further support for our children - lack of resources Parents refusing RSE	Circle time CPD Speakers Weaving wellness Student council Buddy system 6 th and infants	Disempowering children Social med Rise in cases of abu / neglect Time Space
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2.1 Main strengths of the school in teaching and learning (in the areas of English, Maths and SPHE).

ENGLISH

The School Self Evaluation process (2012-2016) has resulted in a comprehensive 'whole school approach' to the teaching of English, particularly comprehension, phonics, genres (writing and reading) and English grammar. Teachers feel competent and confident with regard to the teaching of creative English and poetry.

MATHS

Beginning with a 'solid number foundation' in Junior and Senior Infants using the 'Ready, Steady, Go' programme and building on this with targeted focus on the language of maths, tables, mental maths, estimation, place value, fractions, decimals and percentages.

SPHE

Staff in St. Brigid's have a genuine interest in the children in their care. The main findings from teaching staff questionnaire are

- the huge amount of excellent work being done in SPHE
- that teachers rate SPHE as very important with the curriculum

2.2. This is how we know

- The children are producing work of quality in English. Comprehension skills have improved. The daily use of New Wave English revises grammar regularly with the children. Drumcondra Reading results were seen to have improved between June 2012 and June 2015. Children above the 85 PR went from 33% to 43%
- Test Scores in Maths. Children appear to have increased confidence in Maths.
- SWOT Analysis and questionnaires about SPHE
- **This is what we are going to focus on to improve our practice further**

- **ENGLISH:** Developing a functional pencil/pen grip and handwriting among the majority of the students.
 - **MATHS:** Improving children's knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division tables
 - Children in 1st class will learn doubles, tenners, teens and near doubles.
 - Children in 2nd classes will learn all addition and subtraction tables to 12.
 - Children in 3rd class revise addition and subtraction tables to 12 and learn multiplication and division tables to 12.
 - Children in 4th, 5th & 6th classes revise all addition, subtraction, multiplication and division tables to 12.
 - **SPHE:** Improving the children's wellbeing through SPHE, prioritising developing resilience and self-esteem to boost the wellbeing of our pupils
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