

Scoil San Treasa

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Our Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan – *with specific focus on Science*

summary document for the school community – parents.

1.0 Introduction

On an ongoing basis, we look at teaching and learning in our school - reflecting on what we are doing well and on what areas we may strengthen and develop further. This approach is embedded in practice in Scoil San Treasa. Mindful of the various opportunities, challenges, strengths and opportunities that prevail over time, we seek to sustain and develop what we have and enrich aspects of learning experiences in priority areas. In addition to the above, we consult, reflect and plan in a particularly focused/formal way on specific areas via the structured School Self-Evaluation/School Improvement Plan process as per Department of Education and Skills (DES) procedures.

This document summarises

- key outcomes of our most recent ‘formal’ school improvement plans,
- the findings of our current self-evaluation process, *and*
- our current improvement plan (including how we will seek to enhance teaching and learning in this area and suggestions of ways that parents may further support their children’s learning).

We acknowledge the high level of engagement with the school self-evaluation/school improvement consultative process across the school community.

2.0 Some outcomes of previous key improvement plans

SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) June 2015 (and ongoing informally thereafter); Literacy from September 2013 to June 2014 (and ongoing informally thereafter); and Numeracy from April 2012 to June 2013 (and ongoing informally thereafter).

- Collaborative focus on enhancement of children’s higher order comprehension skills at all class levels via development of a common and consistent methodology in the teaching of comprehension strategies throughout the school
- Ongoing focus on early prevention/intervention re reading difficulties & on development of reading fluency
- Expansion of the variety & genres of reading material to which pupils are exposed
- Sourcing of extension & enrichment activities re literacy & maths and engagement with such resources
- Aistear approaches embedded in practice at infant level
- Inclusion of literacy and/or numeracy focus in all ICT sessions in ICT room – deepening ICT cross-curricular links
- Enhanced communication with parents regarding literacy & numeracy– including website tips, information in newsletters, focus during parent/teacher meetings, guest speakers, displays etc.
- Heightened focus on problem-solving and on engagement of pupils with problem-solving beyond the text book
- Enhancement of ‘Maths environment’ in school e.g. via Maths Eyes initiative, Solve-A-Problem project, incidental markings/signage
- Heightened focus on oral/mental Maths including tables

- More information for parents on children's SPHE learning - to prompt dialogue re what is covered at school - and tips/information generally so that they can further support their children's learning in SPHE – Thursday night SPHE scrapbook initiative; newsletter & website tips; guest speakers.
- Updated RSE Policy.
- Weaving Wellbeing programme introduced at 4th/5th/6th class levels.
- Heightened focus on Internet Safety – across the school community.

3.0 The focus of this evaluation

During the period April 2018 to October 2018, we undertook self-evaluation of **Science teaching and learning**.

3.1 Findings

Our findings reflect the input of pupils (via questionnaires & structured discussions), parents (via questionnaires, informal discussions & email input) and teachers (via questionnaires, observations, professional conversations & discussions), and Board of Management consideration. When considering areas for development and enhancement, we bore in mind current thinking in the area of Science at primary school level, including the DES publication '**Science in the Primary School**' (2008) which highlights the importance of whole-school planning for *Working Scientifically* and *Designing and Making*.

Some key strengths of our school in Science teaching and learning:

- Positive attitude to science across the school community – including pupils, teachers and parents
- High expectations of pupils – evident in the pupils themselves & their work, their teachers and their parents
- Teacher focus on developing & implementing whole-school approaches to science in line with the Primary Curriculum, and openness & commitment to developing individual & collective expertise further
- Channelling of the collective energy and interest of home and school to facilitate and deliver science-based projects at whole-school level – embedding of such approaches in the school year on rolling basis
- School resources & local environment with obvious potential for rich science-based learning
- Gardening/Biodiversity/Green Schools work is well established, with support across the school community
- Engagement with personnel and resources external to the school to enhance the pupils' learning and school experience in the area of science

Aspects of teaching and learning that the school has identified and prioritised for further development and enrichment.

- Working scientifically/practical, 'hands-on' work
- Linking science with the real world
- Enhanced use of local environment – natural & man-made
- Sustaining & developing current good practice at whole-school level e.g. Gardening & Biodiversity; school/Parents' Association whole-school science projects
- Strengthening literacy & numeracy links with science teaching & learning
- Heightened focus on teacher identification of and engagement with CPD (Continuing Professional Development) that develops their own practice, meets the needs of pupils and the school and enhances collective practice in the area of science, together with generation of enhanced opportunities for teachers to engage in a range of CPD courses, sharing of expertise and further study relevant to pupils' learning.
- Teacher focus on collective agreement around and implementation of whole-school approaches to teaching and learning to improve pupils' experiences and outcomes (with specific reference to Discover Primary Science STEM Award)
- Strengthening and extension of collaboration with colleagues and relevant/appropriate outside personnel (including professional development) to enhance the provision of meaningful learning

experiences for pupils, and working together with those personnel to ensure that the learning is integrated (with specific reference to Discover Primary Science STEM).

4.0 Some suggestions regarding how you, as parents, can help us to enhance your child's learning in this area. *(This is not an exhaustive list).*

- Talk to your child about Science learning. You may find the STEM posters, 'Reflecting on Learning' and 'Reflecting on Learning...Looking Forward' helpful. (available on our website, www.sstreasa.ie in the 'Supporting Your Child's Learning' section, under the tab, 'Parents'.)
- Check out the 'Galleries' section of our website - specifically 'Projects' - on an intermittent basis and engage with your child on the science-related topics that may appear there or in other sections of our website. *It is planned to augment the science-related material on our website over time in tandem with our heightened focus on this area.*
- Encourage your child to interact with activities on websites such as <https://nrich.maths.org/primary> While the activities on this website focus on mathematics, they nonetheless help to hone children's thinking skills. This can have a knock-on benefit in the area of science.
- Encourage your child to interact with activities on the website, <http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie/> This website has suggestions for a range of activities that can be carried out at home – including science-based activities. The activities are grouped according to age.
- Supporting and encouraging your child around home-based science projects that may be assigned as part of homework is a key way of nurturing your child's learning in this area. As always, please prioritise health & safety matters with regard to any activity.
- As the year progresses, you are likely to hear more about our school's involvement in the Discover Primary Science & Maths (DPSM) Award programme. Keep an eye out for updates via our website, email, newsletter and homework notebook so that you can engage with your child/school projects as opportunities present themselves. Parental interest in what your child is doing at school can be a very powerful motivator for your child.
- Include science books and science TV programmes in your child's leisure reading/leisure activities. Consider including science kits etc. in gifts/treats for your child as appropriate to their age and level of interest.
- Consider engaging with the vetting process via the school so that you may be in a position to assist with field trips and/or practical work if the school needs support in this area.