

St Paul's Secondary School, Oughterard



OUR SELF-EVALUATION REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In the last year, we have looked at teaching and learning in our school to find out what we are doing well. This is what we discovered:

- Teachers encourage a positive atmosphere in lessons where students are happy to offer answers or raise questions which are valuable learning opportunities.
- In lessons, teachers demonstrate a high level of pedagogical knowledge and use the support of everyday real-life examples to engage the students and allow them to make meaningful links between school and our world.
- ICT is used effectively by many teachers to enhance and support teaching and learning.
- Questioning is used very well to scaffold and support learning, to keep students on track, to assess the level of understanding and to promote learning.
- In lessons where high expectations are set for the quality of students' work, it is obvious that students strive to achieve these high standards.
- The majority of students have experienced a vast range of formative assessment strategies e.g. self-assessment, peer-assessment, mini-whiteboards, brainstorming, etc.

This is what we did to find out what we were doing well, and what we could do better:

- A range of students completed an online survey relating to their experience of AfL in the classroom.
- A survey of 2nd year parents was conducted during a parent teacher meeting to assess their attitudes towards assessment.
- Teachers completed a survey to attain their perspectives towards their opinions on the success of last year's targets (AfL) and changes to be made for the forth coming year. This survey was also used to assess the attitudes of teachers towards Literacy in our school in order to set targets for this year.

- A focus group of seven teachers was set up to discuss the key strengths and issues that we had met in relation to Literacy in our school. Targets to aid improvement were agreed on.

- State Examination results were analysed to give an overview as to how our Leaving Certificate results compare to the national norms.

- Reports from the Department of Education and Skills Inspections were analysed.

*AfL: Assessment for Learning is about using assessment in the classroom as a tool to improve students' learning.

*Literacy: Includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.

This is what we are now going to work on:

- Continue to focus on the use of written feedback students receive on their formative/summative assessment to allow them to focus on their individual areas for improvement.

- Incorporation of learning intentions at the beginning and ending of each lesson to allow students to be aware of what their teacher requires them to know, understand and be able to do following the lesson. The term 'learning intentions' will be used specifically by teachers to focus/motivate students for that class.

- Sharing the 'success criteria' with students on a more regular basis when competing a task in order for them to acknowledge the standard required of particular learning intentions e.g. give them a checklist of criteria they must have included in their answer, a sample answer, other students work, etc. This provides our students with the tools they need to take more responsibility for their own learning and achieve greater independence, we need to communicate to them; what they are going to learn, why they should learn it, how they will recognise when they have succeeded.

- Continue to encourage students to 'read for pleasure', outside of the English classroom. A mobile library is now available within the school and the school library will be open on Wednesday's at lunchtime. Reading is a fundamental aspect of our student's development as it boosts vocabulary and creativity, whilst also contributing positively to their wellbeing.

- Continue to promote opportunities where students can develop their oral literacy in the classroom for example, reading aloud in class, presenting an example of their work to the rest of their class, etc. This skill is an essential element of the new junior cycle curriculum.

- Improve the standard of students' written work. A checklist has been inputted into student's journals which will allow them to self-assess their work with a major emphasis being placed on spelling (link is made to success criteria)

- Following the publication of Circular 0041/2020, we have decided that whilst continuing to embed and encourage the above teaching and learning strategies, the return to school and the support of staff/students would be imperative for the 2020/2021 school year. During the course of the year a substantial amount of work is being completed on the Wellbeing Policy as this is a requirement for all schools by 2023.

This is what you can do to help:

- Encourage your son/daughter to take the time to read through their written feedback, express any concerns/questions they may have with the teacher and more importantly, to take comments on board with the aim of improving the next time.
- Remind your son/daughter that they must take responsibility for their own learning by focusing on learning intentions, referring to success criteria and to be the best that they can be.
- Promote a positive atmosphere for your son/daughter with regard to reading on a more consistent basis e.g. novels, newspapers, etc. Reassure them of the benefits this will have and urge them to avail of the school library.

Here is some information about how we are carrying out our work and about what the Department of Education and Skills requires us to do.

School time and holidays

The Department requires all post-primary schools to have **167 school days** each year, and a **28-hour school week**.

Last year we had **164** school days, from **26th August** to **31st May**. Three days are not recorded as there was two days of Junior Cycle Inservice and one day of exceptional closure for schools with a new ASD special class. Our school week is **28** hours.

The Department sets out a **standardised school year and school holidays**.

This year we took all our school holidays within the permitted time. **YES** / NO

The Department sets out arrangements for **parent/teacher meetings and staff meetings**.

Last year we had **7** parent/teacher meetings and **7** staff meetings, all in line with the Department's regulations.

Looking after the children in our school

The Department requires schools to a Child Safeguarding Statement (C.S.S).

Our board of management has ratified the school's C.S.S. **YES** / NO

All teachers know about the Statement and we have told all parents and students about it and where to find it **YES** / NO

Our Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mrs Orla Malone.
Our Deputy DLP is Mr Micheál Ó'Frighil.

Enrolment and attendance

The Department requires schools to have and publish an admissions policy, to record and report attendance accurately, and to encourage high attendance and participation.

We have an admissions policy and it is published. **YES** / NO
We updated our admissions policy on: **September 2020**

We keep accurate attendance records and report them as required. **YES** / NO

We encourage high attendance in the following ways:

- The importance of good attendance is highlighted at assemblies
- Attendance is discussed at Parent Teacher Meetings and Student Council Meetings.
- Teachers positively affirm attendance while taking roll call.
- A record of attendance is included in school reports.
- The Student Council have a 'Wellness Week' each year which promotes positive mental health and good nutrition for students. This helps to encourage students to stay well.
- Attendance is an item discussed at Board Meetings and Staff Meetings.
- A prize is given for the best attenders in Transition Year.

This is how you can help:

- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students every school day and to avoid absences.
- To ring school on first day of absence.
- To provide written explanation of student's absence on 1st day of return to school.
- To inform school in advance of any planned absences from school
- To provide the school with reliable contact details/numbers.
- To acknowledge and, where necessary reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.
- Any student who needs to leave the school during the school day must be collected and signed out by a Parent/Guardian at reception and students sign in on return.

Positive behaviour for a happy school

The Department requires schools to have a code of behaviour, and asks us to consult parents and students about it. We do this. **YES** / NO

Our code of behaviour describes and supports positive behaviour. **YES** / NO

We have a very clear and high-profile anti-bullying policy in our school. **YES** / NO