

Knock National School, Knock, Co Mayo
16122D

School Self-Evaluation Report

September 2012 – June 2013



June 2013

School Self-Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The focus of the evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in Knock National School was undertaken during the period September 2012 – June 2013. During the evaluation teaching and learning in the following curriculum area was evaluated:

Numeracy: Understanding and using Mathematics

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation

1.2 School context

Knock National School is a co-educational Catholic primary school. It is located in the village of, Knock Co Mayo. The school is a vertical mainstream school with 144 children on roll.

There are five mainstream classroom teachers and two support teachers. The children attending Knock National School are mainly from the surrounding area in addition to which children from traveller families (10%), and other European countries (10%) also attend. The school presently has DEIS Rural status, and receives DEIS funding each year. The school participates in the following programmes: Ready, Set, Go Maths and Mata sa Rang. Ready, Set, Go Maths has been in use for four years. Mata sa Rang is currently being introduced in first class.

2. Findings

Findings are presented in relation to the aspects of teaching and learning evaluated with reference to the sub-themes below:

Numeracy

Results of Standardised tests for 2012 and 2013 are outlined below

2012	Sten 1-3	Sten 4	Sten 5	Sten 6	Sten 7	Sten 8-10
Total	11	10	9	18	14	51
% Total	9.7%	8.8%	8.0%	15.9%	12.4%	45.1%
% Total (Norm)	10%	17%		28%		46%

2013	Sten 1-3	Sten 4	Sten 5	Sten 6	Sten 7	Sten 8-10
Total	16	9	13	16	18	36
% Total	14.8%	0.3%	12%	14.8%	16.7%	33.3%
% Total (Norm)	15%	20%		31%		33%

Findings from the teachers' focus group indicate that:

- Teachers are knowledgeable and willing to embrace new strategies and programmes in maths. There is excellent co-operation amongst all members of staff
- Classroom culture is very positive towards maths and all teachers use the same mathematical language throughout the school
- Increased focus should be placed on tables and problem solving throughout the school. Children should be encouraged and given time to think critically to solve the problem.
- Problems should be varied to include all those outlined in the Maths curriculum particularly open ended questions.

Findings from the parents' questionnaire indicate that:

- Parents recognise that maths is a core curriculum subject and important for everyday life.
- Parents are aware of their child's ability in maths and satisfied with their child's progress.

Findings from the pupil questionnaire indicate that:

- The majority of children (80%) like maths, although less than half (40%) of those surveyed believe that they are good at maths.
- Children recognise that maths is essential for everyday living particularly the use of money. Some children associate maths with employment.
- Children identified problem solving as an area they find difficult in maths. They would like to spend additional time on maths games and problem solving.

- **Quality Statement on Attainment of Curriculum Objectives**

The overall attainment of children with regard to the Mathematics curriculum remains at a high standard in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Primary School Curriculum. Work is differentiated for children who find this curricular area difficult, and students at risk of underachieving are identified at an early stage and making progress. Children are presently screened for Learning Support at the end of second class, however, children will be screened from the end of first class going forward. The Learning Support/Resource Teacher works with the Infant teacher to implement the Ready, Set, Go Maths program in the infant classroom. Both classes engage with the program from the beginning of the school year. Mata sa Rang is currently being introduced in first class.

For the most part the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding with regard to Mathematics reflect the learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for each class level. Evidence collected from school staff, parents and pupil questionnaire responses, samples of pupils' work and our standardised tests results indicate that additional emphasis should be placed on the teaching of tables and problem solving across the school. The children are familiar with and engage frequently with word problems, additional emphasis should be placed on the following:

- practical tasks
- open ended investigation
- puzzles
- games
- projects
- mathematical trails
- spatial awareness and reasoning

The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developing in a progressive way as they move from class to class. The learning targets set out in the DEIS plan in Maths have been achieved. Pupil questionnaires provide evidence that a high percentage of pupils enjoy Maths and are challenged and motivated to learn. Pupils confidently use and apply numeracy skills that are necessary to develop their learning in Maths.

Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.

- **Quality Statement on Learning Environment**

A safe, stimulating and rich learning environment is provided for pupils in the school. Classrooms and all sections of the school building are organised, clean, well maintained and provide stimulus for and evidence of children's learning. Classrooms are appropriately laid out. All rooms have specific maths areas. They are well resourced and organised in an orderly fashion.

Children's work is greatly valued throughout the school. Classrooms and the general school building is decorated with displays and centres of interest that celebrate pupils' work and support their learning particularly with regard to literacy and numeracy. A puzzle of the week board is in use in the senior classroom and will be in use in all classes from September 2013. Children's work is regularly displayed on the school website to further celebrate and communicate their learning with the parent body. Due attention is given to pupil safety during lessons, break times and all school activities. Playground markings in the junior classes and have chosen based on literacy and numeracy. During lessons children have access to high quality practical maths resources (including ICT based) to support their learning and enable them to be active learners. All classrooms have core maths equipment and access to additional shared equipment for use throughout the school. Children use ICT based maths programs on a regular basis and children from 3rd - 6th use the Mathletics program on a regular basis. Teachers are aware of and follow the National Child Protection Guidelines. Teachers are provided with Child Protection folders containing the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Guidelines, Knock NS Annual Review of Child Protection and guidelines pertaining to reporting Child Protection concerns to the Designated Liaison Person.

There are significant strengths in this area.

- **Quality Statement on Pupils' Engagement in Learning**

Pupils at all class levels are enabled to engage actively in their learning and for the most part the level of pupil interest and participation is high. Children are given frequent opportunities with a clear purpose to engage in independent and collaborative learning. The school intends to re-introduce the Maths for Fun program. Parents will work with children in the middle and senior classes, children from the senior classes will work with infants. Teachers are aware of the importance of the skills based approach of the Primary School Curriculum. Children engage with the skills through the content of the Maths curriculum. Children are challenged in the activities organised for them in their classrooms, support rooms and other

learning settings in the school. Children are screened used the Sigma T standardised test and provided with additional support if required. For the most part children achieve the expected outcomes of lessons. Teachers intend to prioritise the use of maths attainment tracking to monitor children's progress in more detail.

Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.

- **Quality Statement on Learning to Learn**

The school aims to equip the pupils effectively with the tools and skills they need for learning now and into the future. In most classes pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own work and are involved in monitoring their own progress in learning.

The teachers focus on developing the pupils' abilities to communicate, work with others, investigate/enquire, experiment, analyse and problem solve. However, acknowledge that additional focus should be placed on the use of these skills, particularly, problem solving and task analysis.. The pupils are guided in developing the necessary skills to plan, study, organise homework, revise, summarise, present their work to others and answer questions on their work.

The pupils are provided with frequent, well-guided access to useful and relevant ICT hardware and programs. They are enabled to use it to present and illustrate their work, access, assess and retrieve information, organise and produce information, express ideas, and to develop, support and extend their learning. All children throughout the school have access to Google Apps to support their learning, if required by the class teacher, and children in the senior classes can choose to attend an after school ICT club.

Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area

- **Quality Statement on Preparation for Teaching**

Teachers are thoroughly prepared in terms of practical and written planning for the delivery of the curriculum through the lessons they teach. Expected learning outcomes are clear, curriculum based and are differentiated as necessary to cater for the learning needs and abilities of pupils in the classroom. Teacher regularly communicate with support teachers and take children's IPLP's and IEP's into account when planning. The school's DEIS plan outlines specific learning outcomes for the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

All teachers prepare short term and long term plans in line with the Primary School Curriculum and Individual Teacher Planning guidelines. All teachers prepare a monthly report of curriculum content covered. Written plans are used to guide teaching and learning. Written plans indicate the expected learning outcomes of lessons, the teaching approaches and methodologies, resources, and activities that will facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Teachers do not use textbooks as a primary resource to teach a concept. Children engage in a mixture of paired, group and class teaching. Necessary and relevant resources, materials and equipment are in use throughout the school. Teachers are familiar with the school maths plan use the agreed strategies and language as outlined in the plan. Teachers plan effectively for how they intend to assess pupils' learning, taking due account of the

curriculum guidelines, the range of assessment strategies outlined in the NCCA Assessment Guidelines and Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy. The increased time allocation for Maths is reflected in each class teacher's timetable.

There are significant strengths in this area

- **Quality Statement on Teaching Approaches**

Teaching is generally focused, stimulating and relevant to the pupils' learning needs. Lessons are guided by expected learning outcomes that are linked to the curriculum. These objectives are shared with children. Expected learning outcomes are achieved during the context of the lesson. There is progression in the pupils' learning in each strand and strand unit as children move from class level to class level. Teachers meet to discuss concerns with regard to particular pupil's learning as children progress throughout the school. The teachers aim to ensure that there is a systematic development and application of knowledge and skills including ICT in the curriculum area. Attention is regularly given within the Maths curriculum to the development of positive attitudes towards learning.

Teacher lessons are well structured, with a clear introduction, development and conclusion to the lesson. Teachers use a variety of teaching approaches and methodologies, as recommended by the Primary School Curriculum, including:

- Teacher and pupil questioning
- Active learning including play
- Guided activity and discovery
- Co-operative and collaborative learning
- Talk and discussion
- Environment based learning
- Higher order thinking and problem solving skills

The area of higher order thinking and problem solving has been prioritised as an area for further development across the school.

Pupils' prior learning, interests and experiences are taken into account in lesson content. Teacher questioning is clear and concise, using a mixture of lower and higher order questions. Teachers use various question types that link with Blooms Taxonomy as taken from the NCCA Assessment Guidelines. Teachers use a broad range of activities to actively engage children in Maths lessons. The varying needs of children are taken into account and work is differentiated accordingly for the higher achievers and children with difficulties in this area. Pupils have access to a range of practical maths equipment including ICT programs. Team teaching is utilised in some classes. Children do not attend support classes during Maths lessons. Assessment for Learning (AfL) is a feature in classrooms. Teachers use this to inform their classroom planning and practice. Assessment is ongoing throughout the year and outcomes are recorded and used to inform future class and school planning.

Good use is made of relevant and necessary resources, including ICT, to support pupils in their learning and the development of numeracy and literacy skills. Most classes are multi class, therefore, teachers need to adapt approaches and strategies on a regular basis to differentiate learning and cater for the needs of all pupils.

Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area

- **Quality Statement on Management of Pupils**

Teachers employ positive behaviour management strategies in their classroom. All classes draw up a class contract at the beginning of each academic year. The school climate and atmosphere embodies a sense of respect, empathy and tolerance. The management of pupils during learning and school activities is effective. Children are suitably commended and rewarded for positive and appropriate behaviour. A positive school Code of Behaviour is implemented. The school is currently reviewing their anti-bullying policy, it will comply with the requirements of the Equal Status Act (2000-2011). Parents receive a copy of the school Code of Behaviour on enrolment, it is also available on the school website, and they are expected to support the Code of Behaviour. Teacher-teacher, teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, teacher-parent interactions are conducted in a positive and respectful manner.

Pupils' efforts and achievements are regularly affirmed, children are encouraged to share and celebrate their achievements in their classes, at assemblies and their work is regularly displayed throughout the school and on the school website. Teachers have a high but realistic expectation of pupils in relation to the manner in which they conduct themselves. They are regularly commended for their behaviour in the class environment. Activities have a learning purpose and there is a clear order and structure to the way that activities are organised and managed. Children are aware of and engage in classroom and school routines. Active learning opportunities are provided on a regular basis.

A sense of respect permeates throughout the school. Pupils are listened to and encouraged to develop and share their views in the classroom environment. Such views are listened to in accordance with their age and maturity and taken into account in the organisation of activities and in the devising of policies where relevant.

Knock National School promotes inclusiveness. All children are treated in a fair and equitable manner regardless of their background, ability or aptitude. Difference and diversity is celebrated throughout the school. Equal learning opportunities take place for boys and girls. Pupils with special needs and pupils from minority groups are treated in an inclusive and equitable manner.

Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area

- **Quality Statement on Assessment**

The school is currently in the process of reviewing the school policy on Assessment. School practice and policy takes account of the curriculum, the NCCA Assessment Guidelines and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. The school provides parents with reports of their children's progress at parent/teacher meetings, sending home samples of assessment, end of year reports and informally throughout the year should the need arise.

A range of assessment approaches include *AfL* and Assessment of Learning (*AoL*) is used to evaluate pupils' understanding, progress and achievement of learning objectives. Teachers have copies of a range of assessment strategies, taken from the NCCA Assessment Guidelines, that they make use of in the classroom. Some classes use a range of self assessment strategies to encourage the children to engage in self and peer assessment. Most pupils are involved in assessing their own work. Teachers have prioritised the

implementation of WILF and WALT methods of self assessment for the coming academic year. Pupils' work including non written and homework is regularly modelled and corrected by the class teacher. Pupils' are provided with constructive feedback on their learning. Teachers check pupils' level of understanding during and at the end of lessons. Maths assessment tracking methods occur in most classes, however, will be introduced in all next year. The NNRIT is administered to children at the beginning of 2nd and 4th class, results are communicated to parents at parent-teacher meetings. Standardised tests are administered towards the end of the school year. Results are communicated to parents and the Department of Education and Skills. Results of standardised tests are kept on the child's file until they reach 21 years of age. Results from assessment is used to inform teacher planning, review of the DEIS plan and school policy.

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

3. Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets

4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings

4.1 Our school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- Providing a rich, diverse learning environment
- High standard of teacher preparation and pupil engagement in learning
- Willingness of teachers to engage in the process and adapt to meet the needs of children
- Refer to attached Incidental report May 2013

4.2 The following areas are **prioritised for improvement:**

- Increased focus on problem solving strategies across the school. Diversify the type of problem to include all as outlined in section 2.
- Renewed systematic approach to re-calling number facts
- Review of assessment strategies across the school. Increased focus to be placed on AfL.

4.3 The following legislative and regulatory requirements need to be addressed:

- Assessment Policy (review)
- Data Protection Policy
- Ratify: Parents as Partners Policy, Health and Safety Policy, SEN Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy

The School Self Evaluation Report was presented to the Board of Management of Knock National School on 19/06/2013.