



ST. ATTRACTA'S JUNIOR NATIONAL SCHOOL

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SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION REPORT 2015/2016

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SIP – SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015 - 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 The Context of this particular report

In St. Attracta's JNS we have always been reflective practitioners and have always engaged in an ongoing evaluation of teaching and learning.

In 2012 / 2013 the DES published Circular 039 / 2012 on the "Implementation of School Self Evaluation" and followed it with the publication of "School Self Evaluation Guidelines" for Primary Schools. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy published in 2011/2012 along with circular 039 / 2012 and the SSE guidelines ***dictated that Literacy and Numeracy must be the first areas evaluated followed then by other curricular areas.***

When the above mentioned circular, guidelines and strategy were published we in St. Attracta's had already identified and commenced working on the following areas as the evidence we had gathered strongly indicated that were the areas that required improvement.

- ◆ ***Comprehension Skills in Literacy*** required focus for further development; ***we had commenced a four year process***
- ◆ We had further identified the ***Visual Arts Programme and Policy*** as an area which required refining to ensure a spiral approach and continuity of teaching and learning particularly in the ***strand "Clay" and the strand unit of Looking and Responding in "Paint and Colour"***
- ◆ We recognised that the area of ***Drama*** required a policy which identified specific strategies at each class level with a spiral approach to the teaching of the agreed strategies
- ◆ Added to the above in 2011 we had commenced what was to become a four year process to develop ***Assessment for Learning strategies and a policy***; during the period 2011 – 2013 we organised whole staff workshops with Dr. Michael O Leary, St Patrick' College of Education to:
 - allow the staff of St Attracta's Junior School plan and implement in a measured and systematic manner over a four year period, an approach to ***AfL*** that further enhances teaching and learning from Junior Infants to 2nd class;
 - identify and implement agreed strategies across 4 areas (***feedback; peer & self assessment; sharing learning intentions & success criteria; questioning & classroom discussion***) in each of four streams, from Junior Infants to Second class

1.2 The Focus of the Evaluation

Work on the above specifically mentioned areas in Literacy, the Visual Arts and Drama and Assessment for Learning have been ongoing since 2012. Numeracy was addressed in 2013/2014.

1.3 School Context

- St. Attracta's Junior National School is a co-educational, Catholic school
- We have 345 pupils - 50.1% boys and 49.9% girls (2014/2015)
- We have 12 mainstream class teachers and an administrative principal
- Additionally we have 5/6 teachers who work supporting pupils with literacy, numeracy and our pupils with special education needs.

2. The Findings

- ◆ In 2012 we reviewed our Standardise Test results in Literacy. The results showed very clearly that our pupils were scoring exceptionally well on the Micra T (English) Standardised tests with an average of 82% of pupils in First & Second Class scoring above the 50th percentile. However, our own teacher observations and teacher designed tasks and tests indicated that oral Comprehension skills required refining and further development in all streams.
- ◆ A review of teachers' fortnightly planning in the six Strand Areas of the Visual Arts for the year 2012/2013 and discussion at Staff Meetings highlighted a need to review our planning for the Visual Arts particularly in the strand unit "Clay" and the "Looking and Responding" strand unit in a number of strands.
- ◆ A similar review of teacher planning on a monthly basis for Drama and discussion at Staff Meetings concluded that the need to identify specific strategies at each class level in a Drama Policy to ensure a spiral approach to teaching and learning in this area.

3. Progress Made on Previously Identified Improvement Targets

- ◆ **Assessment for Learning Policy**
The primary purpose of this policy is to clearly outline our approach to **Assessment for Learning (AFL)** in St. Attracta's Junior School across all curricular areas. This policy was a work in progress and was developed and extended over a four year academic period (2011 – 2015).
Agreed strategies across 4 areas have now been identified and implemented in each of the four streams, from Junior Infants to Second class - (*feedback; peer & self assessment; sharing learning intentions & success criteria; questioning & classroom discussion*)
- ◆ **Numeracy** – in our previous SIP - School Improvement Plan - the following targets were identified.
 - *to improve children's understanding of "what" it is they are learning in Maths each day* – this is now embedded good practice through the use of "WALT" in all classes

- *to continue to increase the children's understanding of the frequency and importance of maths in everyday life* – this is ongoing across all curricular areas as children and indeed parents become more aware that maths is “all around us” all the time
- *to use the children's language of maths to help solve problems* - problem solving-activities/strategies have been developed in all streams to engage pupils in problem solving
- *to support parents in understanding the language of maths and maths in the environment* – this is an ongoing area of development***

4. Summary of School Self Evaluation Findings

4.1 Our School Strengths

The quantitative and qualitative evidence from the evaluation process indicates the following:

- a cohesive approach to reading across the school
- a print-rich environment
- whole-school Paired Reading Programme / CAPER
- strong phonics programme in Junior and Senior Infants
- process writing is well established in all streams which leads to quality pieces of work in different genres
- the commitment at whole-school level to the provision of a relevant and meaningful English curriculum to the pupils in our school
- our pupils have a very positive attitude to reading
- very good support from parents of pupils
- our pupils standards in literacy are very high
- pupils who struggle with literacy are well supported through differentiation in the classroom and through Support Teaching some of which is in-class and some of which is done through withdrawal
- the model of support teaching offered is regularly reviewed in light of changing pupil needs
- the results of the Micra T Standardised Test confirm the above findings
- pupils are actively engaged in their own learning and in assessing their own progress
- we offer a stimulating and varied Visual Arts Programme which covers all strands of the curriculum
- the emphasis in Visual Arts is on the process rather than the end product
- pupil's work is a source of great pride to them and is constantly displayed throughout the school building and commented upon by visitors to the school

4.2 The following areas were prioritised for improvement:

As stated in the “Context of this particular report” above, the following areas were prioritised for improvement and they have been worked on over the last three / four years.

1. Comprehension Skills in Literacy
2. Teacher Planning in the Visual Arts, particularly for the strand “Clay” and the strand unit, Looking and Responding in “Paint and Colour
3. A Drama Policy and approach to teaching and learning which identifies specific strategies at each class level with a spiral approach to teaching and learning

4.3 Summary of the Outcomes of Work in the above three areas:

- ◆ **Comprehension Skills** – below is a *much* synopsis version of the final outcome of a four year process. Over that period practice in all areas of teaching and learning in English was reviewed. See the complete English Policy Document for full details.

“Teachers in St. Attracta’s JNS provide explicit instruction in **comprehension strategies** which are introduced incrementally over the four year Junior School cycle. Evidence of the teaching and learning of comprehension strategies will be evident in teachers long and short term planning.

The Staff of St. Attracta’s JNS have agreed that pupils will be taught to use the following comprehension strategies as follows:” (St. Attracta’s JNS English Policy 2015)

Class Grouping	Comprehension Strategies to be taught:
Junior Infants	Predict
Senior Infants	Predict; Connect; Retell.
First Class	Predict; Connect; Retell; Create Images.
Second Class	Predict; Connect; Retell; Create Images; Understanding Words

The four tables in the English Policy Document indicate:

- 📖 the progression of comprehension strategies agreed to be taught from Junior Infants to 2nd Class
- 📖 The progression of reading books within each reading scheme from Junior Infants to 2nd Class

◆ **Teacher Planning in the Visual Arts, particularly for the strand “Clay” and the strand unit, Looking and Responding in “Paint and Colour**

Over a two year period practice in all areas of the Visual Arts curriculum was reviewed. Following intensive consultation with all staff at a series of dedicated Croke Park Hours and at Staff Meetings the full policy document was revised with particular care being given to identifying particular artists whose work and techniques would be appropriate to different class levels and to each strand of the curriculum to ensure that there was a balance across all four streams.

Below is just one example from the Revised Policy for the Visual Arts (November 2014) which ensures a spiral approach to teaching and learning. This is *a menu* for the individual teacher at each class level under the strand unit “**paint**” where he/she can choose at least one artists for their class stream. It ensures that different artists will be introduced each year.

Class Steam	First Choice Artist	Alternative Artist
Junior Infants	Kandinsky	Seurat
Senior Infants	Monet	Seán Scully
First Class	Van Gough	Mondrian
Second Class	Matisse	Jack B Yeats

The following is an agreed sequence of Skills/Techniques that will developed using a spiral approach, in the ‘Clay’ strand of the Visual Arts Curriculum from Junior Infants to Second Class.

Sequence of Skills/Techniques with Clay in Junior and Senior Infants	***
1. Exploring and experimenting with clay and play dough	
2. Making forms in Clay...flat and standing	
3. Suggest a subject using clay	
4. Surface mark making	
5. Mixed Media pieces	
6. Pull apart and join clay	

Sequence of Skills/Techniques with Clay in First and Second Classes (as above plus the following) ***
1. Make sturdy figures from imagination
2. Play with joining and balancing cubes and oblongs of clay
3. Simple pottery, thumb and pinch pottery
4. Joining these together with slip
5. Decorating clay slabs with incision, draw into clay
6. Make low relief tiles

◆ **Drama** – the following statement and diagram synopsis the strategies agreed

“We have agreed as a staff on Drama strategies for each class level. We will be taking a spiral approach to teaching these strategies. Therefore, as children progress through St. Attracta’s JNS they will have experience of each strategy. It is envisaged that by the end of second class the strategies below will be embedded.” (St. Attracta’s JNS Drama Policy November 2014)

Junior Infants	Senior Infants	First Class	Second Class
❖ Storytelling	❖ Hot-Seating	❖ Conscience Alley	❖ Thought-tracking
❖ Role Play			

Concluding Statement:

As was stated in the opening paragraph of this report, in St. Attracta's JNS we have always been reflective practitioners and have continually engaged in an ongoing evaluation of teaching and learning. Each academic year we reviewed and addressed different areas of teaching and learning in order to improve the overall experience for our pupils. We as a School Community believe that the Principles of the School Self Evaluation process will enable us to build on this practice particularly in the light of the implementation of a new Language Curriculum in the coming years.

As a school community we are also conscious of the need to manage the pace of change to a more sustainable level in order to allow the changes to practice in all the areas identified and reviewed over the last number of years to become established good practice, to become embedded.

ST. ATTRACTA'S J.N.S.
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR
2015 / 2016 & 2016 / 2017

IMPROVEMENT TARGET	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASURABLE OUTCOMES	PERSON/S RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTIONS
<p>LITERACY To improve pupils' comprehension skills at each class level as identified in the English Policy 2015</p>	<p>Short term and long term teacher schemes will reflect the identified strategies for their class level.</p> <p>The skills will be explicitly taught</p>	<p>That the pupils in each stream can use the comprehension strategies identified for their particular class grouping e.g.</p> <p>Junior Infants: Predict</p> <p>Senior Infants: Predict; Connect; Retell;</p> <p>First Class: Predict; Connect; Retell; Create Images</p> <p>Second Class: Predict; Connect; Retell; Create Images; Understanding Words</p>	<p>All teachers Pupils Parents</p>	<p>2015 / 2016 & 2016 / 2017</p>
<p>VISUAL ARTS To expose pupils to different artists under each strand at each class level as identified in the Visual Arts Policy 2014 To ensure that pupils acquire different experiences of clay at each class level as identified in the Visual Arts Policy 2014</p>	<p>Short term and long term teacher schemes will reflect the identified artists / skills/strategies for their class level.</p> <p>The skills/strategies will be explicitly taught</p>	<p>'Paint Strand' That the pupils will be able to relate the relevant curricular outcomes/skills for their class (as per 1999 Visual Arts Curriculum Document) to the work of identified artists (<i>see Page 6 above</i>)</p> <p>Clay Strand: That the pupils will develop the Sequence of Skills as outlined in the school policy document (<i>see Page 6 above</i>)</p>	<p>All teachers Pupils</p>	<p>2015 / 2016 & 2016 / 2017</p>

<p>DRAMA Pupils will be exposed to the strategies identified for their class level</p>	<p>Short term and long term teacher schemes will reflect the identified strategies for their class level. The strategy will be explicitly taught.</p>	<p>Proficiency in the relevant skills for the class group as outlined in the school policy: Junior Infants: Story Telling; Role play Senior Infants: Hot Seating First Class: Conscience Alley Second Class: Thought Tracking</p>	<p>All teachers Pupils</p>	<p>2015 / 2016 & 2016 / 2017</p>
<p>ASSESSMENT for LEARNING To ensure that the pupils / teachers use the strategies agreed for each class stream in giving feedback to pupils; in peer assessment; in sharing the learning intention and success criteria and in questioning and classroom discussion.</p>	<p>Short term and long term teacher schemes will reflect the identified strategies for their class level.</p>	<p>Agreed strategies across 4 areas: <i>Sharing learning intentions and success criteria, Questioning and Classroom discussion, Feedback, Self-Assessment & Peer-Assessment</i> will be embedded features in each class stream (as per school policy 'Rethinking Assessment on our school: Towards a Greater Use of AfL')</p>	<p>All teachers Pupils</p>	<p>2015 / 2016 & 2016 / 2017</p>

*** RE. NUMERACY SIP 'to support parents in understanding the language of maths and maths in the environment'

A staff review (September 2015) of this item found that, rather than developing a 'Language of Maths Dictionary for Parents', Staff would communicate the 'Language of Maths' with parents by:

1. Sending home the Planet Maths Work book and /or weekly Maths Mentals Worksheets on a regular basis
2. Footnote at end of Homework Sheets detailing Mathematical Language being used in class (Snr. Infants)
3. Through the Junior Infant Information Meeting for Parents in September
4. PDST Language of Maths document distributed annually to Junior Infant Parents

Appendix to Primary School Self-Evaluation Report:

Legislative and regulatory checklist – reporting to the school community

<p>Rules and regulations for schools are set out in a number of Education Acts, and in Circulars issued to schools from time to time by the Department of Education and Skills. The list below deals with important areas of school life and tells you what rules and regulations apply to them. You will find the Acts and Circulars mentioned on the Department’s website, www.education.ie.</p>	
Which area of school life is involved, and what are the regulations?	Is the school following the regulations fully?
<p>The school calendar and the school timetable Circular 11/95 sets down the length of the school year - minimum of 183 days</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Circular 11/95 sets down the length of the school day 4 hours 40 minutes (infants); 5 hours 40 minutes (1st-6th classes)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Parent/ teacher meetings and staff meetings Circular 14/04 sets out the arrangements for these meetings</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Implementation of agreement regarding additional time in school for teachers Circular 0008/2011 requires teachers to do an additional 36 hours of out-of-class work each year, so as not to reduce teaching time</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Standardisation of school year Circular 034/2011 gives the dates for school holidays</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Valid enrolment of pupils Sections of the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, and the Rules for National Schools set out the conditions for pupils to be validly enrolled in a school</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Pupils repeating a year The circumstances in which pupils may repeat a year are set out in Rules for National Schools, and circulars 11/01 and 32/03</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Development of school plan Section 21, Education Act 1998 requires all schools to have a school plan</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Engagement with SSE process Circular 39/2012 outlines the school self-evaluation process and what it requires of schools</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Time for literacy and numeracy - assessing and reporting literacy and numeracy achievement Circular 56/2011 sets out initial actions required in the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Exemption from Irish Circular 12/96 sets out the circumstances in which children are exempt from studying Irish</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Implementation of child protection procedures Circular 0065/2011 and the Child Protection Guidelines oblige schools to ensure that: liaison persons have been appointed; the procedures have been communicated to the whole school community; and the procedures are being followed</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

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Which area of school life is involved, and what are the regulations?	Is the school following the regulations fully?
<p>Implementation of complaints procedure as appropriate Section 28 Education Act 1998 provides for procedures to address complaints about a school.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Complaints have been resolved or are being resolved <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Appeals in the case of refusal to enrol students, suspension and expulsion (permanent exclusion) Section 29 Education Act 1998 provides for appeals procedures in these cases, which are dealt with first of all by the school. Where cases are not resolved at school level, an external appeals committee hears the appeal and makes a decision.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Appeals have been dealt with or are being dealt with <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

What area of school life does the policy deal with and what is the aim of the policy?	Has policy been approved by the board of management?
<p>Enrolment policy Section (15)(2)(d) Education Act 1998 obliges schools to have and publish an enrolment policy that respects the principles of equality and parental choice</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Code of behaviour Section 23, Education (Welfare) Act 2000, and the 2008 National Educational Welfare Board Guidelines set out regulations and good practice for schools to follow in drawing up and implementing a code of behaviour</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Anti-bullying policy <i>Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools, 2013</i> sets out regulations and good practice for schools to follow in drawing up and implementing an anti-bullying policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Attendance and participation strategy Section 22 Education Welfare Act 2000 requires schools to develop a strategy to support high levels of pupil attendance and participation in school life</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Health and safety statement All schools should have a health and safety statement that is regularly reviewed (see Section 20 Health and Safety Act 2005)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Data protection</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

School procedures relating to gathering, storing and sharing data on pupils should comply with data protection legislation - Data Protection Act 1988 Data Protection (Amendment Act) 2003	
Internet acceptable use policy Schools should have and implement a policy to instruct pupils on safe and responsible use of the internet. See www.webwise.ie for guidelines	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Special education needs policy Various pieces of equality and education legislation, especially the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004, require schools to be inclusive of pupils with special educational needs and to provide for them appropriately using the resources available	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy Schools are required to have an RSE policy and to implement it in line with Relationships and Sexuality Education: Policy Guidelines (1997)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Substance use policy The National Drugs Strategy and Department Guidelines require schools to develop and implement a policy on substance use, in partnership with parents and other agencies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Child protection policy Circular 0065/2011 sets out requirements (see above for details of policy and implementation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Parents as partners Circular 24/91 requests schools to set up a parents' association, and promotes partnership between home and school	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Deployment of special needs assistants Circular 71/11 allows for SNAs to be deployed flexibly to respond to the needs of the school	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No