

Holy Family J.N.S. River Valley, Swords, Co. Dublin



School Self – Evaluation Report

June 2014

Holy Family J.N.S. School Self – Evaluation Report

A school self evaluation of teaching and learning in Holy Family J.N.S. was undertaken during the period September 2012 to June 2014. During the evaluation, teaching and learning in the following curricular areas were carried out.

- Literacy in an English medium school Sept 2012 – Jun 2013
 - Numeracy: Understanding and using Maths. Sept 2013 – Jun 2014

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation.

1. School Context

Holy Family J.N.S. is a co educational Junior School in River Valley, Swords. It was founded in September 1982 and opened with 7 teachers and 231 pupils. Enrolment in Sept 2013 was 671 made up of 619 Irish and 52 children with ethnic backgrounds from 38 other countries, with 17 different religions, including none, represented.

Projected enrolment for Sept 2014 is 692 in 24 mainstream classes. The vast majority of children attending come from the surrounding catchment area. This school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

At present there are 23 Mainstream Classes

6 x Junior Infants

6 X Senior Infants

6 x 1st Class

5 x 2nd class

2 English Language Teachers

4 x Learning Support Teachers + 15 hours

2 x Resource Teachers catering for 51.425 hours

1 x Administrative Principal

1 x Administrative Deputy Principal

We are clustered with St Patrick's Girls School, Swords ETNS and Thornleigh ETNS for the purpose of Learning Support .i.e. G.A.M

The school has a very active Parents' Association They are very involved and support the school in many ways including School Self Evaluation.

In line with legislation the school publishes all legally required Policies

- Child Protection,
 - Enrolment,
 - Code of Behaviour
 - Anti-bullying,
 - Safety Statement,
 - Substance Use.

These together with all information about the school are contained in our website www.holyfamilyjns.ie and are available from the office in hard copy.

For the purpose of School Self Evaluation the parent body were given surveys on Literacy and Numeracy. A focus group was also set up, where parents were asked to give the school strengths and weaknesses in different aspects of the school. The findings are attached.

2. The Findings

Literacy Evaluation 2012 - 2013

Information sources: Teacher survey, Standardised test results, Parent survey, Pupil survey,

The teacher's opinions were canvassed by **survey** in April 2013. In general, the respondents were satisfied that the pupils' attainment levels are improving or remaining at a high standard in accordance with their levels of development and ability.

Individual pupils' attitudes and disposition towards school and learning are positive and contribute to the overall positive feel in each classroom.

Pupil's listening and oral communication skills are generally very satisfactory, with most concerns highlighting pupils receiving EAL/LS support. Pupils at risk of underachieving continue to benefit from support and make very good progress from their prior levels of achievement.

Reading and writing skills are good to very good. A very positive attitude towards reading is reported, with a good level of interest in "own" writing.

The survey indicated a number of areas where we can improve our collective approach:

- Expanding vocabulary,
- Spelling & grammar,
- Syntax & punctuation.
- Opportunities to write for a wider variety of audiences would also be of value.

Results of **Standardised Testing** show attainment levels are improving or remaining at a high standard throughout the school. (See Attached Evidence)

A **Parent Survey** was carried out in 2012, surveying opinions on both Literacy and Numeracy. In the area of Literacy, all respondents indicated that they listen to their child reading. Large majorities agreed that their children like Reading, that their children are doing well at Reading, that their children enjoy learning spellings and that their children like to write stories. Three quarters reported that they read to their children often. A little over half of respondents indicated that they get good information on how their child is doing in English. (See Attached Evidence)

A **Pupil Survey** was carried out in December 2012 in Second Class.

Large majorities agreed that they like to write stories and that they like Reading. In excess of three quarters reported that they are good readers, that they find spellings easy, and that they can give their opinion at school. "Reading" and "Handwriting" and "Poetry" are offered as favourites, with "Nothing", "Phonics" and "Comprehension" listed as the most difficult. (See Attached Evidence)

Maths Evaluation 2013/2014

Information sources: Teacher questionnaire, Standardised test results, Parent survey, Pupil survey.

The **Teacher Questionnaire** sought teacher's opinions in October 2013.

The replies were tabulated by the Numeracy Group and the resulting proposals were discussed at a Staff Meeting. These were then included in the Proposed Three Year Plan for Numeracy 2015 – 2017.

In general, the staff members are satisfied that the pupils' attainment levels continue at a high standard in accordance with their levels of development and ability. Individual pupils' attitudes and disposition towards school and learning are positive and contribute to the overall positive feel in each classroom.

Pupil's oral maths skills are generally satisfactory, with most concerns highlighting pupils receiving EAL/LS support.

The survey indicated a number of areas where we can improve our school wide approach. These include

- Maths Language – to be taught at start of each lesson
- Maths in First Class – imbalance in resourcing compared to 2nd classes, blocks of intervention using Mata sa Rang model to be introduced
- Standardised testing for Senior Infants
- Standardised testing for First & Second Classes to be evaluated
- More detailed data can be collected from Standardised testing if corrected using computer programmes
- Investigate possibility of testing early in school year

Results from **Standardised Testing** show a high standard is being consistently achieved in Maths. This testing is carried out in 1st & 2nd classes

(See Attached Evidence)

A **Parent Survey** was carried out in 2012, surveying opinions on both Literacy and Numeracy.

In the area of Numeracy large majorities agreed that their children like Maths, that Maths is at the right level, that they know their child's strengths, and that they are comfortable approaching the school to discuss concerns. Roughly half of respondents indicated that they get good information on how their child is doing at Maths and that they know their child's weaknesses. Less than 1/3 indicated that their children need regular help with homework.

(See Attached Evidence)

A **Pupil Survey** was carried out in November 2012 and again in November 2013, both in Second Class.

Pupils were surveyed on attitudes to Maths, together with likes/dislikes. Results were positive in both years, with large majorities returning that they like Maths, are good at Maths, and find Maths problems easy. "Games" and "Addition" remain as favourites, with "Time", "Word Problems" and "Nothing" listed as difficult.

(See Attached Evidence)

Attainment of Curriculum Objectives

The overall attainment of the pupils in Holy Family Junior National School with regards to literacy and numeracy is above average for the most part in accordance with the learning outcomes of the primary curriculum. We endeavour to enhance and support the pupils at risk of underachieving in order to maintain an acceptable standard.

The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the area of literacy and numeracy reflect the learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for each class level. Pupils are able to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in class, some independently and others with teacher guidance.

The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the curriculum areas are developing in a progressive way as they move from class level to class level. The learning targets in our three year improvement plans in the area of Literacy and in the area of Numeracy are currently being implemented. These remain a work in progress. From our focus groups, we have ascertained that pupils enjoy the Literacy and Maths programmes and are motivated to learn. The majority of pupils competently and confidently use and apply the literacy mathematical skills that are necessary to develop their learning in these curriculum areas.

Learning Environment

All teachers are keenly aware of and follow the National Child Protection Guidelines. A copy of the school's Child Protection Guidelines is easily accessible in each classroom. All classrooms are maintained to a very high standard and are properly heated and ventilated. Due consideration is given to pupils' safety in all aspects of the school environment. **Following an in-depth analysis of safety issues and procedures specific concerns were highlighted. (See Appendix)**. Pupils have access to relevant resources to support and supplement learning. The centrally located school library is well stocked. Classrooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards which lend to a natural integration of ICT and learning. **However, a whole school systematic approach is needed to promote pupils' individual computer skills.**

Classroom and corridor displays are to a very high standard and are well decorated. However, there is predominance of art work displayed on corridors and perhaps **it would be preferable if the displays reflected a wider range of curricular areas. Both classroom and corridor displays would benefit from an inclusion of more children's print.**

Pupils' Engagement in Learning

The pupils' level of engagement appears high across the various class levels. Children are aware of classroom rules which are clear, understood and consistently applied. Children are frequently praised and rewarded across all levels. Tasks are pitched at appropriate levels and participation is considered high. Steps in learning goals are small so as to ensure progress and opportunities are provided for children to be successful. Children are given additional support as needed. For the most part different learning styles are catered for by teachers which allow children to access and engage with the curriculum. **From the evidence gathered, differentiation may be an area for improvement in the future. While opportunities are mostly provided for pair/group work; there is scope for more frequent collaborative work.**

Learning to Learn

In all classes teachers effectively develop the pupils' abilities to communicate orally and to work with others. In most classes teachers enable children to engage in research, investigate, experiment, analyse and problem solve.

The pupils are guided to develop the necessary skills to revise, organise homework, present their work to others, answer questions on their work, organise their work in teams and summarise their work. In first and second classes children are provided with opportunities to enable them to plan and study.

Preparation for Teaching

All teachers have long/short term plans prepared and recorded, to deliver the curriculum. Expected learning outcomes in literacy/numeracy across the curriculum are present. Written plans indicate teaching approaches where necessary, for the achievement of learning outcomes. **More detail could be provided in preparation notes, of resources used and integration of numeracy/literacy across the curriculum.**

All teachers plan effectively to assess pupils' learning, taking account of all guidelines in numeracy/literacy.

A list of relevant resources, materials and equipment for each curriculum could be posted on every class noticeboard for easy reference purposes.

In teacher preparation strengths outweigh weakness. More detail could be given in notes for specific learning objectives for all subject areas – deemed relevant. Teaching approaches, resources used and activities undertaken, could be more detailed in notes, where necessary or relevant.

Management of Pupils

The management of pupils during learning and routine activities is effective. A positive code of behaviour, including an anti-bullying policy, which complies with the requirements of the Equal Status Acts (2000-2011), is implemented in a fair and consistent way. Teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil and pupil –teacher interactions are mostly respectful. The teachers have high but realistic expectations of the pupils in relation to their behaviour and learning and they communicate these to them.

There is order and structure to the way activities are organised. Appropriate opportunities for active, independent and collaborative learning are provided.

The pupil voice is generally strong in the school. Pupils' contributions and questions are mostly welcomed in the classroom. Their views and opinions are listened to in accordance with their age and maturity and taken into account in the organisation of classroom activities and in the devising relevant policies.

The school is inclusive and treats all pupils equitably and fairly. There is respect for all pupils regardless of their background. Differences across the equality grounds are understood, acknowledged and valued by all staff. Equal learning opportunities are provided for girls and

boys. Every effort is made to treat pupils with S.E.N and pupils from minority groups in an inclusive and equitable way.

Assessment

There are agreed procedures and practices in operation in the school for assessing and reporting on pupils' progress in numeracy. A written, whole school policy is due to be formulated. This will take account of curriculum and NCCA guidelines on assessment and the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. The school curricular plan for Literacy identifies the relevant assessment practices and procedures.

A variety of approaches to both Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning are employed.

Assessment for Learning is always or frequently done by means of:

- (a) Open-Ended questions
- (b) Closed questions
- (c) Checklists
- (d) Standardised Tests
- (e) Teacher-designed tasks
- (f) Written and Verbal feedback
- (g) Teacher Observation.

Assessment of Learning is always or frequently done by means of:

- (a) Checklists
- (b) Standardised Tests
- (c) Teacher-designed tasks
- (d) Teacher Observation

Pupils' work, including homework and non-written work is regularly monitored and corrected. Both verbal and written feedback is provided in a constructive way to pupils, enabling them to amend their learning as necessary.

Standardised Tests are administered and their results are communicated to parents in line with official guidelines. Information on pupils' learning is collected at regular intervals and this information is useful for future planning of teaching and support.

Pupils' progress is effectively communicated to parents through parent/teacher meetings and school reports. This information is also readily available to all relevant staff.

Information gathered through the school's assessment practices is used effectively to inform the setting of learning targets, for both individuals and for whole classes. This information is also valuable to the whole school planning process and the setting of school improvement targets.

Parent input: Information gathered from a Focus Group of Parents from Holy Family Junior National School 11th March 2013

Information from School

All relevant information is communicated very well to parents through notes home. More important issues generally have 2 notes-the initial note with all information and then a reminder note closer to the relevant date. This is helpful. The school newsletter is very popular with parents.

Concerns:

No real concerns, just some comments:-

Sometimes things get missed in notes home (eg notes lost at bottom of bag, just skimming the note and missing part of the information). Unfortunately, this seems inevitable. Communicating through e-mail would not be any more effective and would have its own disadvantages. Testing parents would be too costly.

As mentioned, the newsletter is very popular, perhaps it could be more regular (eg monthly/6-weekly).

The website will be a welcome addition when it is back up and running.

Communication with Teacher on an On-Going Basis

Strengths:

All the feedback here was very positive. All teachers have been very approachable, and are happy to give of their time to discuss any concerns. Last year, one teacher sent a note home around Easter stating that as it had been some time since the parent-teacher meeting, they would be happy to arrange meetings to discuss any concern that might have arose. That was greatly appreciated by parents.

Concerns: None

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Strengths:

All very positive feedback again. Teachers are very flexible and helpful when organizing meetings (facilitating parents with more than one child at the school, arranging meetings before school, etc). The meetings are detailed and well-structured giving a whole picture of the child, not just the academic progress alone.

Concerns:

Some parents feel that the meetings could be earlier in the year (eg late November) particularly for Junior Infants (to ensure they are settling into school, as it's such a big change from playschool/crèche). Perhaps parents could be surveyed to see what the general feeling is.

School Reports

Strengths:

The report cards are good with very detailed personalised comment sections.

Concerns:

This is generally the case, but parents feel that it is important to receive the reports as early as possible in June (at least 2 weeks before the end of term) so that if any action is required there is sufficient time to do so before the summer holidays start.

General Comments/Concerns About School

Strengths:

One significant advantage of a big school like ours is the wide range of expertise across the staff and all the different activities and choices available.

The meeting for parents in Junior Infants in September is very useful and reassuring laying foundations for a good school/parent relationship going forward

Concerns:

Healthy eating: while parents are aware that the school promotes healthy lunches, perhaps some simple rules would help emphasise the point to the children. For example: treats on Fridays only.

Walk to school initiative: eg “Walk on Wednesdays” or “Fit Fridays” (or maybe something more flexible, covering all days as parents may not always be flexible on what day they could walk). This could possibly be done in conjunction with Green Flag Programme, raising the children’s awareness of their own health and their carbon footprint!

Overall, parents are very pleased with the education of our children at Holy Family Junior National School. We are happy that they are enjoying their time at school and are receiving every opportunity to reach their full potential. Thank you for all your efforts.

3. Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets.

Target	Progress
Standardised Testing	1. Testing to be introduced SI 2014 2. 1 st & 2 nd testing to be evaluated 2014
Mata sa Rang	1. Demonstration classes given 2. Intervention in 1 st classes for 8 weeks
Corridor displays	Displays now include a wider selection of curricular work
Junior Infant Intervention	Intervention in Junior Infant classes for 5 weeks per class
Specific vocabularies	Pre-teaching of subject specific vocabulary introduced for all subjects
Oral & Mental Maths	First 10 minutes of Maths classes to focus on this and previous item
School Website	Now operational

4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings.

Strengths:

- Teacher & pupil interest and attitudes
- Teacher & pupil motivation
- Second Class Maths groups
- Corridor displays
- Resources and Games
- Appropriate Literacy and Numeracy schemes
- Group Planning

Priorities for Improvement:

- Problem Solving
- Too much emphasis/time spent on books
- Individual attention
- Discrete areas of curriculum (detailed in 3 yr Plans)
- ICT access to enhance individual work
- First Class Maths Support – Mata sa Rang
- Standardised Testing for Senior Infants
- Junior Infant Intervention

The process of self-evaluation has been a worthwhile exercise in that it has generated food for thought in many areas. Furthermore it has focused attention on areas and practices already targeted for revisiting. These have been included in the Three Year Plans produced as a follow up to the self-evaluation process.

Appendix to School Self-Evaluation Report 2014:
Legislative and Regulatory Checklist

Issue	Relevant legislation, rule or circular	Is the school fully meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation, rule or circular?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
Time in school - Length of school year- minimum of 183 days - Length of school day 4 hours 40 minutes (infants); 5 hours 40 minutes (1st-6th classes)	Circular 11/95	Yes Yes	
Arrangements for parent/ teacher and staff meetings	Circular 14/04	Yes	
Implementation of Croke Park & Haddington Road agreements regarding additional time requirement	Circular 0008/2011 Haddington Road 2013	Yes Yes	
Standardisation of school year	Circular 034/2011	Yes	
Valid enrolment of pupils	Sections 9(1), 15 (2) and 23 Education Act 1998 Sections 20 and 21, Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Rules 55, 64, 108 and 123, Rules for National Schools Circular P24/02 Staffing Schedule for current school year	Yes	
Retention of pupils	Rule 64 Rules for National Schools Circular 11/01 Circular 32/03	Yes	
Development of school plan	Section 21, Education Act 1998	Yes	
Appointments to posts of responsibility	Circular 07/03 Circular 053/2011	Yes	
Time for literacy and numeracy – assessing and reporting literacy and numeracy achievement	Circular 0056/11 Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy	Yes Yes	
Exemption from Irish	Circular 12/96	Yes	

Issue	Relevant legislation, rule or circular	Is the school fully meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation, rule or circular?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
Implementation of child protection procedures	<p>Circular 0065/2011</p> <p>Please consider the following in relation to child protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of cases where a report involving a child in the school was submitted by the DLP to the HSE ▪ Number of cases where a report involving a child in the school was submitted by the DLP to the HSE and the school board of management informed ▪ Number of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made ▪ Number of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made and the school board of management informed 	Yes	
Implementation of complaints procedure as appropriate	<p>Complaints Procedures, Section 28 Education Act Primary Boards of Management Information Manual November 2007</p> <p>Please consider the following in relation to complaints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of formal parental complaints received ▪ Number of formal complaints processed ▪ Number of formal complaints not fully processed by the end of this school year 	Yes	
Refusal to enrol	<p>Section 29 Education Act 1998</p> <p>Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of section 29 cases taken against the school ▪ Number of cases processed at informal stage ▪ Number of cases heard ▪ Number of appeals upheld ▪ Number of appeals dismissed 	Yes	

Issue	Relevant legislation, rule or circular	Is the school fully meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation, rule or circular?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
Suspension of students	<p>Section 29 Education Act 1998</p> <p>Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of section 29 cases taken against the school ▪ Number of cases processed at informal stage ▪ Number of cases heard ▪ Number of appeals upheld ▪ Number of appeals dismissed 	Yes	
Expulsion of students	<p>Section 29 Education Act 1998</p> <p>Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of section 29 cases taken against the school ▪ Number of cases processed at informal stage ▪ Number of cases heard ▪ Number of appeals upheld ▪ Number of appeals dismissed 	Yes	

Appendix to School Self-Evaluation Report: policy checklist

Policy	Source	Has policy been approved by the Board of Management?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
Enrolment policy	Section (15)(2)(d) Education Act 1998	Yes	
Code of behaviour including anti-bullying policy(12)	Circular 20/90 DES Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour 1993 NEWB Guidelines Section 23, Education Welfare Act 2000	Yes	
Attendance and participation Strategy(13)	Section 22 Education Welfare Act 2000 Equal Status Acts 2000-2011	Yes	
Health and safety statement	Section 20 Health and Safety Act 2005	Yes	
Data protection	Data Protection Act 1988 Data Protection (Amendment Act) 2003	Yes	
Special education needs policy(14)	Education Act 1998 Equal Status Acts 2000-2011 Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN)(15) 2004 Disability Act 2005	Yes	
Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy	Relationships and Sexuality Education: Policy Guidelines (1997)	Yes	
Child protection policy	Circular 0065/2011	Yes	
Parents as partners	Circular 24/91	Yes	
Public service (Croke Park) agreement – special needs assistants	Circular 71/11	Yes	
Other			

(12) Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 23) the school's code of behaviour should conform to the specifications stated.

(13) Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 22), the school's attendance strategy should conform to the provisions stipulated.

(14) Section 9 of the Education Act (1998) requires a school to "use its available resources" to identify and provide for the educational needs of those "with a disability or other special educational needs."

(15) The EPSEN Act requires that schools be inclusive of and provide an appropriate education for pupils with special educational needs.