



Scoil Ursula  
Strandhill Road, Sligo  
18979F

School Self-Evaluation Report Update

## **Literacy**

Original Evaluation period: April to June 2013

Report Update issue date: October, 2015

## **School Self-Evaluation Report Update**

### **1. Introduction**

Scoil Ursula embarked on a plan to improve Literacy & Numeracy standards in the school in response to the DES National Strategy to Improve Literacy & Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020. The first stage of the process was an investigation and report into the school's current position in January, 2012. The report was presented to the Staff and Board of Management in February, 2012. Many of the elements of this process have been incorporated into our School Self Evaluation process.

#### **1.1 The focus of the evaluation**

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in Scoil Ursula was undertaken during the period April to June 2013. During the evaluation, teaching and learning in the following curriculum areas were evaluated:

- Literacy

This is an update to the original report and an appraisal of the attainment of our targets in our School Improvement Plan for Literacy.

#### **1.2 School context**

- This is a vertical co-educational primary school.
- The ethos of the school is Catholic.
- There are currently 405 pupils.
- There are 20 teachers including an Administrative principal, 3.5 SNAs, a full-time Secretary and Caretaker.
- Scoil Ursula is situated in a lower to middle-class suburban area.
- 10% of the school's pupils have Special Educational Needs including 10 children in receipt of Low Incidence Teaching Hours for disability ranging from ASD to Emotional & Behavioural Disorder.
- 19% of pupils are newcomer children.
- The school administers standardised tests in Literacy (Micra-T) and Numeracy (Sigma-T) from first to sixth class. The NRIT is conducted with 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes. The Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (BIAP) is conducted with those Junior Infants who are considered by their teachers to be at risk of educational failure. The Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) is conducted with Senior Infants and the Forward Together Programme is conducted as necessary.
- Teacher Observation and Teacher-Designed tests and tasks are also used in Scoil Ursula.
- Strong emphasis is placed on early intervention strategies for pupils with learning difficulties or special needs. We endeavour to develop each individual child's holistic potential.
- Home-School links are fostered at every opportunity creating an open, welcoming school environment. Formal Parent-Teacher meetings are held in the Autumn.

- We have a supportive Parent's Association who work closely with staff, pupils and Board of Management.
- School Policies are updated regularly and are available to our school community through our website scoilursula.com
- The school has received 5 Green Flag Awards, 2 Discover Science & Maths Awards, a Digital School of Distinction Award, the Active Schools Flag Award and various other Literary & Arts Awards.

## 2. The original findings

A number of instruments were used to gather data for the purposes of assessing our current provisions in literacy and their effectiveness. The standardised test results from the Micra-T carried out in June, 2013 were collated and analysed by Excel. Through our school website and Google Docs, we created questionnaires for pupils, parents and teachers and the data from these was collated and analysed to produce the following results.

- **Literacy**
  - **Standardised Testing:** Pupils are performing 3 points above the national norm. The school's overall average standard score in Literacy is 103 with 58% scoring above the 50th percentile rank; and 22% of pupils score at the 85th percentile rank or above compared with 16% nationally.
  - **Pupils' Surveys:** 84% of pupils surveyed report liking reading and 83% of them regarded themselves as good readers. Word meanings are the single biggest difficulty children have when it comes to reading. 63% are satisfied with the selection of books in their classroom library but 74% want more time to read in class. 24% read at home every day while 71% sometimes read at home. Only 5% never read at home.
  - **Parents' Surveys:** Parents were even more positive about their children's experience of Reading with 89% reporting that their children enjoyed it. Over four-fifths of mums and dads reported reading to their children and listening to their children reading. 90% thought their children were succeeding at reading. Just under three-quarters were happy with the level of difficulty while over half of parents said their children used the local library. 63% of parents felt there was good feedback from school in relation to literacy and three-quarters of them reported that their children regularly read for pleasure.
  - **Teachers' Surveys:** In general teachers were satisfied with the literacy standards in the school. They commended the success of the Jolly Phonics in the Junior Classes and the Reading Workshops in the Senior Classes. They recommended the expansion of the Reading Workshops to the 1<sup>st</sup> Class level. They also recommended structured DEAR Time and a Reading Buddies Programme where specific Senior Classes could be paired with specific Junior Classes. Teachers also identified a

number of specific Literacy areas for development in the school as follows:

- Creative Writing 23%
- Penmanship 19%
- Oral Language 17%
- Comprehension 17%
- Punctuation & Grammar 15%

Suggestions for improving standards in the above areas included

- Creative Writing: More work on brainstorming, plot development, vocabulary expansion and a more structured approach to the various genres.
  - Penmanship: A uniform structured programme to be followed throughout the school using one standard style. Follow-up to ensure that the taught style of handwriting is transferred into the everyday writing process.
  - Oral Language: Specific weekly theme-based oral language development culminating with Circle-Time type discussion on the topic and end-of-week. Gradual introduction of Aistear into Junior Classes. Emphasis on expressive language and sentence formation to counteract the effects of abbreviated communication due to modern technology such as textspeak.
  - Comprehension: The Workshops will also help in this area as well as develop reading for meaning. More Cloze procedures to develop context skills will also help. The 'Building Bridges of Understanding Programme' was also recommended for Senior Classes.
  - Punctuation & Grammar: More emphasis on these areas will improve Writing and Penmanship and reinforcement of these areas is essential for children with learning and language needs.
- **Attainment of the Curriculum Objectives**
    - Teachers report that all strands of the English Curriculum are adequately addressed at each class level.
  - **Learning Environment**
    - Due attention is given to Literacy Displays and centres of interest which create a stimulating Print-rich environment for the pupils.
    - Resources and materials are well maintained and updated within the limitations of the school budget.

- **Pupils' Engagement in Learning**
  - Pupils are enabled to take an active role in their learning and engaging lessons are prepared by teachers using effective methodologies and appropriate use of ICT particularly the Interactive Whiteboards which are in wide use in all classrooms.
  
- **Learning to Learn**
  - Pupils are taught strategies to promote independent learning particularly in the increasing number of multi-grade settings in the school.
  
- **Preparation for Teaching**
  - All teachers prepare plans to guide the teaching and learning of literacy. There are specific learning outcomes for literacy skills stated in individual plans which are prepared on a fortnightly basis.
  - IEPs are developed to meet the individual needs of pupils with special needs and support is provided by Special Needs Team when necessary.
  
- **Teaching Approaches**
  - Teaching approaches, as recommended by the curriculum, are skilfully applied in all classes.
  
- **Management of Pupils**
  - A variety of classroom management strategies for the teaching of numeracy are employed including independent work, group teaching and whole class teaching.
  - Pupils with Special Needs are supported both in and out of class by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team.
  
- **Assessment of Pupils**
  - A variety of modes of assessment of and for learning is used consistently in all classes to monitor pupils' progress. Assessment of results is analysed at all levels for screening and diagnostic purposes and to identify aspects of numeracy in need of re-teaching. This is supported by the SEN Team during in-class support and group work.

### 3. Progress made on previously identified targets identified in the current SIP

2014-2015	Targets	Attainment
Improvement targets (related to pupils' achievement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the school's class-based literacy average standard score from 102.8 by .7 each year over the three-year period to a target of 105 by 2016.</li> <li>• To increase the percentage of pupils achieving above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile from 57.8% by .7% each year over the three-year period to a target of 60% in 2016.</li> <li>• To reduce the percentage of pupils achieving below the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile from 13.3% by .4% each year over the three-year period to a target of 12% in 2016.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remains at 103.4 - no change from last year. Probably due to the increased emphasis on Numeracy during SSE Year 2.</li> <li>• Down from 59.5% to 59.1% a decrease of 0.4% but, due to over achieving on last year's target, still substantially on target to achieve 60% by the end of Year 3.</li> <li>• Up from 11.5% to 12%, an increase of 0.5% but, due to achieving the three-year target in one year, we are still achieving this target a year in advance.</li> </ul>

## 4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings

4.1 Our school has strengths in the following areas:

- Scoil Ursula has a conscientious, dedicated, innovative staff open to new ideas and initiatives and focussed on providing the best possible educational opportunities for its pupils.
- Pupils are performing well above the national norm with 59.1% scoring above the 50th percentile rank; and 18.1% of pupils scoring at the 85th percentile rank or above compared with 16% nationally. There is a similar significant differential in the lower percentile brackets with just 12% achieving below the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile against a national norm of 16%.
- The school's literacy standard score stands at 103.4 which is well ahead of the national average.
- Children with literacy and language needs are provided with a differentiated programme to enable access to all strands of the curriculum.

In a WSE Report in January 2015, the DES Inspectors identified school strengths as follows:

- The well-informed and committed board of management provides very good governance to the school.
- The principal very effectively leads a dedicated and very professional team of teachers. He promotes a culture of collaboration and commitment to the development of the school.
- A sense of community and inclusiveness, a welcoming school atmosphere and positive interactions between staff, pupils and parents characterise the school.
- The pupils are very well behaved and are commended for their interest, enthusiasm and engagement with all learning activities.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the school is good and some excellent examples were evident.
- The parents' association is very active and very supportive through engagement with a range of activities on behalf of the school.
- The school's engagement with school self-evaluation (SSE) and the school improvement process is very effective.

4.2 The following areas were prioritised for improvement:

- Creative Writing
- Penmanship
- Oral Language
- Comprehension
- Punctuation & Grammar

**4.3** The following legislative and regulatory requirements were addressed:

- Our Anti-Bullying Policy was updated in accordance with the recently introduced DES guidelines.
- An Attendance Policy was drafted and implemented in 2014.
- A Data Protection Policy will be drafted and implemented in 2015.
- A Home-School Links Policy will be drafted and implemented in 2016.

**Appendix to School Self-Evaluation Report:  
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 hour 40 minutes (1 <sup>st</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> classes)	Circular 11/95	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Arrangements for parent/ teacher and staff meetings	Circular 14/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Implementation of Croke Park agreement regarding additional time requirement	Circular 0008/2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Standardisation of school year	Circular 034/2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Valid enrolment of pupils	Section 9(1), 15(2) and 23 Education Act 1998 Sections 20 and 21, Education (Welfare) Act	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

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	
	2000 Rules 55, 64, 108 and 123, Rules for National Schools Circular P24/02 Staffing Schedule for current school year			
Retention of pupils	Rule 64 Rules for National Schools Circular 11/01 Circular 32/03	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Development of school plan	Section 21, Education Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Appointments to posts of responsibility	Circular 07/03 Circular 053/2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Exemption from Irish	Circular 12/96	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Implementation of child protection procedures	Circular 0065/2011  Please ensure the following in relation to child protection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	▪ Number of cases where a report involving a child in the school was submitted by the DLP to the HSE			__0__
	▪ 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			__0__
▪ Number of cases where the DLP	__0__			

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
	<p>sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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</li> </ul>	<u>0</u>		
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"> <li>▪ Number of formal parental complaints received</li> <li>▪ Number of formal complaints processed</li> <li>▪ Number of formal complaints not fully processed by the end of this school year</li> </ul>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	For Formulation, Ratification & Implementation in 2015
	<u>0</u>			
	<u>0</u>			
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>		N/A	
	<u>0</u>			

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
	Number of cases processed at informal stage	<u>0</u>		
	Number of cases heard	<u>0</u>		
	Number of appeals upheld	<u>0</u>		
	Number of appeals dismissed	<u>0</u>		
Suspension of students	Section 29 Education Act 1998  Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year			
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school	<u>0</u>		
	Number of cases processed at informal stage	<u>0</u>		
	Number of cases heard	<u>0</u>		
	Number of appeals upheld	<u>0</u>		
	Number of appeals dismissed	<u>0</u>		
Expulsion of students	Section 29 Education Act 1998			

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
	Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year			
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school	<u>  0  </u>		
	Number of cases processed at informal stage	<u>  0  </u>		
	Number of cases heard	<u>  0  </u>		
	Number of appeals upheld	<u>  0  </u>		
	Number of appeals dismissed	<u>  0  </u>		

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Code of behaviour <sup>1</sup> including anti-bullying policy	Circular 20/90 DES Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour 1993 NEWB Guidelines Section 23, Education Welfare Act 2000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attendance and participation strategy <sup>2</sup>	Section 22 Education Welfare Act 2000 Equal Status Acts 2000-2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	For Formulation, Ratification & Implementation in 2014
Health and safety statement	Section 20 Health and Safety Act 2005	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Data protection	Data Protection Act 1988 Data Protection (Amendment Act) 2003	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	For Formulation, Ratification & Implementation in 2015
Special education needs policy <sup>3</sup>	Education Act 1998 Equal Status Acts 2000- 2011 Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN) <sup>4</sup> 2004 Disability Act 2005	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy	Relationships and Sexuality Education: Policy Guidelines (1997)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Child protection policy	Circular 0065/2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Parents as partners	Circular 24/91	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Home School Links Policy for

<sup>1</sup> Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 23) the school's code of behaviour should conform to the specifications stated.

<sup>2</sup> Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 22), the school's attendance strategy should conform with the provisions stipulated.

<sup>3</sup> 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."

<sup>4</sup> The EPSEN Act requires that schools be inclusive of and provide an appropriate education for pupils with special educational needs.

			Formulation, Ratification & Implementation in 2016
Public service (Croke Park) agreement – special needs assistants	Circular 71/11	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Other			