



## School Self Evaluation Report.

### **Introduction**

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in Skerries Educate Together National School was undertaken during the period September 2012 to May 2013. At a staff meeting a sub-committee was elected whose task it was to lead the school community through the evaluation process. During the evaluation, teaching and learning in the both Literacy and Numeracy were evaluated. The main focus of the report was on Numeracy. It was decided to use template questionnaires from Inspectorate Guidelines for School Self- Evaluation for both parents and pupils. As these templates include research questions on Literacy as well as Numeracy the committee decided to proceed with gathering data on Literacy and bank these findings for a follow-up focus research in this area within the school.

### **School Context**

Skerries Educate Together National School, established in September 2008, is a national school under the patronage of Educate Together. It has been designated as a DEIS Band 2 school by the Department of Education and Skills and it participates in the School Completion Programme. Staff has received training in 'First Steps' Literacy programme which has been implemented in the school. Some staff members have also received training in Maths Recovery. Teachers have been working consistently in devising curriculum policy in all areas over the past five years. From 34 pupils enrolled in September 2008, the number of children enrolling in the school has rapidly increased within the five years of the school opening and there are now currently 206 pupils on the school roll. Almost half of the children attending our school comes from homes in which English may not be the first language.

### **Literacy**

In the area of Literacy the following findings were made;

The vast majority of parents (86% agreed or strongly agreed) indicated that they believed that their children liked reading. A greater number (93%) believed that their children were doing well at reading. Parents mostly (70%) believed that their children liked writing stories. Some parents communicated that they would like more information from the school. Recommendations regarding choice of books for children was one area identified in which some parents stated that they would appreciate some guidance along with information in general on how to help their children progress with literacy

Quite a large majority of pupils similarly displayed positive feedback in relation to their own perceptions of their learning at school. 75% stated that they 'liked' reading. 69% termed themselves as 'good readers'. With regard to usage of newspapers 69% stated that they did not use newspapers in school. Children were largely positive in relation to what they liked most about English lessons indicating that they liked



school textbooks, handwriting, phonics and games. Asked what they found hard about learning English the following were listed; Spellings, Thinking of a writing topic, Grammar, Phonics, Games, Compare and contrast, Modern Handwriting Book and Two Little Frogs (textbook).

### **Numeracy**

In relation to numeracy parents indicated that they were for the most part very positive about their perceptions of their children's engagement with Maths. 80% stated that their child liked Maths. 76% indicated that they knew their own child's strengths in Maths while 66% indicated that the maths being encountered by their child is at the appropriate level of difficulty. Opinions were more diverse in relation to parents' knowledge of their child's weaknesses in Maths – 54% stated that they were knowledgeable about such weaknesses while 46% indicated that they were not. 58% of parents who responded said that their child did not need regular help with Maths homework. 37% said that they did. 64% of parents who responded either agree or strongly agree that they receive good information about how their child is performing in Maths.

Asked about how the school might help parents to help their children with Maths, parents mentioned; more advice, advanced notification of subjects to be covered, explanations of new methods (e.g. subtraction), regular updates on children's performance, introduction of html programming, refresher courses for parents, guidance on practical uses for addition and subtraction, more than one parent-teacher meeting each year, results on Maths tests going home more regularly.

Pupil responses were again similarly positive. 69% stated that they liked Maths, 62% said that they found maths problems easy. 66% believed themselves to be good at maths and 60% indicated that they played interactive Maths games in class. Asked about the possibility of spending more time at maths elicited an even response with half indicating that they wanted this and half saying that this wasn't what they wanted. Children responded that they enjoyed the following topics and activities in their Maths lessons in school; Puzzles, Tables, Time, Symmetry, Maths games, Problem solving, Place value, Multiplication, Addition and Division. Children answering the question about what they find hard to learn during Maths listed; Odd and even numbers, Problem solving, Subtraction with big numbers, Multiplication and division, The English used in Maths, Fractions, Percentages, Long division and the circle

### **The Learning Environment**

Some research questions yielded information on the learning environment at our school. Both parents and pupils appear to be generally positive with regard to this. 67% of children who completed the questionnaire believe that there are good books to read in their classrooms. 60% use the classroom computer for games, projects, maths



and other curricular areas. However, 83% of children said that they do not use the computer to help them write stories at school. Parents commented that they were happy with the approach taken to Maths in the school. There was also a positive response to the Homework Clubs and the choice of textbooks for different classes. Some of the more prominent suggestions from parents included more ICT games during Maths and homework being made available in advance, possibly via the school website. 6 parents requested more homework while 4 asked for less.

### **Pupils' Engagement with Learning**

Our research also presented data in relation to pupils' engagement with learning. As previously stated 75% of children stated that they liked reading while 69% stated that they liked maths. Also, as stated previously, 70% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child likes to write stories. In addition to this 67% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child(ren) liked learning spellings and 78% state that they often listen to their child reading aloud. A lot of children said that they like 'free writing' which is an important component in the whole-school 'First Steps' approach to developing writing skills. In addition to this many children stated that they enjoyed learning other subjects with a focus on reading/literacy.

### **Assessment**

In relation to Assessment and teaching and learning with Literacy and Maths the following findings were made; A large number of parents (75%) were happy with the information they received on how their child is doing at English. 64% of parents stated (agreed or strongly agreed) that they received good information on how their child is doing in Maths. Standardised testing, undertaken in May 2012, showed that in Literacy (Micra-T test) the distribution of scores for reading matched very closely the normal curve of distribution for Reading. In Sigma-T testing the distribution curve of scores was somewhat to the left of the normal distribution curve for Maths. We had a significant number – 31% - achieving a standardised score between 80 and 89 whereas the normal distribution for this category is 16%.

### **Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets**

Earlier in the current school year a three-year DEIS Plan for Maths was devised. From analysis of the previous year's standardised testing the following target was agreed:

'Using Sigma-T, children scoring at or above a standard score of 90 will increase from the current 63% level to 70% over the term of this three year plan.'

Analysis of recent testing shows that in just one year we have actually achieved this target. In fact the level of pupils at or above a standard score of 90 is 75%

### **Summary of school self-evaluation findings**

Our school has the following strengths;



- There was an overall positive response from parents on their child's learning in relation to Reading and Maths.
- Standardised test results in English over the period 2008 – 2013 have indicated normal distribution. This is a welcome achievement given that we are designated as a DEIS school and that we have a considerable number of children who must cope with accessing the curriculum through English despite the fact that this is not their first language.
- A large majority of parents highlighted that they were happy with communication between the school and home.
- Homework clubs were noted by parents as being of great assistance towards their child's learning. Homework clubs in the school target children who may need extra support with their learning, for example children with EAL.
- There was strong positive feedback from the children's own perceptions of their abilities in English and Maths.
- Children stated that they enjoyed free writing – a strategy used as part of the First Steps Literacy Programme being currently implemented by teachers in the school. This appears to be a positive endorsement of First Steps.
- Children responded positively in relation to English and Maths and the various teaching methodologies adopted by teachers within these subjects.
- Teachers' whole-school approach towards oral maths appears to have been successful with children.
- Most children indicated that they enjoy the books in their classroom libraries.

**The following areas are prioritised for improvement**

- More equipment to support the teaching of the curriculum and the organisation of this equipment in the new school building.
- Communication to parents of their children's progress in Maths.
- The provision of more practical Maths homework and the use of NCCA parental advice material to assist them in helping children with homework (to include demonstration videos on different topics such as renaming in Maths).
- More opportunities for parents to learn about the curriculum, such as Maths courses for parents.
- On-going training in and review of oral Maths programme in school – to include a focus on EAL children and the use of Maths language.
- Staff focusing on the use of ICT for writing stories and other literacy skills.