St. Attracta’s Community School,
Tubbercurry,
Co. Sligo.

School Self Evaluation Report 2

Report Issue Date: September 2015
1. **Introduction**

In September 2012, a whole staff evening in-service took place on school self-evaluation.

A Literacy and Numeracy core team was then assembled consisting of school management, resource/learning support teacher and a number of staff representing the following subject areas: English, Gaeilge, Project Maths, History, Geography, French, Junior Cert Science, Leaving Cert Sciences, Applied Sciences and LCVP.

The first SSE Report was completed in January 2014. The School Improvement Plan for Literacy was confirmed in September 2014, with continuous reinforcement of the Literacy targets throughout the school year.

The second SSE Report was researched and completed during the 2014/15 school year.

1.1 **The Focus of the Evaluation**

Based on Standard Mathematical Assessments which were completed in September 2014, Units of Measure and Percentages were confirmed as the Numeracy areas which were in need of focus. Staff, parents and students were surveyed on their attitudes to Numeracy.

1.2 **School Context**

St. Attracta's Community School came into being in 2002 through the successful amalgamation of Banada Abbey Secondary School and the Marist Convent. We are a co-educational school in a rural setting under the Trusteeship of the Bishop of Achonry and the Marist sisters. Numbers have increased from 527 in 2002 to 600 currently with a staff, teaching and ancillary of 60. We have 12 feeder schools in our catchment area.
As well as the traditional Junior and Leaving Certificate, we also have a well-established Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. There is a strong culture of CPD in our school. St. Attracta’s strives to create a Christian Community where the academic, cultural, sporting and spiritual aspects of each student is developed within an atmosphere of mutual respect, integrity, sincerity, honesty and tolerance.

Our school has successfully undergone a Whole School Evaluation, a Whole School Evaluation/ Management, Leadership and Learning in 2015, numerous subject inspections and incidental inspections since its opening. We appreciate the input and support of the Inspectorate at all times.

2. The Findings

Standard Mathematical Assessments were completed in September 2014. A cohort of students completed a Mathematics Competency Test. As a result we were able to identify two areas for intervention. Units of Measure and Percentages were confirmed as the areas of focus.

In order to address and help us plan for the development of Numeracy across the curriculum we conducted surveys of students, parents and teachers.

We surveyed the teachers to establish existing practice with regard to promotion of Numeracy in the school. Teachers were invited to complete a brief online survey (Appendix 1) related to Numeracy in the classroom.

From the summary of findings we were able to ascertain what good practice was already in place, which of these Numeracy related activities could be extended across the curriculum and also where there might be scope for the introduction of new practice.

The findings of this survey indicated that the majority of teachers were using Numeracy (89%) in their classrooms. It was, however, evident that in 63% of classrooms, students work mostly on their own. We decided that a list of subject specific strategies to enhance the use of units of measure and percentages would be helpful. Further research on collaborative learning methods may be of use.

One area which has been identified in the student surveys (Appendix 3) as needing promotion is the estimation of results prior to calculation in
relation to Numeracy. Parents reported an understanding of Numeracy abilities and practical use (Appendix 2). We decided to improve the practical Numeracy rich environment of the school, particularly outside the classroom. This will enhance Numeracy skills and encourage students to understand the use of Numeracy after school as a proportion of students reported that they would not use Numeracy beyond the classroom.

2.1 Use of Data

We now use the CAT 3 assessment for all our students just prior to entry. This is a series of cognitive ability tests including a Verbal battery, a Quantative battery and a Non-Verbal battery of tests. The students also take the age appropriate level of the CAT 3 in Transition/5th year. These tests provide us with stanines for all students at entry. The stanines for verbal attainment for our current 1st years are shown in the table below:

No. of students scoring at each Stanine (Test May 2013)

![Bar chart showing the distribution of students across different stanines.]

It is possible to use the CAT 3 to gain some indication of performance at Junior Cert and Leaving Cert. Ideally we will be able to identify and introduce a series of programmes and interventions that will improve standards in literacy and numeracy. We hope to be able to measure the impact of these interventions by analysing the CAT 3 and JC/LC results.

- In accordance with recommendations of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Guidelines we have established a Literacy and
Numeracy Steering Committee. This committee is made up of teachers from a range of subject areas. The core team is using data gathered from the Self Evaluation process to inform the development of our own Whole School Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

3. Progress Made on Previously-Identified Improvement Targets- Literacy
   a. We revisited the target relating to the DEAR programme after realisation upon reflection, that our original plan to extend it was not possible.
   b. The print rich environment is continuing to be developed, both inside and particularly outside the classroom along corridors and on classroom doors. Samples of students’ work are on view inside and outside classrooms.
   c. Independent reading in school and in the wider school community is continuously being encouraged.
   d. A presentation on Independent Reading, based on suggestions from the Literacy and Numeracy Team and the SSE Team, was made to parents at the 1st Year Information Evening in September 2015. This will be extended to all other parental groups in the future.
   e. We continue to use data from CAT 3 Verbal Assessments to inform practice with regard to Literacy.

4. Summary of School Self-Evaluation Findings- Numeracy
4.1 Our School has Strengths in the Following Areas:
   • We are in the process of providing staff with a list of interventions to aid the improvement of Numeracy in their classrooms.
   • There is willingness among staff to share good practice (resources, methodologies etc.).
• Classrooms and corridors are now environments for the promotion of Numeracy.

• 89% of teachers report that Numeracy occurs in their subject, 83% are comfortable dealing with Numeracy as it arises.

• 10% of students report that they will not need Numeracy skills when they leave school.

• 54% of students report that they are not encouraged to estimate results prior to calculation.

• 69% of students feel they understand Numeracy best when working in pairs.

• 88% of parents surveyed report that they know their child’s strengths in Numeracy.

• The main uses of Numeracy at home reported by parents were farming, budgeting, shopping, on line purchases and cooking.

• 6% of parents report that their child always has difficulty with Numeracy.

4.2 The Following Areas are Priorities for Improvement:

• Continue to implement the DEAR programme where appropriate.

• Increased focus on independent reading in school and in the wider school community.

• Continue to develop the school, both inside and outside the classroom, as a print rich and Numeracy rich environment.

• Continue to use data from CAT 3 Assessments, Verbal and Quantitative, to inform practice with regard to Literacy and Numeracy.

• Provide teachers with brief subject-specific strategies relating to the enhancement of Units of Measure and Percentages.

• Encourage teachers to promote estimation of results prior to calculation in relation to Numeracy.
• Consider Collaborative Learning Strategies as an aspect of teaching and learning to be investigated and enhanced in SSE in the future.