

School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Report

**Merlin Woods Primary
School**

School roll number: 20350p
Evaluation period: 2019-2020 school year
Report issue date: June 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 The focus of the evaluation

Curriculum area: **Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) including the area of Pupil Well-Being**

1.2 School context

- A Co-Educational Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Galway. Our school celebrates and welcomes diversity. We promote the development of all aspects of the pupils, intellectual, physical, cultural and spiritual. The school prioritises the importance of the overall development of all children in its care. We have 16 mainstream classes along with two special classes for children with autism
- A school established 10 years ago in one of the fastest growing and diverse suburbs in Europe
- A school where over 80% of our pupils come from a home where English is not the first language spoken.
- A rapidly developing school since foundation in 2010, with a 27-fold increase in enrolment in the period 2010-2020, (16 pupils – 435 pupils)
- An inclusive school community, where pupils thrive on the support and dedication of many individuals and groups, including (at present): sixteen mainstream class teachers, ten special needs assistants, ten SET teachers (including EAL and resource teachers) , two special class teachers, administrative principal, two part –time secretaries, a bus escort, a facilities management company who run the building as part of a Public Private Partnership Agreement, a shared campus with Merlin College Secondary School, Parent & Student volunteers, Student Council, Parent Teacher Association and Board of Management.
- A school already committed to continuous improvement, where the school development planning process was supplemented by external inspection. 90% of our permanent teaching staff have had their work evaluated by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills while working at this school

2. Evaluation approach/methods

The key source of evidence in this school self-evaluation process is:
the views of parents, teachers and pupils

Tools used to support the gathering of information and the timeline involved:

- ✓ **December 2019:** Show of hands survey with all classes in the school
- ✓ **January and February 2020:** Questionnaire drafted by Deputy Principal sent to all teaching staff to survey strengths and challenges in delivering the SPHE curriculum
- ✓ **March 2020:** teaching staff SCOT Analysis.
- ✓ **March 2020:** two Focus Group meetings with Parents on delivery of SPHE curriculum and development of a healthy eating and homework policy
- ✓ **March 2020:** school closure due to Covid 19 pandemic
- ✓ **April 2020:** development of 3 wellbeing questionnaire's (ref: Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023 Revised October 2019)
- ✓ **May 2020:** school was due to be visited by PDST coordinator for review of SSE process to date which had to be cancelled due to school closure, Covid 19.
- ✓ **May 2020:** wellbeing questionnaire sent to parents, teachers, pupils (two target classes at 2nd class and 4th class level and different groupings of pupils at all levels within the school)
- ✓ **June 2020:** SSE presented to staff focus group for feedback
- ✓ **June 2020:** presentation to all staff for feedback and discussion
- ✓ **June 2020:** publishing of report and school development plan

Together with the above sources, information was also gathered as part of an ongoing process in a variety of ways. These include; teacher observation and consultation, staff meetings, information from pupils, in school management meetings, parental input and whole school evaluation report and school subject inspection in the area of SEN

3. CURRENT SCHOOL INITIATIVES

The following initiatives and programmes are currently being run within the school:

- Walk Tall, Stay Safe and RSE programmes are implemented in all classes Junior Infants – 6th Class. Stay Safe is taught in full every year
- recently achieved its 4th Green Flag on the theme of transport
- awarded a yellow flag as part of the Diversity in Schools Programme
- awarded a blue flag as part of the Active schools programme
- various initiatives such as Friendship Week, Active School Week, Anti-Bullying Week, Behaviour Week held annually
- weekly assemblies with class and individual awards
- awards for attendance and sporting achievements at the end of the school year.
- community spring clean initiatives
- a Students Council
- a Parents Association
- part of the Healthy Schools Ireland Initiative
- part of Food Dudes initiative
- an Incredible Years school
- Fun Friends (2nd Class) and Friends for Life (3rd/4th class) are ran with targeted groups

of children

- Zippy's Friends and Zones of Regulation are in operation within the school.
- healthy lunches are promoted throughout the school- 88% of staff feel the school promotes healthy eating, while 100% of parents and pupils surveyed feel the school promotes healthy eating
- physical activity is promoted through a wide variety of afterschool and within school sporting activities. Strong links have been established between the school and local sports clubs.
- high number of staff have received training and use mind up – a mindfulness programme to supplement their teaching of the SPHE curriculum.
- some staff have received training in restorative practice and utilise circles and circle time in the resolution of conflicts
- school readiness programme is run within the school
- proactive attendance strategy is in place
- close links exist between the school and on campus secondary school with strong transition programmes in place
- close links exist between the school and the ARD Family Resource Centre
- nurture room is in the process of being established.

4. Findings

LEARNER OUTCOMES

- The pupils' are enabled to transfer their knowledge and understanding in the curriculum competently and confidently in a variety of contexts.
 - ❖ 100% of children report that if they feel bullied their teachers have taught them what to do
 - ❖ 82% of children know which adult to talk to at school if they or a friend feel worried or anxious about something
 - ❖ 96% of parents believe that their child knows what to do and who to talk to in the event of a bullying situation
 - ❖ 94% of children report that they are taught about bullying/cyber bullying and they know that leaving people out and teasing people is not allowed.
 - ❖ 92% of pupils report that they learn about accepting people are different and that we are all special and unique
 - ❖ 94% of pupils agree that they know the school rules and that the school rules are there to keep us safe
- There is a need for a more coherent whole school structure, for the implementation of elements of the SPHE curriculum, to ensure that pupil knowledge, awareness and understanding develops in a progressive way.
 - ❖ 60% of teachers report using the year1/year2 approach when planning
 - ❖ 25% of teachers find the school plan useful or very useful when planning with 60% of teachers rating it as an averagely useful plan
- The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, within the various elements of the SPHE curriculum, reflect the learning outcomes set out for each class level, however, survey results from all stakeholders indicate that not all pupils are developing the appropriate attitudes and dispositions as set out in our SPHE curriculum, for their class level.
 - ❖ 75% of parents report that their child has spoken to them about feeling anxious in relation to a school issue
 - ❖ 42% of pupils report feeling anxiety in relation to a school issue
 - ❖ When teachers were asked in an open ended question to list their main areas of concern in the area of SPHE, wellbeing of pupils and mental health of pupils were the greatest concern, with 55% of teachers mentioning these topics.

● LEARNER EXPERIENCES

- The school and classroom environment supports, encourages and celebrates pupil learning and achievement in SPHE.
 - ❖ 100% of pupils rate their school as being a friendly, welcoming place
 - ❖ 100% of pupils consider the school a safe place to be

- ❖ 100% of staff believe the school environment is used to display pupil work and celebrate pupil achievement
- ❖ 100% of staff believe the physical environment of the school is well maintained.
- Pupils grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive, however, interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers are not always respectful and positive, and conducive to well-being. The tenets of respect, positivity and friendship underpin the SPHE curriculum.
 - ❖ Almost 40% of teachers report that children do not always respect the school building and equipment
 - ❖ Almost 40% of pupils report that children do not always respect the school building and equipment
 - ❖ 20% of teachers agree with the statement that children always talk to the teachers in a calm and respectful manner
 - ❖ 32% of teachers agree that children interact with each other in a calm and respectful manner
 - ❖ 58% of parents report that their child has spoken of the negative behaviour of others impacting their learning
 - ❖ 88% of pupils report the negative behaviour of others as having an adverse effect on their learning
- Pupils are given the opportunity to communicate, collaborate, analyse and problem solve.
 - ❖ “The overall quality of teaching of pupils is commendable. During the evaluation almost all of the lessons observed were well structured and purposeful and teachers demonstrated effective classroom management skills. Good use is made of approaches such as group work, pair work and team teaching. A strong spirit of collaboration was evident during in-class intervention lessons.” (Ref: Department of Education and skills Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with SEN Inspection Report 2019)



● **TEACHER PRACTICE**

- Teachers value and understand the importance of SPHE as a subject and are open to delivering a variety of initiatives and programmes in this subject area.
 - ❖ 95% of staff rate SPHE as an important or extremely important subject
- Expected learner outcomes are clear, relevant and differentiated to cater for the learning needs and abilities of all pupils.
 - ❖ 92% of staff agree that teaching and assessment approaches are differentiated to provide opportunities for success for all students
 - ❖ 72% of staff agree that then supporting a student with identified needs, the school engages in a collaborative problem-solving process to support the child with the remaining 28% agreeing that this sometimes happens
- Necessary and relevant resources, material and equipment are available to enhance lessons.
 - ❖ 80 % of staff rate resources as between satisfactory and extremely satisfactory.
- Lesson content is differentiated to meet the varying needs and abilities in the class.
 - ❖ 92% of teachers feel the teaching and assessment approaches are differentiated to provide opportunities for success for all students
 - ❖ 76% of teachers feel pupils who have learning, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are appropriately supported
- All pupils are treated in an inclusive and equitable way and differences are understood and valued.
 - ❖ 96% of staff believe that the school has an ethos of respect and acceptance of difference where all people are valued the remaining 4% believe that this sometimes happens
 - ❖ 96% of parents agree that the school is the school is welcoming and accessible to all students
 - ❖ 92% of pupils report that they learn about accepting people are different and that we are all special and unique
 - ❖ “This is an inclusive school where all children are enabled to participate in the full range of learning opportunities provided. Teachers take on a collective responsibility for the management of pupils and the strategies in use foster positive behaviour and mutual respect.” (Ref: Whole School Evaluation of Management, Leadership and Learning Report, June 2014)



● **OTHER FINDINGS OF NOTE**

- Awareness around the curricular area of SPHE is low across the pupil body. In a show of hands survey in each class within the school no child chose SPHE in their top three favourite subjects. In 13 out of the 16 classes teachers were asked what SPHE was.
- In a parent focus group the most area parents wished to receive more information about

was Relationship and Sexual Education with 50% parents present being unfamiliar with the schools RSE policy.

5. Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets

[Not applicable in year 1.]

6. Summary of school self-evaluation findings

6.1 Our school has strengths in the following areas:

- A conscientious, dedicated, innovative staff and leadership team, open to new ideas and initiatives and focussed on providing the best possible educational opportunities for its pupils.
- The school has a high profile in sports with numerous successes in a variety of codes.
- The provision of a school atmosphere that is supportive and encouraging, and that contributes to the happiness and well-being of the children.
- Positive and effective provision for diversity and inclusion (including the area of special educational needs.)
- Effective provision of an extensive range of SPHE-related learning experiences, including positive social experiences.
- A wide range of programmes and initiatives being run throughout the school

6.2 The following areas are prioritised for improvement:

- **The School Plan:**
 - Greater co-ordination of SPHE plan at whole-school level to ensure continuity across class levels and to maximise the opportunities for SPHE learning in the context of the overall demands of the various curricular areas.
 - Review of RSE Policy to include parent and pupil body
 - Review of Code of Behaviour to include parent and pupil body
- **Behaviour Management**
 - The challenging behaviour of some pupils, (including pupils experiencing emotional and/or social difficulties.) helping other pupils to understand these behaviours (in a general sense) and how these behaviours are managed.
 - Targeted work around conflict resolution & management with an emphasis on restorative practice across the whole school community, which will be reflected in an updated Code of Behaviour
- **Parent and Pupil awareness**
 - Developing communication with parents and pupils on the work being done in the curriculum area of SPHE and also in the area of wellbeing, with a focus on further involvement of parents and pupils in the development of appropriate policies and plans.
- **Pupil Wellbeing and Mental Health**
 - Introduction of the Weaving Wellbeing programme from 2nd to 6th class in order to provide a structured mental health programme that can be taught hand in hand with the strands and strand units of the wider SPHE curriculum

6.3 The following legislative and regulatory requirements need to be addressed, (see checklist at Appendix overleaf):

- N/A (At present, the school is fully compliant.)

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 st -6 th classes)	Circular 11/95	Yes	
Arrangements for parent/teacher and staff meetings	Circular 14/04	Yes	
Implementation of Croke Park agreement regarding additional time requirement	Circular 0008/2011	Yes	
Standardisation of school year	Circular 034/2011	Yes	
Valid enrolment of pupils	Section 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	<i>[On-going development and redevelopment]</i>

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	
Exemption from Irish	Circular 12/96	Yes	
Implementation of child protection procedures	Circular 0065/2011 Please ensure the following in relation to child protection	Yes	
	<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 		
Implementation of complaints procedure as appropriate	Complaints Procedures, Section 28 Education Act Primary Boards of Management Information Manual November 2007 Please consider the following in relation to complaints	Yes	
	<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 		

Refusal to enrol	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		Yes	
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school	Nil		
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		Yes	
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school	Nil		
Expulsion 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		Yes	
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school	Nil		

Number of cases processed at informal stage	N/A
Number of cases heard	N/A
Number of appeals upheld	N/A
Number of appeals dismissed	N/A

Number of cases processed at informal stage	N/A
Number of cases heard	N/A
Number of appeals upheld	N/A
Number of appeals dismissed	N/A

Number of cases processed at informal stage	-
Number of cases heard	-
Number of appeals upheld	-
Number of appeals dismissed	-

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 ¹ including anti-bullying policy	Circular 20/90 DES Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour 1993 NEWB Guidelines Section 23, Education Welfare Act 2000	Yes	
Attendance and participation strategy ²	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 ³	Education Act 1998 Equal Status Acts 2000- 2011 Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN) ⁴ 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	

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

² Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 22), the school's attendance strategy should conform with the provisions stipulated. ³ 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."

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