

**Grange Community College
Grange Abbey Road,
Dublin 13**

School Roll Number: 70020B

School Self-Evaluation Report

Evaluation period: August 2015-May 2016

1. Introduction

1.1 The focus of the evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in Grange Community College was undertaken during the period August 2015 to May 2016. During the evaluation, teaching and learning was evaluated. The area was identified by staff as one which affected all students in virtually all subjects. Improvement in this area could help other areas also targeted by Deis.

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation.

1.2 School context

Grange Community College is a multi-denominational school with a comprehensive in-take under the auspices of Dublin, Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The college participates in DEIS, SCP, and HSCL programmes.

The College operates within the regulations laid down from time to time by the Department of Education and Skills and follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Section 9 and 30 of Education Act 1998.

Pupils at Junior and Senior Cycle follow a core programme, with a number of optional subjects. The College also offers the Junior Certificate Schools Programme.

The college also offers a compulsory Transition Year Programme. Furthermore, where there is a demand, the College offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Grange Community College is a Deis band 1 urban school with students presenting with a high level of disadvantage. It is a mixed school with 159* students. There is a special class for 6 autistic students. This intake comes from many feeder primary schools within the local area.

**As per second level statistics in October returns 2015*

2. The findings

Findings following a review are:

- A Teaching and Learning Committee was set up in the school. This reviewed the entrance examination testing procedures and the structure of the day. It reviewed fifth year options. It also reviewed first year options and the distribution of in-coming first years in classes.
- Leaving Certificate options are now led by student choice with classes being arranged where possible to facilitate this.
- Two new subjects are in the process of being introduced at Leaving Certificate level: music this year, and physics next year. The school has also been a pilot for the introduction of the new Leaving Certificate subject politics and society, which will commence with fifth year students in the 2016-17 school year.
- The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) was introduced this year with most of the fifth year students choosing this option.
- The entrance testing day has been restructured to lengthen tests and make them more appropriate. The day will now include input from subject teachers and these teachers are involved in the marking

of the tests.

- New first year timetabling was implemented.
- Project Maths type problems had been introduced into the entrance testing in 2015 and again this year, which will allow for more comparative analysis when they are re-tested towards the end of second year.
- A number of teachers participated in the Transfer learning programme, TL21, Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century, which was jointly run by Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and training Board and National University of Ireland, Maynooth during the 2015-16 school year. During this programme the Grange Community College hosted a session where innovative practices, which had been trialled by the college were presented to other schools for possible implementation. A certificate of completion was awarded to those who took part at a ceremony in DDLETB Head Office in Tallaght in May 2016. The college and the teachers who participated were highly commended by the DDLETB and also by the Board of Management of Grange Community College.
- Visiting international students were welcomed into the school for the first time. Some of them followed the Transition Year programme, whilst others joined fifth year. It was a hugely positive experience for the students themselves, as well as for our students and teachers. They had a positive influence on our students' attitude to learning.
- This year teachers carried out monthly assessment testing on first year students which was recorded on Vsware. Some review of results took place, but there would be a need for further review in the future, as this scheme continued into second year.

3. Progress made on previously identified improvement targets

Attendance

- The target to increase the attendance of senior cycle students by 5% in the school year 2015-2016 has not been met and it was agreed to review this target in the next school year.
- Attendance figures for the school year 2014-2015 as returned to TUSLA at the end of the school year showed that 3522 school days had been lost that year.
- Attendance figures as returned to TUSLA at the end of this school year (2015-16) showed that the total number of school days lost was 3109 despite an increase of student numbers and not-withstanding the fact that there were more students this year who were absent for 20 days or more.
- As the above figures are for whole day attendance they also demonstrate a marked improvement in attendance in school in the afternoons. The re-structuring of the school day meant that Junior and Transition Year students remained in school for lunch-time and were consequently present for the afternoon.

Literacy

- Reading Ability test showed that the student average at the entrance test was under the 40th percentile, (39.93). As percentiles reflect an average for an age cohort an average improvement of a year could very well show up as the same percentile in each subsequent year. We wanted our students to improve by more than the average, so we set that at one percentile point in each year. This could be reviewed after the first year.

- The previous DEIS plan recorded improvement in reading scores and the initiatives under the previous target in this area were felt to have been effective. However, it was by no means clear that all staff were interpreting the target in the same way. This is a re-working of the previous one taking into account comments from the DES inspection in this area, and in-put from the PDST through Selina Wilkes. Not all students would acquire an in-depth understanding of key terminology, but the effort would be very helpful to all.
- However we felt that it was very important to encourage students to read more, as this would help their general literacy and therefore affect their Examination Attainment and Educational Progression.
- Although it was not part of our DEIS targets a study was conducted by G Mc Keown of the college's Resource Department on the reading attainment results of second year pupils.

18 students took part in both the entrance test in February 2014 and April 2016, so only the scores of these students were used in the study. Using the entrance tests as the baseline data, an average grade equivalent score was determined. This was compared with the average score from the recent tests. This was converted to Reading Age equivalents and the results are as follows:

Average Reading Age Equivalent at entrance exam: 11 years 8 months
 Average Reading Age Equivalent at end of 2nd year: 14 years

Major reading improvements were recorded by students across the spectrum, which is especially significant given the wide range of abilities in 2nd year. This is a major achievement and a true reflection of the hard work all the teachers have put in.

4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings

4.1 Our school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- Small numbers of students in many classes (including provision for two maths classes in each year group)
- Access to resource teachers and learning support
- ICT present in all classrooms / maths trolley
- After-school study
- Increased choice of Leaving Certificate subjects
- Introduction of Music and Physics at Leaving Certificate level
- Designation as pilot school for the new Politics and Society Leaving Certificate examination
- Innovative and committed teachers as evidenced by participation in TL21 programme
- Improvement in attendance since the 2013-14 school year as evidenced by the decrease of 1195 days lost to the school, when compared with the school year 2015-16, as calculated in the TUSLA Reports.

4.2 The following areas are prioritised for improvement:

Teaching and learning

- To continue to offer options according to student choice
- To offer a greater variety of Leaving Certificate subjects in order to support the diverse abilities of our student cohort and to widen their progression opportunities
- To continue to promote the LCVP programme and the new Leaving Certificate subjects, Music and Physics
- To offer the option of Politics and Society
- To implement methodologies focused on in the TL21 programme and the new Junior Certificate in-service

Attendance

- To review the attendance of senior cycle students and draw up a new target for the remaining two years of the DEIS plan
- To increase full day attendance of junior cycle students by 1 %

Literacy

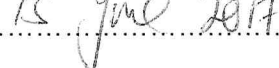
Overall target to improve literacy levels of specific groups of students within the junior cycle:

- That those students in first year in 2015-16 will have made an average percentile improvement in Reading Ability per annum.
- That the majority of students will have an in-depth understanding of key vocabulary/terminology in all subjects in order to access the junior cycle curriculum.
- To promote interest in reading throughout the school.

4.3 The following legislative and regulatory requirements need to be addressed:

- Health and Safety Statement needs to be reviewed
- Data Protection Policy developed by DDLETB needs to be ratified by Board of Management
- Child protection policy needs to be reviewed by the Board of Management (annually)
- Homework policy is being reviewed and needs to be finalised
- Adult induction policy needs to be drafted/reviewed
- Guidance policy needs to be finalised
- CCTV Policy needs to be developed

Signed 
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date..... 

Grange Community College Homework and Study Policy

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Grange Community College Homework and Study Policy

Introductory statement

This policy includes

- Purposes and Principles of a Homework policy.
- Main types of Homework.
- Expectations for all Involved.

Scope

This policy applies to students, teachers, parents/guardians. *

Relationship to the School's Mission Statement

Grange Community College seeks to enable students to fully develop their talents by creating a safe, healthy learning environment that nurtures self-discipline and encourages our pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

Rationale

Homework is a valuable part of schooling. It allows for the practice, extension and consolidation of work done in the class. Homework provides training for students in planning and organising time and helps the development of a range of skills such as identification and use of information resources. Students must see homework as essential to aiding their learning. It is a vital requirement that guides them in the recognition of their strengths and weaknesses in a particular subject. Students become responsible for their own learning. Additionally, good habits of study, concentration and self discipline become established.

Guidelines

There are no hard and fast rules about time spent on homework, but the following times are generally recommended as a minimum for each group

First Year: 1 – 1 ½ hours.
Second Year: 1 ½ - 2 hours.
Third Year: 2 – 2 ½ hours.

Fourth Year homework will be given but is usually less frequent than in other years and will often consist of research for project work.

Fifth & Sixth Years: 2 ½ - 3 hours.

* In the context of this document parents/ guardians means parents/guardians/caregivers

Homework and Study

In addition to the recommended hours of study, Grange Community College offers students school facilities to complete study and homework in an environment conducive to best performance.

Evening Study is available to third, fifth and sixth year students.

Homework club is available to first and second year students.

Study skills workshops are offered to third and sixth year students.

Use of Student Journal in relation to Homework

Each student is required to have a student journal. It is the chief means of communication between school and home in relation to homework. When used correctly, it is also an important aid to students in ensuring that they cover the prescribed homework. It is very important that teachers and parents/guardians ensure that the student uses the journal so as to maximise the benefit to the student's education. Teachers may use the journal to commend good work and consistent effort along with using it as a channel to inform parents of non-completion of homework.

Purpose of Homework:

- To reinforce and consolidate work done in class
- To extend learning done in class, for example additional reading
- To carry out preparatory work for the next day's class
- To develop skills in writing, research, organisation and study
- To promote independent learning
- To allow pupils to work at their own pace
- To motivate and challenge students
- To enable teachers to monitor student's progress
- To provide parents with an opportunity to take part in their children's education

Types of Homework

Each subject department sets assignments which are specific to its particular subject area.

Homework includes the following types of activity:

- Development of oral skills
- Development of mathematical skills
- Writing of essays/articles/speeches/short stories/dialogues/poems
- Learning by rote
- Listening to and/or viewing radio or TV programmes/use of the internet
- Drawing and illustrating
- Making notes
- Reviewing
- Reading for pleasure
- Reading for investigation or information
- Preparation and presentation
- Practice of exam technique
- Research
- Revision
- Completing assignment and projects within a specified period

*Above list not exhaustive.

Roles/ Responsibilities:

Board of Management:

- To ratify the policy
- To ensure a review of the policy is carried out regularly

Principal, Deputy Principal

- To monitor the implementation of the policy
- To emphasise to both students and parents the importance of homework
- To ensure that necessary resources are in place to support the implementation of the policy, for example, homework club and evening study

Class Tutors:

- To check that journals are signed weekly by parent or guardian
- To clarify the importance of homework to the student body
- To contact parents/guardians regarding homework issues when appropriate

Subject Teacher:

- To set appropriate homework and give a completion date
- To set homework considering the needs of the students
- To leave sufficient time in class for students to take down homework
- To check students are recording the homework in their journals
- To ensure students are clear as to what they are expected to do and expected amount of time to be spent completing homework
- To check and correct homework set
- To implement a rewards and sanctions scheme where applicable
- To record non-completion of homework into the student's journal
- To refer issues of repeated non-completion of homework to the Class Tutor for appropriate action (Yellow form)
- To contact parents/guardians regarding homework issues when appropriate

Guidance Department and Learning Support Team:

- To provide support and guidance to students, teachers, parents/guardians, in particular for students with special needs.

Parent/ Guardian responsibilities:

As partners in their child's education, parents are expected to take a positive interest in their child's studies and actively support the Homework and Study Policy.

In the following areas we recommend that parents should:

Supervision of Homework:

- Demonstrate their interest in and support for homework
- Ensure homework is completed to the best of the child's ability
- Check that their child reviews class work and engages in frequent revision
- Ensure that the child finds out what homework has been missed

Provision of Space and Facilities:

- Provide, where possible, somewhere suitable for doing homework
- Ensure that the child has the necessary books, materials and equipment to complete homework to the best of his/her ability

Communication with teacher:

- Sign and monitor the child's journal and contact the teacher when necessary
- To respond to teachers' communication through the journal
- Provide an explanatory note in the event that homework is incomplete or not done
- To inform the teacher or tutor if the child is experiencing on-going difficulty with homework

Student Responsibilities**With regard to homework:**

The student

- Is required to have their journal in their possession at all times while in school
- Must record homework in the journal under the correct subject including the detail outlined by the teacher
- Must present homework clearly and neatly
- Must complete homework to the best of his/her ability
- Should communicate difficulties with homework to the subject teacher
- Is responsible for finding out any homework that has been missed
- Is required to provide a note from parent/guardian if homework is not done or is incomplete

With regard to study:

- It is important for the student to realise that study is not limited to homework, but should also include revision, exam preparation and self – directed learning.

Links with other Policies:

This policy should be in conjunction with the following school policies:

Code of Behaviour/Discipline

Child Protection

Guidance Plan

SEN Policy

Admissions/Enrolment Policy

other relevant policies as they are developed.

Ratification and Communication:

- The finalised draft will be ratified by the Board of Management in 2017.
- The homework policy will be published on the school website and the policy will be made available to parents upon request.
- It will be published in the staff booklet and a copy of this booklet will be given to any new teachers coming to the school.
- A shortened version of the homework policy will be found in the student journal.

Implementation and Review:

The Homework and Study policy will be promoted throughout the school, and its implementation and effectiveness should be reviewed every two years or as required.

Signed:

Kev O'Riordan
Chairperson, Board of Management

Dated:

13th June 2017

Review date:

13 June 2019

Appendix 1

Homework Policy

Homework should be meaningful for the teacher and the student. It should serve to reinforce work done in class and it should act as a bridge between the work of one day and the next. It should be designed in such a way as to offer the students opportunities for self-assessment.

An effective homework policy will help students to develop and sustain good study habits. It fosters positive values such as self-discipline, responsibility and an interest in learning, which will benefit the student throughout their lives.

Types of homework assignments (as identified by the NCCA):

Preparation

This type of assignment is intended to help students get ready for the next day's classroom lesson. For instance, a reading assignment may be given prior to a lesson.

Practice

By successfully completing practice assignments students have the opportunity to review and reinforce skills, knowledge and information presented in a previous lesson.

Extension

Extension assignments ask students to expand on skills and/ or concepts taught during a previous class. For example, reading further on topic studied.

Creative/ Enrichment

This assignment includes analysing, synthesising and evaluating concepts or skills already taught. Students have an opportunity to develop and apply their own ideas about a topic and prepare a presentation for the teachers or the class. One example would be to assign students the task of writing a play or a short story.

Finally, all homework is not alike in nature and purpose, but all homework should help students construct knowledge, develop deeper understandings and connections amongst the concepts to which they have been introduced, and provides an opportunity for them to apply the skills they have acquired.