



Finn Valley College
Coláiste Ghleann na Finne
Drumboe Lower, Stranorlar
71240U

School Self-Evaluation Report

Evaluation period:

September 2013 – June 2016

Report issue date:

June 2014

SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Teaching & Learning (Homework) for **September 2013 – June 2016**

I. Introduction

I.1. The focus of the evaluation

A school self-evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Finn Valley College was undertaken during the academic year 2013 /2014. Our school chose to focus on Homework as an important aspect of Teaching and Learning in our school. Three groups were examined in the collation of data.

The following is a report on the findings of the evaluation.

I.2. School Context

Finn Valley College is one of four co-educational schools in the Finn Valley area and is one of two in the Ballybofey/Stranorlar urban area. Our school operate under the aegis of Donegal ETB.

There are currently 302 students enrolled in the school. Traditionally, families in the area have tended to send their children who are less academic to the school while the more academic children have been sent to the neighbouring school in the town. Consequently, the school has a very significant number of students in receipt of learning support with almost 25% of our allocation assigned to learning support for students. When adjusted on a per capita basis this is one of the highest ratios of SEN provision in the country. The school currently has 12 SNAs catering for the needs of SEN students. The school also operates an ASD classroom and hopes to open a second class in the next year to cater for the large number of autistic students who are referred here. We are the only post-primary school in the area operating n ASD classroom.

We are a DEIS school serving families who suffer from quite a significant amount of socio-economic disadvantage. As part of the DEIS initiative we are also part of a School Completion Programme that serves two other post-primary schools and five primary schools. There is a constant effort required to ensure students complete their education to Leaving Certificate level. The school offers the LCVP and LCA programmes as well as the Junior Certificate and Junior Certificate Schools Programme to meet the varied educational needs of the students.

Finn Valley College is renowned for its pastoral care and its holistic approach to education. We regularly cooperate with external agencies such as Tusla, CAMHS, Jigsaw

and Foróige to provide interventions for students at risk of early school leaving or who may be experiencing other difficulties.

2. The Findings

Learner Outcomes

- There is no specific hard-line data that one can use for measuring the impact of homework on attainment levels for students. There are many other variables that may have a causative impact on attainment levels.
- However, a broad based empirical analysis by the teaching and Learning Committee suggested that there is correlation between poor homework practice and poor attainment. Those students who regularly present without work completed either fully or properly tend to underperform in exams.
- Staff agreed that improving homework practice would benefit students considerably in terms of their overall attainment by reference to improving retention of information, the acquisition of new skills and refinement of those attained in class as well as cultivating a culture which placed more value on learning.

Learning Experiences

An analysis of a Student Questionnaire carried out by the Teaching and Learning Committee revealed:

- Students are not copying their homework into their diaries and consequently it is not being done fully or to an adequate standard.
- Some students are not recording their homework accurately writing it in a rushed way and not recording non-written homework.
- Students are not taking enough care to get their homework journal signed by a parent each evening.

A survey of parents was also carried out by the Teaching and Learning Committee:

- While many parents are very supportive in relation to monitoring their children's homework and their Homework Journal not all parents check the journal each night.
- Parents are not always signing the Homework Journal each night.

Teachers' Practice

An analysis of current Teacher Practice carried out by the Teaching and Learning Committee revealed:

- The need for regular homework with feedback is accepted by staff as important for progression and attainment.
- Most staff regularly gives homework but this depends on the group's ability level and the particular subject area.

- There is inconsistency in the approach adopted by staff in assigning quantities and types of homework.
- There is inconsistency in ensuring students record homework in their Homework Journals.
- More care is needed in monitoring how fully or how well homework has been done.
- That many of the students are not being assigned sufficient quantities of homework relative to their age, programme and ability.

3. Progress made on previous improvement targets

N/A as this is the first year of school self-evaluation in relation to homework.

4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings

4.1. Finn valley College has strengths in the following areas:

- There are a number of systems and procedures already in place to promote good practice in relation to homework. In particular the Homework Journal provides opportunities for ensuring homework is done fully.
- A Homework policy is already in place which, if fully implemented, should bring about an improvement in Homework completion rates and attainment rates.
- The Pastoral Care class has traditionally been used by Class Teachers to focus on the importance of homework reinforcing the emphasis placed on homework in the school.

4.2. Finn Valley College prioritise the following areas for improvement:

- Teachers to ensure that Homework Policy is consistently and fully implemented.
- Teachers to ensure that Homework Journal is used properly by students on a daily basis.
- Students to write all homework in the journals and ensure that there is an entry for every subject each day.
- Students to complete all types of homework each.
- Improve the quality of the homework being presented for correction.
- Improve the quality of monitoring and reporting of homework completed.
- Parents to play a more proactive role in improving homework practice with their children.

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