

## REFLECTION AND EVALUATION – 2014

**INTRODUCTION:** At the end of the school year teachers were invited to reflect on the highlights of the 2013-2014 Academic Year from their own perspective and to identify areas for improvement. A similar evaluation and reflection took place in May 2013. This report is in 3 sections:

1. Section 1 indicates what teachers identified as the highlights of 2013-2014 Academic Year. Feedback has been prioritised in order of the number of times a point was made – e.g. (6) after a comment means that particular point was made 6 times.
2. Section 2 summarises the areas teachers identified for improvement going forward into 2014-2015.
3. Section 3 reflects on which of the areas identified for improvement in 2013-2014, have been addressed and how.

### SECTION 1: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL YEAR 2013-2014:

Sports: Successes of basketball and spikeball teams; increased successes of our students in the sporting arena especially branching out into many new areas; William and Terry Donoghue's boxing successes. Sports facilities extended and improved (8)

Endeavour Awards (8) – one of the best events of the school year.

Academic Awards Ceremony (6)

Open Day (5) – “lovely to show off our school and our students”.

Leaving Certificate Graduation Evening (5) – “lovely, relaxed atmosphere”, “always a very special night”.

Winter Song (5) lovely way to showcase students abilities and to welcome members of our school community.

Spelling Bee (5) – very positive

PRO work published in local newspapers (4) Claire O'Connor's PR group did an amazing job in promoting Athy College in the media. “increased exposure in the local media”.

Be Active Activities – the triathlon is a fantastic way to involve students in exercise; triathlon and Aviva Mile (3)

Darkness into Light (3)

Science and Technology Day (3) “positive reaction from incoming students”.

Annual Art Exhibition (3)

Participation in the National Choral event at Croke Park and Athy College Choir (3)

Success of the Easter study programme (2)

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Brendan Doyle winning 1<sup>st</sup> place in Ireland for MTW Project (2)

Cross-Campus Teaching and Learning sessions – teachers teaching teachers (2)

Cecil Day Lewis successes (2)

NUIM Awards for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Years and Inspirational teachers (2)

Civic responsibility by students – cleaning up canteen after lunch (2)

Home Economics Department focus on Healthy Eating Week, Fruity Fridays, demonstration of Wedding Cake Sugar Craft and Bake-off (2)

The Talent Show (2)

Introduction of debating – great to have new ventures starting (2).

Display of B4 students' jewellery in Gillen's Jewellers (2)

The work and care of tutors and year heads (2)

Partnership with Athy Concentrates (2)

5<sup>th</sup> Year Retreat to Ovoca Manor (2)

Christmas celebration with Rang Gorm

Commencement of Green Schools Project

Bodhran lessons for Rang Gorm

Student/parent information evenings for incoming 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year students.

Floodlighting of the Astropitch

Seachtain na Gaeilge

Literacy Initiatives and Numeracy initiatives

The installation of the Hare Queen and Giorria sculptures.

Timetabling of Gaelige for 3<sup>rd</sup> years

Effective timetabling of Mock Exams

New members of staff and their new perspectives.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> years – a lovely group of students who will progress well into the senior cycle.

Sending reports at Halloween to first years' parents/guardians

Inter-schools history quiz – promoted interest and competition in the subject.

Attendance awards

Resource teachers in the technology area

## **SECTION 2: IDENTIFYING AREAS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:**

### **Teaching and Learning:**

- More subject planning meetings need to be scheduled.
- Students need to use journals properly (3).
- Continue practice established in 2013-2014 of sending reports on first year students in November.
- Be Active Week is a great initiative. However, if you have an exam class during class 7 it can be stressful.
- International students and LC repeat students not from Athy College – effect on other students' learning is not always good. Placement in 5<sup>th</sup> year is a better option for international students.
- Motivation of senior cycle students. Suggestion: Connect in with "Managing Myself" key skill (School Improvement Plan). Monitor attendance of senior cycle students (2)– involve parents early where there are problems.
- Emphasise the importance of homework and the use of the journal with all classes.

### **Pastoral Care and Student Issues:**

- More meetings of Pastoral Care teams need to take place (4).
- Significantly increase the number of nominations required to receive an Endeavour Award.
- A meeting needs to be held at the beginning of the academic year to explain the role of tutor, roll book etc to new tutors. Students are frequently being sent to tutors' rooms without phone call, note etc during class time. This is very unfair on the tutor and on the class whose tuition time is being interrupted (3).

### **Student Discipline:**

- School bags at doorways and in corridors a problem. Suggestion: shutter in canteen not to go up for 5 minutes after the bell to give students time to go to lockers and stop rush for food.
- Students not bringing school bags home. Focus needed on students bringing all equipment to class. (3)
- Suggestion: Cameras in corridors and locker areas.
- Uniform – need to re-focus in particular on shoes and have a common approach (2).
- Suggestion: Return of weekly/fortnightly blitzes on particular focus points. Principal texting parents throughout the summer to remind about purchasing the proper school uniform.
- Some senior students stayed down town during class 7 activities organized for Be Active Week.
- Increase number of teachers on break duty (2).
- All teachers promote courtesy, respect and manners amongst students. Suggestion: Link in with “Managing Myself” (School Improvement Plan)

#### **Staff Wellbeing and Professional Development:**

- ePortal comments on student matters; do not use tutors’ break times to discuss student discipline matters. Every teacher deserves his/her break (3).
- More opportunities for collegial/staff bonding and team building. Suggestion: Ovoca Manor (3)
- More staff to be trained in area of First Aid (2)
- Feeling of being inundated and overwhelmed by all the new IT – When getting a handle on Moodle the introduction of Mahara was slightly overwhelming.

#### **Administration:**

- More meetings of in-school management team and staff meetings should take place.
- Would it be possibility to make allowance within Croke Park hours for voluntary Saturday mornings? The three Saturday mornings amount to about 12 hours for any teacher who participates in all 3. Would it be possible to sue some Croke Park hours for correcting mocks?
- Planning time for subjects early in the first term
- Issues around supervision of cleaning the canteen area.

#### **Building and Facilities:**

- Gravel channel at front door could be paved to prevent gravel entering the building.
- Improved sound system required for some events.
- More air-dryers in toilets to replace paper towel.

### SECTION 3: A REVIEW OF WHICH PRIORITIES FROM 2012-2013 WERE ADDRESSED AND HOW

**Green type indicates priorities from May 2013. Red type = reflection on actions taken (or not taken) during 2013-2014, May 2014.**

1. Tutors and Year Heads need more time and opportunities to plan, co-ordinate and discuss. (x5) Teachers need to email tutors AND then put on e portal any matter that teachers are drawing to the attention of a tutor /year head. (xx2) Teachers should work through the Guidelines for Class Discipline Procedures before contacting a tutor/year head about a matter. Time for tutors to meet with their groups is important. It is impossible to sign journals, check uniform and address any issues in an SPHE class while teaching a lesson. A class or 8 minutes per morning should be set aside for these issues plus one class per week to meet with year head. Not all teachers are using email correctly so there can be a lack of communication involving important matters such as projects or pupil ill health. **Many aspects of these concerns remain. Management have decided on a greater time allocation for meetings of Pastoral Care Teams from August 2014 going forward.**
2. Could Be Active Week be moved to a different time of the year (x4) – very late in the year for exam classes. Should be held in September to enable students to build relationships with each other early in the year. **All** timetabled staff to attend with their classes for Be Active week activities. While Be Active Week is an enjoyable and valuable part of our school year, the timing needs to be considered. So close to the end of the school year, it was disruptive for exam students and it was hard for many students to settle down and focus for the last 2 classes afterwards. Perhaps it could be held in September? **Be Active Week moved successfully to an earlier time this academic year. There was a higher staff attendance at the supervision of events during class 7. Triathlon and Aviva Mile events were highly commended – see above. Issues still remain around involvement of examination students and some “mithcing” by some senior students during the Class 7 activities.**
3. Summer tests should also be timetabled for 2<sup>nd</sup> years. (x3) **Took place.**
4. Across the board uniform checks (3)– especially shoes. There must be consistency in areas such as school uniform, discipline and stands for ALL teachers to follow. **Still an issue.**
5. More time could be spent on staff well-being/team building/improving morale/staff get together (2). Perhaps some Croke Park hours could be used for this? Teachers have **MASSIVE** workloads. **Initiatives during 2013-2014 included workshop with Gaeity School of Acting, Wintersong, Summer Barbecue.....**
6. The overall ability of staff to use labour saving IT options (e.g. cut and paste). (2) Can we use some the Croke Park hours to develop staff’s overall ability to use IT? **Several hours were allocated to development in the IT area during 2013-2014, to the extent that a number of staff felt a little overwhelmed.**
7. **All** timetabled staff to attend with their classes for BeActive week activities. **Took place.**

8. Use resource teaching hours for intensive work with small groups of students who need extra help in literacy and numeracy. Took place – small group resource timetable, support for B4 group, resource teaching in the technology area.
9. More clubs for students (e.g. video production, chess, photography) . An IT /Computer Club was established by students for students during 2014. Debating was introduced.
10. Development of music in the school. Wintersong foregrounded students' musical talents.
11. While most students have excellent manners and courtesy, an initiative on this for all students. In 2014-2015 "Managing Myself" has been selected as our area of development and may address deficits in this area.
12. To give greater allocation of time to one-to-one guidance so that there can be greater development of whole school guidance. There is greater need for on-the-spot counselling (child safety issues) and need to develop guidance around transition from primary to post-primary. Change of personnel in Guidance Department meant that this matter was not substantially addressed.
13. The Endeavour Awards is a lovely night for showing our appreciation and while it's never possible to include everyone, the teachers who train teams got very little recognition for the hours they spend training at lunchtime and after school. Maybe they could get a mention next year. Took place.
14. Structure of parent-teacher meetings – parents to be given appointments perhaps or bells to ring frequently . An extra parent-teacher meeting was scheduled and announcements and bells indicated the end of meetings.
15. Could TLC be part of Croke Park hours?
16. All teachers need to implement the school's discipline policy. We need to get firmer re not accepting indiscipline.
17. Green Schools. Work towards this has started.
18. More use of Moodle now that it has been developed. Significant progress was made in this area.
19. Litter and chewing gum have become serious problems. More teachers required at breaks to supervise. More teachers were allocated to supervision. Also the effect of adjacent shop was noted during a spell when it was not trading.
20. Avoid having school tours during the summer test period. Took place.
21. Possibly have a relaxation room/"chill out zone" for JCSP students/or other students in need of such a facility.
22. CPD in Behaviour Management, Health and Safety and First Aid Course for games teachers. Need for First Aid training is being prioritised for 2014. CPD in Behaviour Management integrated into the Mentoring Programme for newly appointed staff.
23. G13 has no internal phone – led to feeling isolated when support was required. Installed.