

**Focus: The Development of literacy in Coachford College**

A School self evaluation of teaching and learning in Coachford College was undertaken in the second term of the 2013-2014 school year. During the evaluation, the teaching and learning of literacy skills in all subjects was examined.

**This is a report on the findings of the evaluation**

Coachford College is a mixed school set in a rural area with 560 students. The curriculum prepares students for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate as well as an optional Transition year programme.

**The findings**

A survey of the English teachers revealed that most teachers believed that there was scope to encourage students to read for pleasure and thereby improve their literacy skills.

English teachers also believed that more emphasis needs to be put on correcting students spelling and grammar mistakes, in their written work. A sample of 1<sup>st</sup> year students' written work was examined to determine, where students were most regularly making mistakes. Written work, in History, English and Home Economics was examined.

It was found that:

Students showed the correct use of capital letters, full stops and commas a lot of the time. However there is scope for students to take more care to ensure more consistent correct use of such grammar. There was particular scope for improvement in the use of capital letters i.e. using capitals at the beginning of a sentence and for proper nouns. Students should not use capital letters randomly in the middle of words or sentences.

The school introduced an optional oral examination in both Irish and French at Junior Certificate in 2013. This was continued this school year. 98% of students opted to sit the oral in Irish and 94% opted to sit it in French in 2014. One week after the orals took place, students were surveyed about their experience. 82% felt their spoken Irish improved as a result of the orals, while 77% felt their oral French improved.

**Learner Experience:**

**Teachers practice:**

A PDST facilitator gave a presentation on Literacy to the staff in August 2013

Two periods of subject planning was devoted to the development of literacy plans in every subject during 2014-2015. All subject departments developed a 1 page plan for teaching literacy in their subject.

A literacy team has been set up and meet regularly over the last two years. A literacy link teacher has been appointed and has attended two in-services provided by PDST in the past year. The team has reported regularly to staff meetings.

**Summary of schools self-evaluation findings:**

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

The school has a very enthusiastic and dedicated team of very experienced teachers in English, Irish and French. An active literacy team has been set up.

A well-stocked library has been provided and is open to students one day per week.

Students attend and take part in plays and drama on a regular basis, as well as in other extracurricular activities.

A keywords journal was introduced in September 2013 for First, Second and Third year students in order to provide a unified approach to teaching of literacy in all subjects.

The English department introduced 'reading for pleasure' to their scheme of work for First year pupils this year.

Students regularly carry out reviews of literature in English class. The English Department designed a 'red read wall' to display students' reviews around the school.

Other literacy notice boards include 'Cork in the All-Ireland final' and book reviews from newspapers.

**The following areas are being prioritised for improvement:**

Creating a literacy rich environment in classrooms and in the school building.

Further development of the school library facilities. The parents' council has been asked to help with this.

A literacy week will be held in May. This will include lunch time activities and competitions.

Teachers are asked to consider increasing the use of the keywords journal.

Teachers of all subjects are encouraged to be aware of the need to correct spelling and grammar mistakes when correcting work. Teachers are asked to place particular emphasis on the use of capital letters in the correct place.

**The following legislative and regulatory requirements have been addressed by the school this year:**

The teaching of RSE to senior cycle students.

The Anti-bullying policy