Digital Schools Award Evaluation Report

School: St Raphaela's National School

Roll No: 17470I

Date of validation: 21/5/2018

Leadership & Vision:

St. Raphaela's is a Catholic Primary School serving girls from the Stillorgan and surrounding area. As a learning community, they have an excellent ICT Plan and AUP and form my visit it the school staff are embracing and promoting the use of technology throughout the school. The Aladdin administrative tool is effectively used. All teachers have an email account and they also use text-a-parent to share school notices and updates. The school has an ICT display area to highlight ICT usage and share good practice between classes. The school also has a comprehensive Acceptable Usage Policy which is updated regularly.

The learning environment created is welcoming, collegial, happy, safe and respectful of all its members. A key element of their ethos is the respect and dignity shown by all school personnel towards every child. They are nurturing minds to think, hands to create and hearts to love. The teachers implement the e-learning plan into their daily work. Staff and students are actively engaged in innovative and exemplary practice.

The school encourages a buddy system amongst staff to upskill and deal with any concern teacher's may have in ICT. Dedicated Croke Park Hours are assigned for peer mentoring on ICT from more competent IT teachers. The school also surveys teachers on areas they would like to be upskilled on; i.e., What would you like to be upskilled on in ICT?/How can we improve ICT in our school?. The school has a dedicated ICT Coordinator who is creative and extremely effective with significant experience in integrating ICT in teaching, learning and assessment.

ICT in the Curriculum:

I witnessed great examples of ICT integration in the curricular areas of Gaeilge, Literacy Coding and Numeracy. The children were confident and proud of the digital resources they created. The ICT policy highlights progression of targeted and focussed ICT integration at a very early age.

The school server is used to connect and share ideas. The server has a folder for each class and subject area which is updated regularly with new resources, ideas and tips etc. to help our teachers stay connected and share information. The ICT folder is full of useful educational websites for each curricular area for teachers to choose from. As mentioned earlier they use Aladdin as an administrative tool and they have an ICT display area to highlight ICT usage and share good practice between classes.

Volunteers from Microsoft Education Ireland come into the school and the students have had the opportunity to learn how to write code during Hour of Code using Minecraft. Senior classes also use Scratch programming in their ICT classes and junior classes use Scratch Junior to build coding skills. The school also have ICT and STEM workshops each year where we have volunteers from LearnIt Ireland come into the school for classes to experience Lego Robotic workshops.

The school has a wide range of computer programmes (e.g. Jolly Phonics, Word Shark, Word Attack, etc.), websites (e.g. Science Fusion, Folens, CJFallon, etc.) as educational resources. Students are actively using 'Mangahigh' which develops their numeracy skills and 'Reading Eggs' (junior classes) and 'Reading Eggspress' (Senior classes) to develop SEN ICT integration is very evident in the school also. The resource room and SEN section has excellent resources and an inspiring demonstration of the use of Clicker was observed during the visit

School ICT Culture:

They have an excellent school website (www.straphaelasns.ie) which is updated regularly. This website has been awarded with Scoilnet's much-coveted Star Site award in March 2018 which recognises schools that are embracing the web as a communication tool. The school website has class blogging which enhances home-school-community communication and is updated regularly informing the wider audience of events and activities in the school. Many classes have twitter accounts and tweet regularly to enhance live communication. (@straphaelas, @MsCrowley5th, @MsHalpenny5th, @junior_infants, etc). These twitter accounts are linked to the website to show live twitter feeds. Classes interact with other schools nationally and internationally through twitter. For example, classes take part in social media challenges closely monitored by the class teachers; e.g. 100 Word Challenge. This links schools internationally.

Professional Development:

The school recognises the dynamism of ICT. It liaises with its local Education Centre and participates in courses promoted and provided by this institution. The very active ICT team provides updates on developments and digital methodologies. Many staff also have postgraduate qualifications. Peer to peer training is constantly going on and the young and energetic staff are always looking to learn more. There is already a high level of

expertise amongst the staff which is collaboratively utilised in project based teaching and technical resolutions. The ICT team are very active and focussed. All staff participate in summer courses and online courses. The Principal encourages staff to engage in CPD and training opportunities is highlighted as it becomes available.

Resources & Infrastructure:

As already mentioned there is a vast inventory of hardware, digital devices and appropriate age /class/ ability related software in this school. They have a laptop trolley with 16 student laptops, an IPad trolley with 11 IPads, a number of Learning support / child specific laptops, and each classroom has a laptop, interactive whiteboard or touch screen monitor, visualiser, digital camera and access to the school's network. The school has plans to expand on this array of devices in the coming years and the ICT Team and Principal are working hard to get maximum value for money going forward. The school has internet access via the National Broadband Network. The internet connectivity is pretty good of late and staff are happy with the service now.

General comments and recommendations General Comments and Recommendations:

This is an urban school and is a very good example of ICT integration in the delivery of the National Curriculum and of the digital development of its students and progress in the school. It has established a strong digital footing and what is exciting is the focus of the Principal and her ICT team on what can be achieved. The ICT team is very progressive whether it is sourcing new equipment, locating new resources or engaging in ICT-CPD.

The students in all groupings are very *au fait*, confident and competent in digital functioning and in the exercise of their skills such as explaining and demonstrating their wide-ranging projects.

This school in my opinion on the evidence seen here meets all the criteria for Digital School of Distinction recognition.

Scoring:

The visit validates the statements in the Self Evaluation Review.

Neil O'Sullivan
Chief DSoD Validator