

Senior Leadership Team Learning Walks October 2017

The aim of the Learning Walk programme this session and beyond is:

- To enable the Senior Leadership Team with to gain a more holistic view of learning, teaching and assessment across the school

The focus of the Learning Walks is shared with the Learning Visits this year and is:

- **Collaborative learning**

In addition to this, as we enter year three of embracing the principles of visible learning, SLT also took the opportunity to look for evidence of other high quality learning, teaching and assessment approaches.

Each of the five members of the Senior Leadership Team selected two periods during the week beginning Monday 23rd October in which they would complete Learning Walks.

Once these two periods were identified, they were then allocated three departments to visit during each period. They were asked to, as appropriate, speak with and/ or observe learners in each of these lessons to gain an understanding of:

- Collaborative learning opportunities already in place
- Opportunities to further develop collaborative learning
- Additional information about learning, teaching and assessment

SLT were able to gain 'snapshots' of learners' experiences in around 25 different lessons.

Departments were nominally allocated to try to ensure as even a spread as possible across the school. House Heads made a particular effort to see S1 classes in their Houses where possible, to aid with understanding of transition. This flexibility was important as it meant that if a class was, for example, completing a written assessment, or had been taken to work elsewhere, there were other opportunities to speak directly with learners. A full range of BGE and Senior Phase classes were visited.

SLT members completed pro-formas to gather evidence of collaborative learning and other key points on learning, teaching and assessment. All staff were given the opportunity to review any feedback on their lessons.

The discussions undertaken with pupils and/ or staff varied according to their year group and the context of their learning during the Learning Walk.

SLT visited the following subjects/ year groups:

- Art and Design (Senior Phase)
- Business Management (S3, Senior Phase)
- Dance (S2)
- Drama (S2)
- English (S1, Senior Phase)
- French (S3)
- History (Senior Phase)
- Home Economics (S2, S3)
- Horticulture (Senior Phase)

- Maths (S3)
- Modern Studies (S3, Senior Phase)
- Music (S1, Senior Phase)
- Music Technology (S3)
- Physical Education (S1)
- Personal and Social Education (S1)
- Religious and Moral Education (S1)
- Science (S1, S2)

The comments below are based on the pro-formas completed by SLT during lessons.

Collaborative learning in practice:

- **Dance:** Learners worked in small groups to choreograph a dance based on a theme chosen through 'lucky dip'; it was easy to see the 'added value' of collaborative practice in the activity
- **Drama:** Learners were trusted to select their own groups to complete a task and did so effectively, reflecting that collaborative learning was very much part of the classroom practice
- **English:** Classes using 'one to five' strategy to identify their level of understanding at checkpoints throughout the class and target support; there was a clear culture of sharing ideas to develop strong pieces of work
- **History:** Learners had completed mind-maps with a coloured pen assigned to each learner to identify where high quality ideas had come from
- **Horticulture:** A clear culture of learners working together to develop practical skills through e.g. working in the school garden, projects based at Vogrie
- **Home Economics:** The set up of the space meant that pairs/ groups naturally collaborated with and supported each other
- **Modern Studies:** Learners' groups for their collaborative task had clearly been set in accordance with skills and attributes; there was a clear emphasis on the importance of everyone contributing and having responsibility within a collaborative task
- **Music:** A 'speed dating' activity was used to help pupils gather information for an upcoming assessment
- **Music Technology:** In creating an individual audio-book, learners were still expected to collaborate in e.g. recording sound effects, finding a narrator for their story, playing instruments for each other
- **Physical Education:** Learners were working in small teams and focusing on communicating effectively with e.g. good eye contact, use of names, and handshakes at the end of the lesson
- **Personal and Social Education:** The arrangement of the class into loose friendship groups supported the discussion of potential sensitive topics
- **RME:** Learners recognised that by distributing the responsibility for different areas of their talk between them, they were able to produce much more comprehensive information on their topic

Opportunities to further develop collaborative learning:

- Learners were tackling questions from the board in their jotters individually then answering as part of whole class question and answer; there was a good opportunity for think, pair, share to generate more developed answers

- Learners going over answers/ ideas on homework could have discussed these using a carousel/ table mat activity; in this way, those who struggled with the task could have seen examples of good work
- A number of classrooms still have learners quite rigidly in pairs (confirmed as standard by the learners); class layout should be considered / varied to maximize the opportunities to make collaborative learning an everyday part of the learning experiences
- Some group work is very cooperative but not necessarily collaborative; a next step in some cases would be to think about what 'added value' there is in having learners work together
- A number of classroom discussion activities observed remained very much teacher led; discussions that were working most effectively were those gave learners the opportunity to ask questions of and respond to others
- When going through answers to previous assessment activity, learners checked theirs individually; it may have been beneficial to create pairs/ trios with different strengths and development needs to maximize the opportunities for peer support

Additional observations:

- Learning intentions and success criteria were evident in most classes
- Many lessons demonstrated clear links to success criteria throughout
- There was clear evidence of classroom, teachers and learning assistants working positively together to meet the needs of the learners
- Several classes had clear starter activities when the learners arrived, to maximize learning and teaching time
- Strong use was made of visual materials to support the learners in working through examples
- There were good examples of learners exercising personalisation and choice in their activities
- There was clear evidence of learners being encouraged to view mistakes as part of learning and to seek these out and correct them where possible
- Clear references were made to previous learning
- Plenary activities were evident in the majority of classes
- Where used, plenary activities were useful in demonstrating the new learning gained in the lesson
- Overall, classes were well settled, with positive engagement in the learning clearly in evidence
- Peer assessment was in evidence across a range of classes, supporting an effective feedback loop
- Positive praise and encouragement were clearly a part of the culture of many classrooms
- Traffic lighting was used for learners to reflect on their targets, as were self assessment forms
- Timers were used well as verbal reminders to ensure the pace of learning was maintained
- Some lessons included specific references to literacy, numeracy, or health and wellbeing
- Strong classroom routines were observable in a number of practical subjects to ensure that resources and equipment are used and stored effectively
- A minority of lessons still focused on copying information from the board, which could lead to learners being viewed as passive and could be problematic for those who struggle with literacy
- Where appropriate, advice was clearly linked to exam techniques and the requirements of different types of question
- Many lessons used a variety of questioning techniques, though a significant minority still appeared reliant on 'hands up', meaning some learners were passive
- Overall, lessons visited were well prepared with a range of relevant resources in place

Next steps:

- Following on from these observations and the authority school review, the focus is on **consistency** of learning experiences
- Staff will be provided with classroom **visuals** and a **'top ten tips'** easy reference guide to collaborative learning
- Through the **ELT forum**, Principal Teachers will be asked to experiment with collaborative approaches in their departments and reflect on their impact

Further evaluation of collaborative approaches will take place through the Learning Walks in March and May 2018, and the Learning Visits in May 2018.