Digital Schools of Distinction Award Evaluation Report

School: St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS. Waterford
Roll No: 15046I
Date of validation: 07/09/2017

Leadership & Vision

St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS, with a dedicated team of teachers and support staff, clearly demonstrates in both written word and in classroom practice, that technology- enhanced teaching and learning, play a fundamental and inclusive role in the students', teachers' and wider community's lives. Moreover the leadership and vison displayed during the DSoD validation confirm that 21 Century ICTs play an important part in the everyday lives of the school and wider urban community as a whole. Pupils and teachers are afforded the opportunities to become familiar with a range of technologies and to advance the skills to effectively employ them in engaging and focused learning environments. This was of particular interest, and beautifully presented, in the Media studies lessons employing ICTs and a wide range of equipment. Senior students are also encouraged to seek out ICT research interactions and opportunities by a most committed ICT coordinator Mr. Trystan Russell and also a very supportive Principal teacher, Mr. P. Morris and a very welcoming teaching staff and ICT committee. Parental and local involvement is to be highly recommended and the support of PTA cannot but be recognized as formative and excellent. Their financial contribution to the ICT culture of the school is exemplary. Moreover the BOM itself ensured that the school was fully equipped with the new suite of iPads by 'forward paying' for the whole package prior to receipt of the ICT grant(s) from the DES. The CPD, peer-to-peer provision and internal 'assistance' offered during the school-year is also noteworthy. The use of ICTs is incorporated in the various policies and posters on display and there is no doubt that technology plays a central role in teaching and learning. The school is an old De La Salle building and the provision of wired and wireless technologies, in spite of the building's structure and multiple pre-fabs, is well structured throughout. Moreover the school provides innovative mobile Wi-Fi devices to ensure that the iPads available to each student, is at all times connected to the Internet. An external IT company assists when necessary.

The secretary and teachers use internal servers and Cloud facilities to share files and documents and also a dropbox is available to all. The school uses the Aladdin system for communicating amongst staff and documenting administrative issues. They also use Aladdin to text parents about upcoming events in the school, along with utilizing the school website and Text-A-Parent. The school is also committed to acquiring further hardware and has a provisional plan in place. The Leadership and Vision displayed, discussed and demonstrated during the validation was excellent.

ICT in the Curriculum

St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS, a vertical, all-boys DEIS school, endeavours to guarantee in a truly representative manner, that each child, irrespective of his or her background, ability or intellectual challenge, leaves the school feeling self-assured and confident using modern technologies, having gained a reinforcement of their general classroom work in many curricular areas and in particular, Media studies, Visual and Performing Arts, Literacy, SESE, Gaeilge, Oral skills, Maths and English. Other curricular subject areas are also accessed and explored utilizing a variety of Education Apps, websites and ICT tools to enhance learning and wellbeing. The use of Media Studies was excellently presented. The effective use of iPads during classes and in various 'stations' during classes, is to be applauded and merits special mention, especially in the seven classrooms visited, where the students and their teacher were deeply involved in individual, station and group/team teaching with ICT. Furthermore they also demonstrated their media work with 'External Skyping', News and film/Movie Maker/Comic Strip productions. *Bhí sé iontach cláracha as Gaeilge a fheiscint chomh maith, cruthaithe ag na daltaí, faoi stiúr na múinteoirí.* This was absolutely wonderful to observe and discuss with the students. The use of IWB systems is very effective also at all levels of assessment, classroom revision and testing throughout the school. The study of Fís and the Titanic was a joy to behold! The integration with other curricular subjects, utilizing Kahoot, Go Noodle, Bua Na Cainte, was expertly introduced and as a validator, it was a privilege to see such 'excellent' work. The Internet, 100 word global challenge was an excellent way to introduce Literacy, active research strategies and a variety of methodologies.

In catering for pupils' needs especially in Learning Support: They use adaptive technologies on the iPads as per ability and needs of individual students as they present themselves and the SNA support is to be commended. This was observed by the validator during the visit to various settings. Finally, the school also has a new suite of iPads that are used extensively on a daily basis. Station teaching is a key part of the approach to literacy and numeracy.. Apps are carefully selected to enhance the subjects being taught and the teachers include apps for all age and ability levels. The aim is for a balance between skill-based apps and those designed to create content. There is also a multitude of Media, Numeracy and Literacy subscriptions for all teachers and pupils. ICT integration in the curriculum is exemplary! IONTACH !!

School ICT Culture

There is clear evidence that ICT is ever present and visible into the cultural fabric and daily life of St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS. Posters on Cyberbullying and safe internet practices are also clearly noticeable in the school. Throughout the school, the effective use of various hardware is unmistakable. This is also effectively used for SSE (School Self Evaluation) with teachers/students/Parents/Community. The school's website is very informative www.ststephensbns.com bringing together a variety of classroom and community based projects, blogs, tweets (@StStephensDLS), multimedia, music, special events, archives, school policies, new and current Information and classroom activities. Moreover, the provision of regular Newsletters and the emphasis on the Ethos of the De La Salle schools and the importance of inclusive, autonomous, child-centred activities, greatly enhances the excellent website. A special e-safety facility on the HOME page also greatly encourages parents and visitors to full explore the website and the excellent work contained within, in the knowledge that the school is a mindful and safe place of teaching and learning.

The daily use of internal software to communicate and organize school, internal e-mail, testing and attendance related activities was evident. It clearly shows a commitment to promoting every aspect of the school's professional life and work as a central part of this community. Recent updates demonstrate the emphasis on Classroom and School News/ Media/ Bloggind/Tweeting/Literacy, Extra-curricular activities/Policies/Parents Association activities/Archives/ Multimedia/ Visitors to the school/Photos and sporting competitions, Teachers and various students were only too happy to discuss with the validator how they engage with the website. This is all moderated by the ICT coordinator Mr. Russell. The Principal is fully supportive and encourages all teachers to participate and be active.

All children are comfortable utilising mobile technologies such as a suite of iPads and a range of desktop computers and laptops with excellent learning to learn tools. Finally, the PTA has worked with management to develop a Twitter policy for the association. The Twitter accounts are a great tool for directing parents to the website for more information about school events and daily news

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Professional Development

At present training requirements are adequately catered for by in-school, peer-to-peer and Summer CPD attendance at various courses and ICT Support evenings at Waterford Education Centre. The ICT coordinator also provides opportunities of one-to-one CPD, with interested teachers, in identified areas of ICTs. There is also noticeable Peer to Peer collaboration going on when teachers find new ideas and practices. Individual teachers have undertaken courses like Skyping, Media production, Movie Editing, Comic Strip, data Processing and MS suite to enhance their professional lives and those of the students.

Resources & Infrastructure

Excellent resources are evident throughout the school. Every classroom visited had an IWB facility and/or similar hardware with effective and satisfactory internet access and the necessary equipment to offer an engaging, technology-enhanced environment for all students. Mobile iPads with wireless connectivity and printing facility are available to all classes. There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the evidence of ICT fusion, synthesis and usage both seen and witnessed during the validation is admirable and commendable. An effective school server-network and Cloud facility is available for educational and organizational purposes. Teachers are expected to maintain their server presence. A wired and wireless connection is available for use with iPads and other stationary and mobile media. The Broadband is provided by the NCTE/Digiweb.

There is a wealth of licensed software and other related educational tools and Apps available throughout the school. Excellent print facilities are also available throughout the school. The building is an old De La Salle school but even with pre-fabs to cope with growing numbers, every aspect of connectivity and delivery has been addressed effectively to ensure a technology-enhanced environment is available to the whole-school community.

General comments and recommendations

St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS is living proof of effective, representative and inclusive integration of ICT in everyday school life. The validator was given a detailed, time-tabled, guided tour of the school facilities, classrooms and associated ICT / SEN provisions. The expertise and thoughtfulness displayed and demonstrated by all involved in their use of ICTs and mobile technologies is to be highly celebrated and commended.

The standard of utilising and integrating ICTs was most impressive and inspiring especially in the area of media studies.

St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS meets all the criteria for Digital School of Distinction Status and I have no reservations whatsoever in recommending them for this prestigious award. I believe St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS, its teachers, students and community will continue to lead the way for other urban schools, in older buildings to follow. I would especially like to thank Trystan Russell– such an enthusiastic, inspiring, innovative and motivated teacher and the príomhoide Mr. Morris and all the team and students of the St. Stephen's De La Salle for giving the validator a glimpse of what a committed school can achieve and is achieving in the areas of ICTs, when a clear vision is defined and implemented. It was my pleasure to feel very exhilarated and revitalized after my visit to St. Stephen's De La Salle. NS. Excellent. Níl dabht ar bith ach go bhfuil obair fhiúntach theicneolaíochta faoi lán-seol sa scoil. Go leana sé. Molaim go mór iad.

Please outline any good or noteworthy examples of ICT integration in this school:
Fís
Audacity
Media and Radio
Gaeilge
Maths
Literacy
Go Noodle
Apps for iPads
Movie Maker/Comic Strip
SESE
Kahoot
Skype

Scoring
The visit more than validated the statements on their Self Evaluation Review.