



Digital Schools of Distinction Award Evaluation Report

School: Boolavogue NS. Ferns, Enniscorthy. Wexford

Roll No: 18336J

Date of validation: 12/11/2015

Leadership & Vision

Boolavogue N.S, with a fervent and energetic team of teachers and support staff, exhibits in both their policies provided and in everyday school-life, that technology- enhanced learning plays an active part in the students', teachers' and wider community's lives. Moreover the leadership and vision presented during the DSoD validation confirm that 21 Century ICTs play an essential and cleverly integrated role in the everyday lives of the school and wider community as a whole. Pupils and teachers are afforded the opportunities to become familiar with a range of ICTs and to develop the skills to effectively employ them. They are also encouraged to seek out ICT synergies and possibilities by a most committed ICT coordinator who is also the Principal teacher, Mr.Séamus Dempsey and a very welcoming Deputy Principal, Ms. Mullery and teaching staff. Parental and local involvement is to be highly recommended and support for the school is obvious with the manner in which the parents' council fully support the school at every opportunity. This point was re-enforced by the principal when discussing future ICT provision for the classes. The CPD and peer-to-peer provision and internal 'help' 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 an important role in teaching and learning. The school is a combination of the old and renovated rooms and the provision of wired and wireless technologies is fairly well structured throughout, acknowledging the need for a more stable and faster internet connectivity and a wider and more accessible wireless system for the whole-school.

The school uses the Aladdin system for administration and communicating amongst staff. They also use Aladdin to text parents about upcoming events in the school, along with utilizing the school website and a very effective twitter account is also noteworthy. Leadership and vision is very strong and focused in the school and the visit to all classrooms and discussions with the staff confirmed this.

ICT in the Curriculum

Boolavogue N.S, a vertical, co-education, rural school strives to ensure that each child, irrespective of his or her ability or intellectual challenge, leaves the school feeling assured using computers, having gained a strengthening of their general classroom work in many curricular areas and in particular, Literacy



(Guided reading), Gaeilge, Oral skills, Maths, and English. Other curricular subject areas are also accessed and explored utilizing a variety of Education Apps and websites / Go Noodle/YouTube/ Active Schools and ICT tools to enhance learning with SESE/ SPHE/Bua na cainte with Gaeilge/ Music and 'Maximo-Yoga'. The effective use of iPads during classes and in various 'stations' during classes, is to be commended and merits special mention. It was absolutely wonderful to observe and discuss all aspects of ICTs with the infants and other classes. The senior classes were adept at discussing 'Mindcraft' and scientific applications relevant to past, present and future technologies. This was a joy to behold. The use of IWB systems is very effective also at all levels of teaching, assessment and classroom revision and testing.

In catering for pupils' needs especially in Learning Support: They use adaptive technologies as per ability and exceptional needs of individual students as they present themselves and the 'extra' support is to be commended. This was observed by the validator during the visit to the various classrooms.

School ICT Culture

There is vibrant, strong and visual evidence that ICT is ever present into the cultural fabric of Boolavogue N.S. Posters on Cyberbullying and safe internet practices are also clearly visible in the school. Throughout the school, the effective use of various hardware is evident. This is also effectively used for SSE (School Self Evaluation) with teachers/students/Parents/Community. The school's website is very informative <http://boolavoguens.ie/> bringing together a variety of classroom and community based Projects, blogs, research links, events, galleries, twitter feeds, school policies, new and current Information/calendars and classroom activities and so much more.

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 Literacy, Extra-curricular activities/Policies/Parents Association activities/ Photos and national awards and competitions. This is all moderated by the ICT coordinator (principal) with outside assistance. The Principal is fully supportive and encourages all teachers to participate and be active. Discussions on 'cyber-bullying' and 'hacking' really allowed the students to portray their knowledge of the 'dark -side' of ICTs and outline their manner of dealing with them. Really enjoyable and informative.

All children are comfortable utilizing the iPads with excellent learning to learn tools. Iontach ar fad.



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 various Education Centres. 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 and the viewing of the school website clearly indicates a regular uploading and sharing of information with colleagues. At present they are engaging in acquiring new iPads/ laptops for the school to further enhance the CPD opportunities for teachers and also learning opportunities for the various classes. The use of background music from the internet to enhance tin-whistle playing was superb and I would suggest that this would be further explored (CPD) in the same manner that Boolavogue NS is already exploring with such obvious success, the Active schools, yoga and Go Noodle programmes on a daily basis. The energy and enthusiasm of the staff was palpable!

Resources & Infrastructure

Resources are evident throughout the school. Every classroom visited had an IWB facility or similar hardware with sometimes effective and adequate internet access and the necessary equipment to offer an engaging, technology-enhanced environment for the students. A mobile selection of iPads is available to all classes and new laptops are being acquired in the near future. There is absolutely no doubt that the evidence of ICT incorporation and usage both seen and witnessed during the validation in this school is praise-worthy. A school server-network is available for educational and organizational purposes. A wireless connection is available for use with the iPads. The strengthening of this network is also being explored at present. The Broadband is provided by the NCTE/Permanet. At present it is not fully reliable or fast enough to handle all the daily needs of ICTs, but again there is a communication between the school and NCTE/Permanet to provide modern, acceptable broadband as soon as possible. A Summer Works grant has been applied for and this infrastructural change will demand adequate and reliable broadband provision, both wired and wireless. There is a wealth of licensed software and other related educational tools available throughout the school.

General comments and recommendations

Boolavogue N.S is evidence of effective integration of ICT in school life. The validator was given a time-tabled, guided tour of the school facilities, classrooms



and associated ICT / SEN provisions by Mr. Dempsey. The expertise and reflection displayed and demonstrated by all involved in their use of ICTs is to be highly commended.

The standard of utilising and integrating ICTs was splendid and most whole-hearted.

Boolavogue N.S 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 the school, its teachers, students and community will continue to lead the way for other small, rural schools to follow. I would especially like to thank Mr. Séamus Dempsey, the deputy principal and Aistear co-ordinator, Ms. Mullery and a most dedicated and motivated teaching staff and students of the school for giving the validator a glimpse of what a committed school can achieve in the area of ICT, when a clear vision is defined and implemented. It was my pleasure to feel very enthused after my visit to Boolavogue N.S Níl dabht ar bith ach go bhfuil sár-obair theicneolaíochta faoi lán-seol sa scoil. Molaim go mór iad.

** **Recommendations.** Permanet/NCTE and Broadband provision.
Enhanced, wireless provision throughout the school building.

Please outline any good or noteworthy examples of ICT integration in this school:

Minecraft

School Website

Active Schools

Clever use of Technology enhanced Apps throughout the school/SEN

Kahoot

Bua Na cainte

YouTube.

Scoring

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