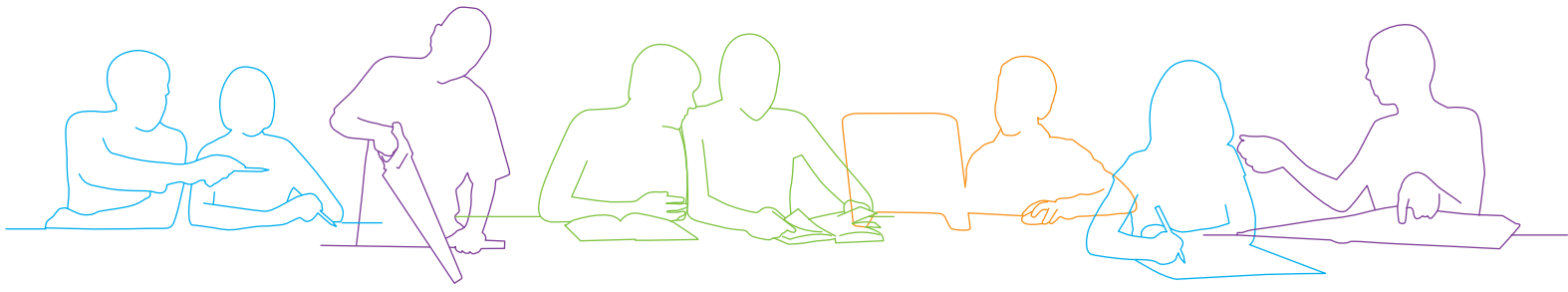


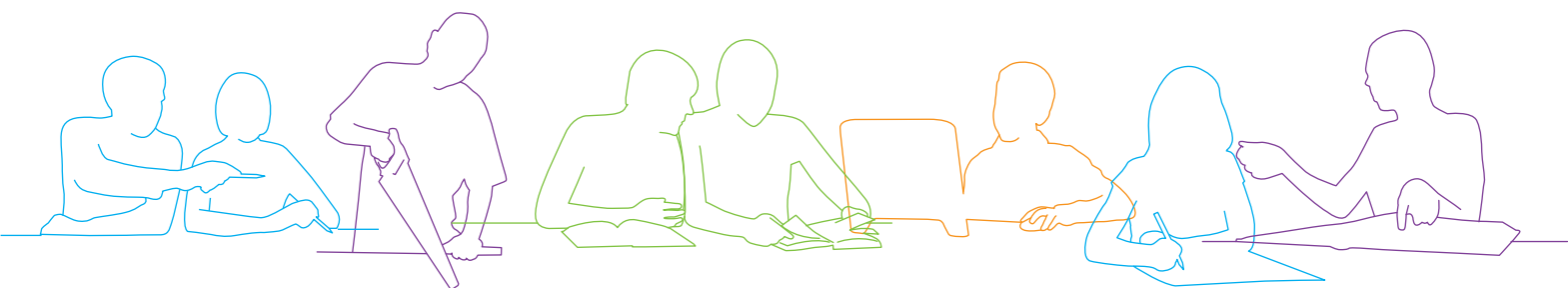
# JCSP

Junior Certificate School Programme

## Programme Statement







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# INTRODUCTION

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) originated in a number of projects initiated by the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) through its Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). The projects were concerned with identifying potential early school leavers and devising a programme suitable to their needs. In September 1996, following a pilot phase, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Department of Education and Science (DES) launched the *Junior Certificate School Programme*. Since its introduction the programme has expanded from 32 schools in 1996 to 240 schools in 2010. The programme has expanded on a phased basis, to all post-primary schools participating in the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) initiative.<sup>1</sup> While the majority of settings providing the JCSP are post-primary schools, the JCSP is also offered in Special Schools, Children Detention Schools, Traveller Training Centres and Youth Encounter Projects.

The JCSP is aimed at students who are identified as being at risk of early school leaving. The programme offers schools and teachers a more flexible approach than a traditional subject-based curriculum. The programme statement has two purposes – to outline the nature and content of the JCSP and to present examples of good practice in implementing the JCSP. The latter is achieved through case studies developed in collaboration with JCSP schools and teachers.

The programme statement can be used in any educational setting. It is intended for use by school management, programme co-ordinators and teachers and should be accessible to a range of others directly involved with the students' education, including parents, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), Guidance Counsellors, and Home School Liaison Community co-ordinators.

<sup>1</sup> This initiative puts in place an integrated, strategic approach to addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). *An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion* DEIS, 2005:2.

# CONTENTS

## Programme Statement

The programme statement outlines the nature and content of the JCSP and the process of selecting students to participate in the programme. The emphasis placed in the programme on active teaching and learning and on the development of basic skills is outlined. The key elements in organising the JCSP at school level are considered, including the importance of planning, the establishment of a staff team, and the role of the coordinator. The main features of the student profiling system are also outlined.

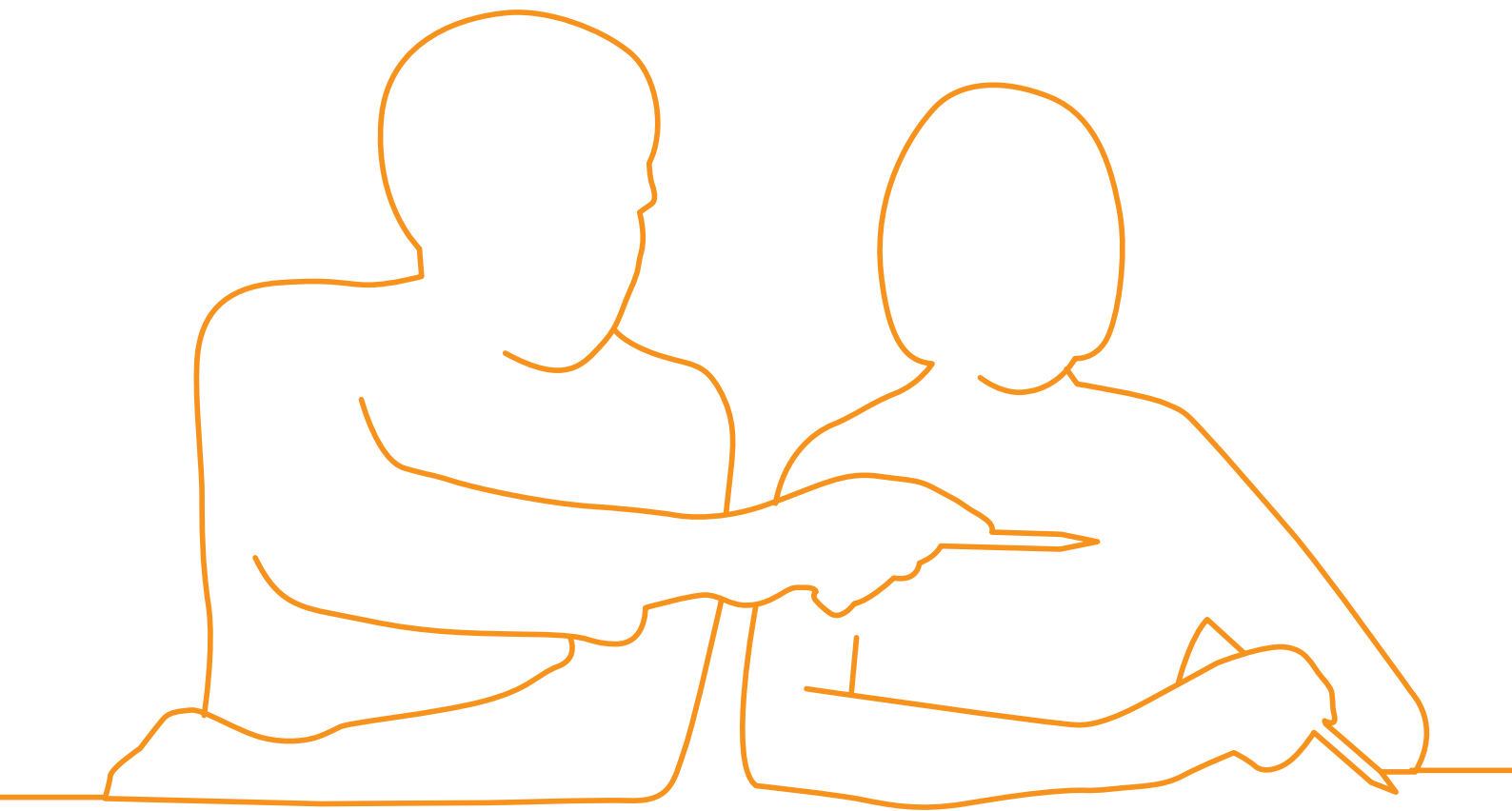
## Case Studies

The three case studies, two from post-primary schools and one from a special school, demonstrate the varied approaches schools take in implementing the JCSP. The case studies set out how the key elements of the programme are organised and provided for in the schools concerned to meet the learning needs of their students.

## Note:

Throughout the programme statement reference is made to teachers, students and schools. The JCSP is also in operation in other types of educational settings where terms such as *tutors*, *learners*, *centres* and *units* may be viewed as more applicable.

# PROGRAMME STATEMENT



# THE JCSP

Every year a small group of students, many of whom are educationally disadvantaged, leaves school without qualifications. For many of these students their experience of school is one of disengagement and alienation. While these difficulties may, in part, be rooted in the disadvantage they have experienced they may also have to do with the culture of schooling, school organisation and the learning experienced. The JCSP is designed to address some of these difficulties. It enables students to re-engage with their learning. It builds their basic skills of literacy and numeracy and their personal and social skills. It aims to ensure that each student benefits from their time in school and enjoys an experience of success. It does this by offering schools and teachers a more flexible approach to meeting the diverse needs of students and achieves this within the context of the Junior Certificate qualification.

This approach focuses on analysing the student's learning needs and strengths and planning a suitable programme of work around them. In the process, the JCSP places a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills, in particular literacy and numeracy, which are relevant to many areas of the curriculum and are important for managing daily life, both inside and outside school. A further emphasis is placed on the development of the student's personal and social skills, which enhance self-esteem and his/her ability to relate well to other people. Schools using the JCSP adopt active teaching and learning approaches, including cross-curricular thematic work that offers students a smoother transition from the experience of primary schooling. In addition, cross-curricular work supports students in making connections between the various areas of learning across the curriculum, while at the same time developing their basic skills.

The JCSP has at its core a student profiling system which is designed to fulfil three separate but related functions – a diagnostic function, a formative function and a summative function.

## 1. **DIAGNOSTIC**

to assist teachers in diagnosing the student's strengths and needs, and to plan programmes of work which build on the student's abilities and address the main obstacles hindering progress.

## 2. **FORMATIVE**

to facilitate the teacher in breaking down the learning outcomes of Junior Certificate syllabuses and cross-curricular areas of learning into smaller, manageable learning targets. This step-by-step approach, used in the profiling system enables students to successfully complete smaller units of work and in turn motivates students to attempt the next unit of work. Through profiling, the teacher engages in a dialogue with students about their learning. The teacher shares the learning targets of the lesson with students. The teacher discusses their progress through feedback and students record their progress.

## 3. **SUMMATIVE**

to provide students with a Student Profile (see appendix one) which is an individualised record of the achievements which a student has demonstrated over the course of the programme. The Student Profile describes the skills, knowledge and achievements of the student, including their personal and social skills.



The aims of the JCSP are consistent with the general outcomes of the junior cycle (see appendix two). The JCSP shares the emphasis in junior cycle on the importance of students experiencing a broad, balanced and coherent programme of study across a wide range of curriculum areas. Students participating in the JCSP, in common with their peers, take a range of subjects, at various levels, in the Junior Certificate examination.

### Selecting students to participate in the programme

While recognising that all students are unique individuals with different learning interests, strengths, ways of learning and challenges, schools using the JCSP have identified it as a suitable programme for students, often potential early school leavers

- who have difficulties in the areas of literacy and numeracy
- with learning disabilities which hinder them from fully participating in and benefiting from the junior cycle
- who show clear signs of not coping with the experience of school at junior cycle
- whose attendance and/or behaviour and attitude indicate a considerable degree of disengagement from school.

When looking at a student's suitability for the JCSP, a process to gather and interpret evidence concerning his/her achievements, learning strengths and learning needs is necessary. While the focus of this process includes academic attainment, consideration is given to all aspects of the student's development and learning such as their attendance, talents, interests, hobbies, social, emotional and communication skills. The JCSP is equally suitable for girls and boys. Research<sup>2</sup> indicates that boys have a greater chance of becoming early school leavers but this does not mean that girls who are at risk of early school leaving should be overlooked. In establishing class groups of JCSP students, attention should be paid to the number of girls to be included in the class group. There is some research which suggests that where girls are in a small minority in a class group, their potential experience of the best effects of the programme can be diminished.

The process of selection is assisted when school personnel visit the sending primary schools to gather information on the needs of all incoming students. Visits to the homes of prospective students by school personnel such as the Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator are also helpful. As parents are the primary educators of their children, they should be consulted throughout the process of identification. Parents are an invaluable source in establishing the needs and potential supports required for their child. Where there are close links with primary schools and early identification of students in need of extra support occurs, students usually begin the JCSP in first year. Their participation in the JCSP often follows a period of one or two months at the start of first year where students are given time to make the transition from primary school and find their feet in the school, before a decision is finally made on their participation in the JCSP. During the three years of the programme, each student's continued participation in the programme is kept under review.

<sup>2</sup> *School Leavers' Survey Report 2007*, Byrne, D., McCoy, S. and Watson, D. The Economic and Social Research Institute and Department of Education and Science (2008: xii).

## The curriculum

Schools usually limit the number of subjects they offer students participating in the programme. This is to ensure the programme is cohesive and manageable. As a minimum, students must follow courses leading to Foundation Level examinations in English and mathematics, and follow a suitable course in Irish. Other subjects are included as part of the curriculum following consultation between school management, students and their parents. Students participating in the JCSP benefit from accessing a broad range of subjects including Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). But they can follow any subject courses leading to the Junior Certificate examination at Higher, Ordinary and Foundation levels as appropriate to their identified needs, interests and abilities.

The uptake of practical subjects, such as home economics, the technology subjects and art, craft, design is encouraged as these are subjects where students can engage in learning through practical activity. These subjects lend themselves easily to cross-curricular links and student-centered activities. The potential that cross-curricular and extra curricular activities have to enhance student learning is another element to consider when planning the curriculum. Many schools offering the JCSP find it is beneficial to have teachers teaching more than one subject to the students and this is particularly so in the case of the programme co-ordinator. A small teaching team offers some continuity with the primary school experience of students and eases the transition into post-primary school where students typically meet and work with a number of teachers on a daily basis. JCSP is based in the curriculum taken by all junior cycle students but it allows for careful and targeted differentiation of the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual students in question.

## Teaching and learning

A range of teaching approaches and methods is used, which differentiate teaching and learning to meet the needs of students on the programme. These approaches also provide continuity with the learning experiences of the primary school. Connecting learning to real life situations is fostered, thus making learning more relevant and meaningful to the students. In particular, it is essential to affirm and build on the knowledge and skills which the students bring to school.

The use of active teaching and learning methods across the curriculum promotes student-centred learning and encourages students to become engaged in their learning. Schools using the JCSP find adopting a cross-curricular approach to the development of literacy and numeracy skills beneficial. In this approach, subject teachers are encouraged to adopt specific techniques in addressing the literacy and numeracy demands of their subject area. Cross-curricular activities also involve a high degree of collaboration where students work together and with the teacher.

## Assessment and certification

Students participating in the JCSP follow the same subject syllabuses, though often fewer in number, and are assessed in the same way as their junior cycle peers in the Junior Certificate examinations. They gain a Junior Certificate outlining their achievements in the subjects taken but, in addition, they receive the *Student Profile*, which outlines the skills, knowledge and achievements that they have attained during the course of the programme.

## Progression from the JCSP

On completion of the junior cycle, students can progress to the Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the Leaving Certificate Applied.

## The student profiling system

JCSP has at its core a profiling system which consists of a series of statements, each of which is a general description of a particular area of knowledge or skill. In other words, a statement affirms that a student knows, understands or can do something, for example that *the student can apply the knowledge and skills needed to manage money in daily life*. Statements may be subject-specific or cross-curricular in nature (see figure 1 and figure 2). Subject-specific statements reflect the learning outcomes of Junior Certificate syllabuses, whereas cross-curricular statements have a broader base that relates to skills and areas of learning that span a number of subject areas. Currently, there are over 140 subject statements and over 50 cross-curriculum statements (see table 1). The use of cross-curricular statements enables students to gain credit for a wider range of achievements than those included in the Junior Certificate examination.

Figure 1: Subject statement

Figure 2: Cross-curriculum statement

The image displays two sample statements from the student profiling system. Each statement includes a title, a subject code, a statement code, and a description of the skill. Below the description are learning targets, each with a progress indicator (a row of five circles). At the bottom of each statement is a reviewing system with three categories: 'Work begun', 'Work in progress', and 'Work completed', each with a row of five circles.

**Figure 1: Subject statement**

**English: Poetry**  
**English** Statement Code no: 6  
 Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

At Junior Certificate level the student can:  
 Describe, reflect and respond to poetry studied

Date Commenced: ○○○○○○ Date Awarded: ○○○○○○

**Learning Targets** - This has been demonstrated by your ability to:

- 1 Give the title of the poem's and the poet's name ○○○○
- 2 Explain what the poem is about, the theme ○○○○
- 3 Explain what idea is presented in the first verse and how it changes and develops by the end of the poem ○○○○
- 4 Choose a line from the poem and explain what you think it means ○○○○
- 5 Choose an image (picture) from the poem and say why you liked it ○○○○
- 6 Choose a simile or metaphor and describe how it adds to the poem ○○○○
- 7 Choose an example of alliteration and say what idea the poet is trying to get across ○○○○
- 8 Describe what feelings/emotions/moods are expressed in the poem and explain how they change ○○○○
- 9 Write about what you liked/disliked and found interesting about the poem ○○○○
- 10 Comment on the words the poet uses in the poem ○○○○
- 11 Choose a poet studied and explain what you thought about their poetry ○○○○
- 12 Use reference or quotation to back up answers ○○○○

**Reviewing system**

Work begun ○○○○ | Work in progress ○○○○ | Work completed ○○○○

**Figure 2: Cross-curriculum statement**

**Measurement of Weight/Capacity**  
**CC** Statement Code no: 21  
 Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

At Junior Certificate level the student can:  
 Apply the skills, knowledge and understanding needed for the measurement of weight/capacity in everyday situations

Date Commenced: ○○○○○○ Date Awarded: ○○○○○○

**Learning Targets** - This has been demonstrated by your ability to:

- 1 Name the units and terminology of weight/capacity: litres, half litres, quarter litres, millilitres, kilograms, grams, milligrams ○○○○
- 2 Find the marks for litre, half litre, quarter litre and millilitre on a measuring jug ○○○○
- 3 Find the marks for kilograms, grams and milligrams on a weighing scale ○○○○
- 4 Give examples of weight and capacity from daily life, for example a litre of milk and a kilo of sugar ○○○○
- 5 Use a graduated vessel to work out the capacity of liquids ○○○○
- 6 Use a weighing scales to work out the weight of powders and solids ○○○○
- 7 Use a balance scales to weigh items ○○○○
- 8 Estimate amounts using non-standard units, for example a cup, teaspoon and tablespoon ○○○○

Refer also to: English, Home Economic, Math, Science

6 Work begun ○○○○ | Work in progress ○○○○ | Work completed ○○○○

**Table 1: Examples of subject and cross-curricular statements**

Subject statements	Cross-curricular statements
■ English	■ Personal and social development
■ Mathematics	■ Social competence
■ Irish	■ Learning for life
■ History	■ Home studies
■ Geography	■ Measurement
■ Home economics	■ Make and do
■ Music	■ Multimedia
■ Art, craft, design	■ Project work
■ Materials technology (wood)	■ Health and safety
■ Metalwork	■ Animal care
■ Technical graphics	■ Road safety
■ Business studies	■ Horticulture
■ Environmental and social studies	■ Interculturalism
■ Civic, social and political education	■ Rural studies
■ Religious education	
■ Physical education	

Statements are further broken down into learning targets that provide short-term manageable units of work, which encourage students to become more effectively involved in their own learning. The learning targets define each statement in more detail, outlining the steps to be followed if the students are to achieve competence in the long-term goal, the statement. Progress on these learning targets is a useful source of ongoing feedback to the student and to parents.

At an early stage in the school year, teachers select those statements which describe the curriculum areas or cross-curricular skills which closely relate to the student's abilities and learning needs. Choosing statements based on the student's needs and interests helps to make the learning experience more realistic and relevant for the student. Students are encouraged to become involved in selecting statements in areas that they are interested in. Students are aware of these aims for the term and the year, and understand that their class work and homework, as well as their performance on class tests, will count towards achieving these statements on the final *Student Profile*. Ideally a student works on a small number of statements at any one time and if these have been achieved or are nearing completion, additional statements can be selected.

### Student portfolio

Each student in the programme has a JCSP portfolio. The portfolio contains a list of the learning targets and statements that are currently being studied and worked on by the student. It also contains samples of the student's good work. The portfolio serves many purposes, but its main purpose is to provide evidence of student progress and achievement. Portfolios are usually kept in school and reviewed regularly in class so that students can keep track of their own progress. Student progress is reviewed through discussion between the teacher and the student. To facilitate the process of reviewing and recording the student's progress and achievement a three-box reviewing system is used (see figure 3 below).

**Figure 3:** The three-box reviewing system used to track students' progress



### Awarding statements

During the profiling team meetings teachers who have worked through statements with the student can recommend the awarding of that statement. In general, students are awarded a statement when they have completed 80% of the learning targets. To facilitate teachers in making decisions whether a student has completed a statement, the following questions are posed

1. Has the student completed at least 80% of the learning targets?
2. Has the student displayed competence in the following four areas?
  - **Frequency** – the student can on 80% plus of occasions carry out the given task.
  - **Accuracy** – the student can perform the task accurately enough for the purpose of the task.
  - **Independence** – the student can carry out the task almost totally independently.
  - **Sustainability** – the student can retain the knowledge or skill for about a month.

### Reviewing the programme

Regular review of a school's programme ensures that the programme continues to meet the identified needs of its students. The review can be informal and/or formal in nature. Towards the end of the year, the informal review is documented and this informs the planning for the succeeding year. Some schools have found that a formal review every three or four years is useful, for example by using a questionnaire to get the views of teachers, students and parents. Other information that schools use in reviewing the programme are examination results, attendance figures, the number of students who drop out of school before completing their Junior Certificate examination and the number of students who progress to and engage with senior cycle education.

## School organisation

All schools are different and therefore schools operating the JCSP adopt different approaches to implementing the programme. Some schools use ability grouping to place their students in groups and usually, in this situation, those students taking the JCSP are placed within the lower ability group. Other schools use mixed-ability grouping for all, including JCSP students.

Research conducted on behalf of the NCCA<sup>3</sup>, indicates in line with international research that the different policies and practices on ability grouping have a profound effect on student attitudes to school and their level of engagement with learning. Students in lower streams are more likely to drift or become disengaged with school than their peers in mixed-ability settings or higher ability classes. In schools that adopt mixed-ability grouping, a greater satisfaction among students with the pace and type of instruction is evident, and their students, including their higher ability students, usually perform better in the Junior Certificate examination. These findings suggest that over time schools should move towards using mixed-ability grouping for all, including those students participating in the JCSP.

The central concern of schools offering JCSP is to support students who are at risk of early school leaving. Responding to early school leaving is best addressed as part of a whole school approach, where JCSP is linked with other support measures within a school, such as the School Completion Programme, the Home School Community Liaison scheme and Learning/Resource support. Typically, given the characteristics of the students in question, the same students are often involved in the School Completion Programme and the Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator will often be familiar with the families of students participating in the JCSP. Building on the home and school relationships to encourage parents to become involved in the programme only serves to enhance the experience for students, for example inviting parents to celebrate their child's successes and achievements. Many of the participating students need extra support in literacy and numeracy and involving the Learning Support/Resource teacher in the programme can also be very beneficial.

## JCSP Co-ordinator

Each school appoints a programme co-ordinator who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the programme. The role is a diverse one, incorporating administrative, facilitation and liaising responsibilities. To assist the co-ordinator in carrying out these duties, each school receives an additional time allocation depending on the number of students participating in the programme. The co-ordinator has responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of JCSP in a school and these responsibilities might include:

- leading the core team in planning and implementing the programme
- making recommendations to management in relation to timetabling, budget and the allocation of resources
- reviewing the programme
- setting up and maintaining a system of student portfolios

<sup>3</sup> *Moving up, The experiences of first-year students in post-primary education*, Smyth, E., Darmody, M., McCoy, S. The Economic and Social Research Institute, (The Liffey Press:2004)

*Pathways through the junior cycle, the experiences of second year students*, Smyth, E., Darmody, M., McCoy, S., Dunne, A. The Economic and Social Research Institute, (The Liffey Press: 2006)

*Gearing up for the exam? the experiences of Junior Certificate students* Smyth, E., Darmody, M., McCoy, S., Dunne, A, (The Liffey Press: 2007)

- monitoring and evaluating student portfolios
- organising JCSP events, initiatives and projects
- keeping staff informed about the JCSP
- informing parents about the programme
- induction of new teachers to the programme
- liaising with other relevant personnel such as the Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator and the School Completion Programme co-ordinator.

### Teams involved in the JCSP

In addressing the needs of students who are at risk of early school leaving, a whole school approach is adopted. Key personnel in this approach might include the JCSP co-ordinator, the Principal, Deputy Principal, Home School Liaison co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellor and School Completion co-ordinator. These personnel have a role to play in the links with sending primary schools, in student selection for the programme, in offering guidance on subject choices, and in advising on progression from the JCSP.

JCSP necessitates good teamwork among school staff. The range of teams involved in implementing the JCSP may vary from school to school. However, schools operating the JCSP identify three main teams as necessary - the planning team, the core team and the profiling team. The co-ordinator participates in all these teams and the membership of these teams also often overlaps. Schools have flexibility in how they arrange these team meetings but an example of how this can happen is presented in Table 2. It outlines the members of the various teams, their key responsibilities and how often they might meet.

### Typical scenario of a school organising the JCSP

The following paragraphs describe a typical scenario of how a school might organise the JCSP. Once the programme has been introduced in the school, the first stage of planning takes place when the planning team meets well in advance of the start of the school year. The planning team considers, in consultation with parents and students, the selection of students to participate in the programme, the curriculum to be offered, the resources required to implement the programme and how the programme is to be evaluated and what indicators of success will be used.

Following the initial planning meeting, arrangements are put in place for the core and profiling team meetings to occur throughout the year. Some schools find that having weekly timetabled core team meetings is an effective way to implement the programme. The core team (the co-ordinator and a number of teachers) meet once a week to oversee the ongoing implementation of the programme. These meetings are used to keep track of the student profiling system and to plan JCSP events, initiatives and projects. Several profiling meetings are organised throughout the year, usually one a term, typically in December, February and April. These meetings are attended by the teachers involved in the programme and the co-ordinator. At the initial profiling meeting (December) the students' strengths and learning needs are analysed and suitable statements are selected. The following meetings (February and April) focus on discussing and recording the students' progress and achievements. After each meeting teachers give students feedback on their progress and achievements. In third year, when students have completed the programme, a final profiling team meeting is held and teachers agree the statements that students will be awarded. Each student then receives their *Student Profile* listing all the statements they have achieved over the course of the programme.

**Table 2:** Outline of the various teams involved in the JCSP

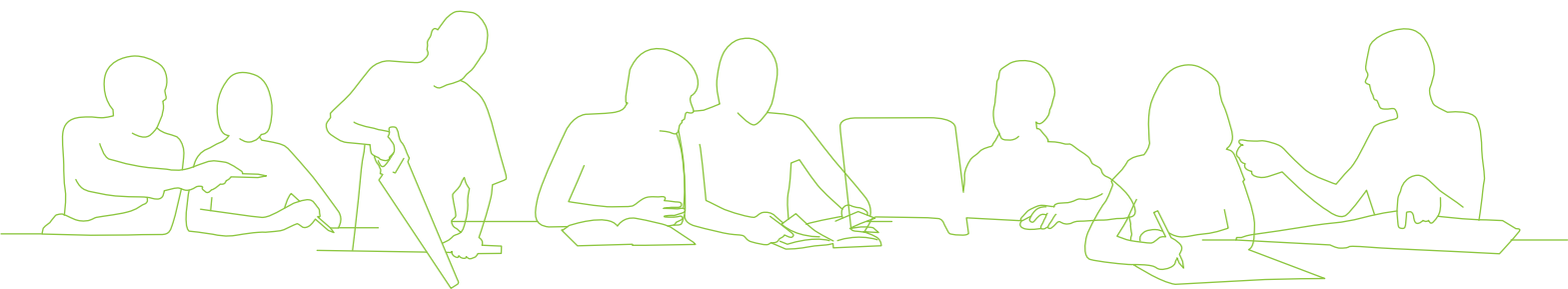
Name of team	Staff involved	Key responsibilities	How often they meet
<b>The planning team</b>	The planning team usually includes the principal or deputy principal, the programme co-ordinator, and may include the resource/learning support teacher, the home school community liaison co-ordinator, the school completion programme co-ordinator and the guidance counsellor.	This team oversees the planning of the programme. Usually this involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selecting students to participate in the programme</li> <li>• deciding what will be included on the curriculum</li> <li>• discussing the resources required for implementation of the programme.</li> </ul>	Meets in advance of the new school year e.g. the final term of the previous school year.
<b>The core team</b>	The core team usually includes the programme co-ordinator and may include the class tutor and a number of subject teachers.	This team oversees the ongoing implementation of the programme on a daily basis. Usually this involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitoring student progress</li> <li>• keeping track of student profiling and ensuring that records are being maintained</li> <li>• planning profile meetings</li> <li>• induction of teachers new to the programme and keeping other staff informed about JCSP activities</li> <li>• planning JCSP initiatives, projects and celebrations.</li> </ul>	Meets regularly - ideally timetabled once a week.
<b>The profiling team</b>	The profiling team consists of the subject teachers working on the programme.	This team implements the profile system. Usually this involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analysing the student's strengths and learning needs</li> <li>• selecting statements</li> <li>• monitoring and recording the student's progress</li> <li>• relaying feedback to students after profile meetings.</li> </ul>	Planning meeting in October Profile meetings typically in December February and April.



# APPENDICES

Appendix one: Sample Student Profile

Appendix two: Outcomes of the junior cycle



# APPENDIX ONE

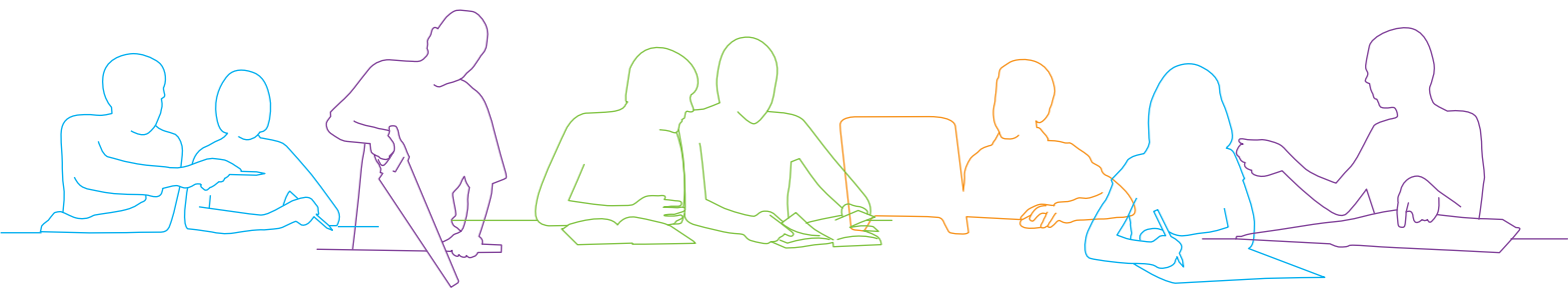
## Sample student profile:



# APPENDIX TWO

## Outcomes of the junior cycle:

- competence in literacy, numeracy and spoken language skills which will allow them to participate as young adults in society
- experience in various domains of activity – artistic, intellectual, scientific, physical and practical
- formative experience in moral, religious and spiritual education
- knowledge and supportive guidance in matters of personal health, sexual awareness and relationships
- competence and understanding in practical skills, including computer literacy and information technology
- knowledge and appreciation of their social, cultural and physical heritage and environment
- understanding and appreciation of the central concepts of citizenship.



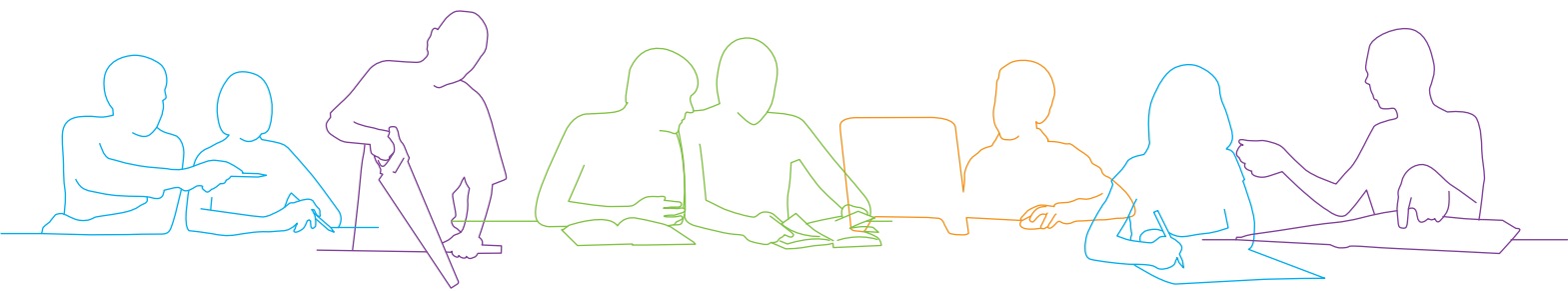






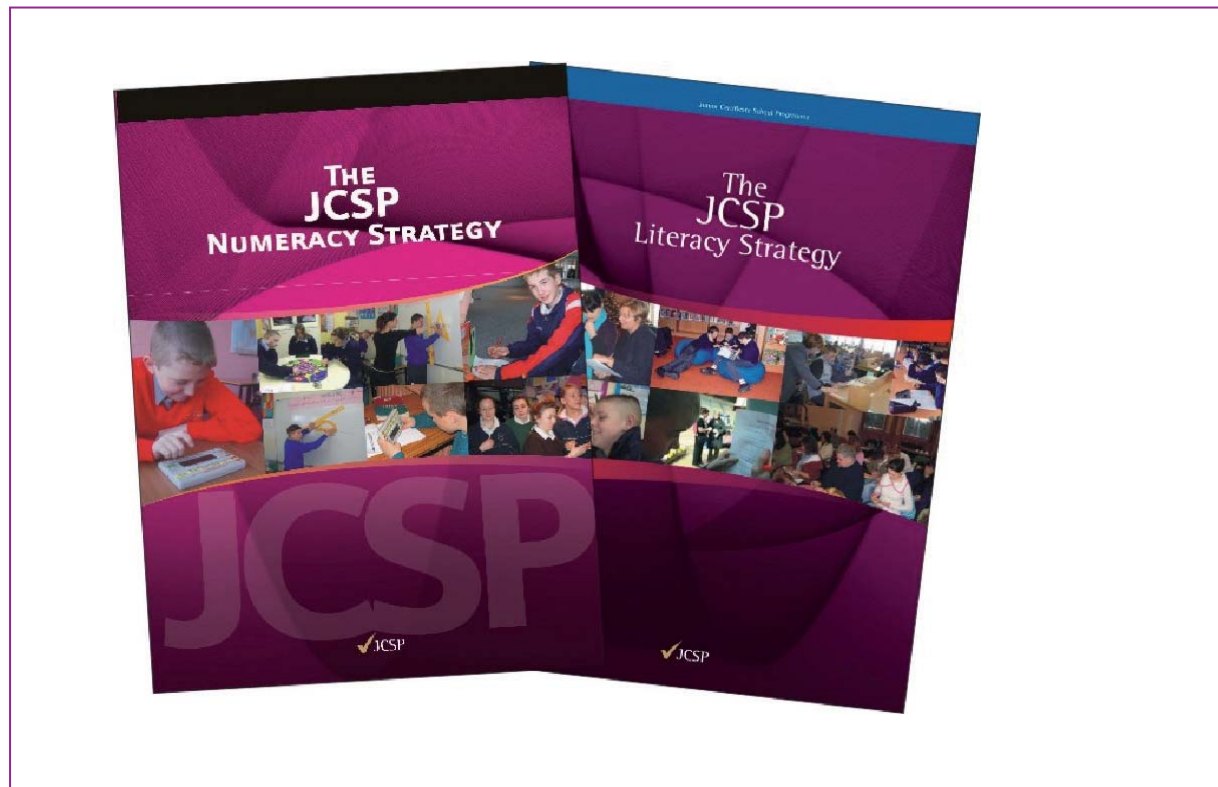
# CASE STUDIES



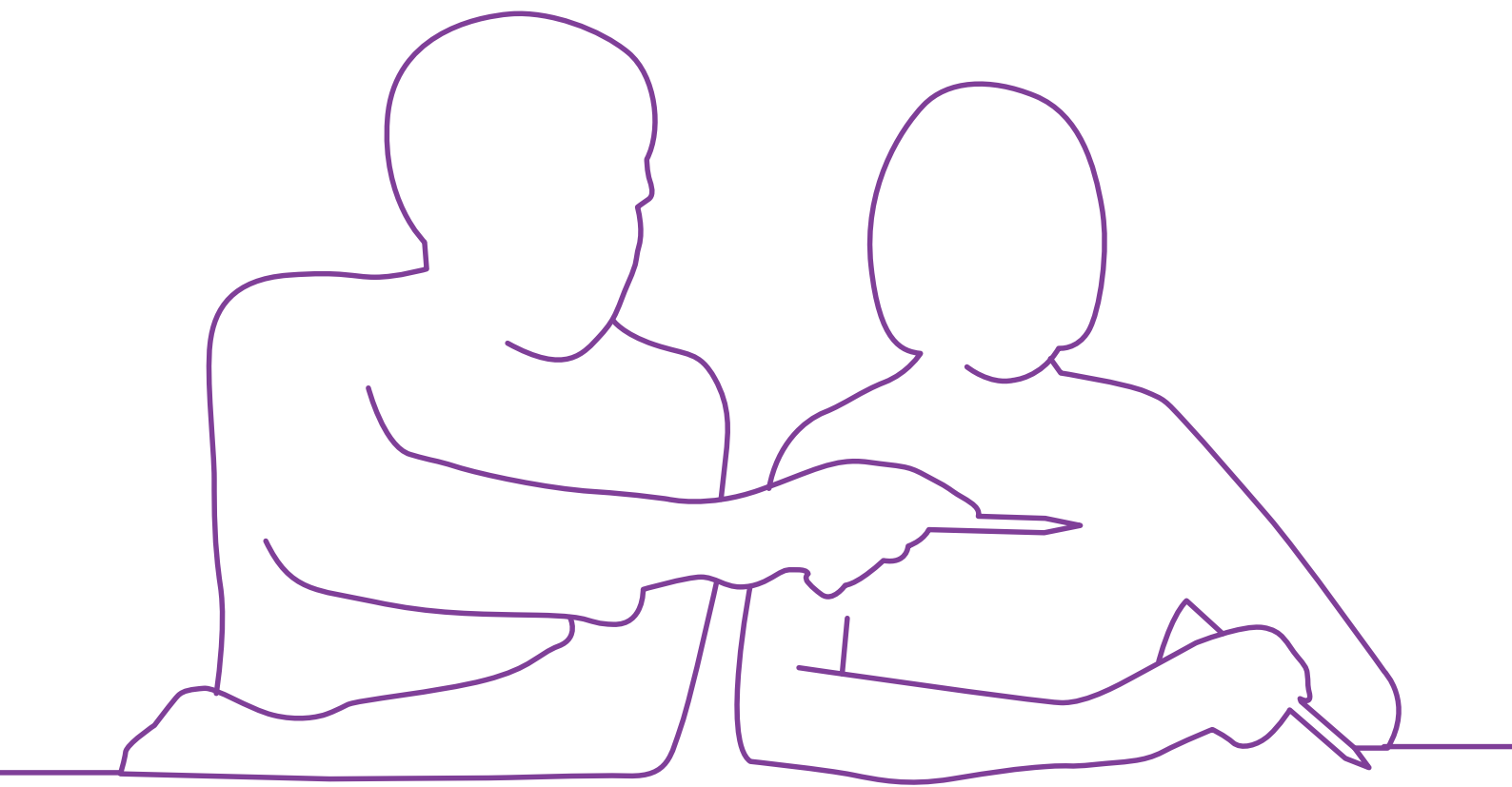


# INTRODUCTION

Schools using the JSCP adopt various approaches to its implementation and the case studies that follow describe the approaches taken in three schools, two post-primary schools and one special school. The case study schools used the inherent flexibility of the programme to meet their local and student needs, but at the same time subscribed to the common features set out in the Programme Statement. One of these features is the focus schools placed on using the JSCP literacy and numeracy strategy<sup>4</sup>. The strategy outlines a range of classroom learning and teaching methods, and short-term initiatives, designed to develop literacy and numeracy skills.



<sup>4</sup>For more details see [www.jscp.slss.ie](http://www.jscp.slss.ie)







CASE STUDY

1



# IMPLEMENTING THE JCSP IN A POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Introduction

This is an all girls secondary school. It has designated disadvantaged status (DEIS). The school has over 500 students and 45 teachers. Students are organised into mixed-ability class groupings. The school offers the JCSP, the Junior Certificate, Transition year, the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school has a strong pastoral care system which includes year heads, class tutors, school chaplain and onsite counselling. Class tutors meet with their class group twice a week for pastoral care. Students participating in the JCSP are in a mixed-ability setting throughout first year and banded in Irish, mathematics and English in second and third year. Across the three year groups there are 39 students participating in the JCSP.

The school had previously organised classes by streaming. This resulted in having two very small lowest stream classes. It was felt that this approach was impacting negatively on the academic and social development of the students in the lower stream classes. Most of these students were struggling with their school work and they took Foundation Level subjects for the Junior Certificate examination. They were perceived by other students as 'weak'. The school wanted to offer all students the most fair and open post-primary education possible and mixed-ability grouping was introduced.

## Curriculum

In first year, students take English, Irish, mathematics, history, geography, religion, Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Students also take two classes a week in the following taster subjects - music, art, craft, design, home economics, business studies, science and French. The main focus of the lessons in first year is on the transition from primary to post-primary education. In second year all students choose three options from science, music, home economics, art, craft, design, and business studies. The student in JCSP chooses two options and the third option comprises of literacy and numeracy classes, or personal and social development classes or a module based on French culture. All the students participating in the JCSP are doing the Junior Certificate examination. The vast majority of these students sit ordinary level Junior Certificate examinations and a number of students take some subjects at Higher Level.

## Attendance

Many students participating in the JCSP tend to have poor attendance. In the last school year, 24% of students have been absent for 30 days or more and another 24% have been absent for 20 days or more. The school takes a whole school approach to tackling the issue of poor attendance, particularly as it is viewed as one of the early warning signs for early school leaving. As part of the DEIS planning, the school has developed an attendance/punctuality policy and the JCSP co-ordinator was involved in their development. The home



school community liaison co-ordinator attends the weekly core team meetings and informs the group about students' attendance and punctuality. The JCSP co-ordinator has close ties with the school completion programme co-ordinator, who is involved in running a transfer programme for all first year students.

The JCSP punctuality and attendance statements are outlined in the code of behaviour which is in the student journal. In these statements students record their own attendance and punctuality. The school also has an attendance officer who records and monitors student attendance. At the end of each term students receive certificates to acknowledge good attendance or improved attendance. The last time the certificates were distributed 40% of students received gold (attendance has been very good), 35% of students received silver (good attendance) and 25% of students received bronze (attendance has improved).



## School organisation

While the main person organising the JCSP in the school is the co-ordinator, the school has adopted a collaborative approach to its implementation, using a range of teams. There are three main teams – the planning team, the core team and the profiling team (more details on these teams are given in the following paragraphs). To ensure a sense of consistency the co-ordinator is a member of all the three teams.

### JCSP co-ordinator

The JCSP co-ordinator is a first year class tutor, who also teaches history and geography. The co-ordinator has responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the programme which includes the following:

- leading the core team in planning and implementing the programme
- facilitating the profile team meetings
- making recommendations to management in relation to timetabling, budgeting and allocating resources
- setting up, maintaining, reviewing and evaluating the student portfolios
- organising JCSP events, initiatives and projects
- induction of new teachers to the programme
- liaising with parents and other relevant personnel
- reviewing and evaluating the programme.

## Getting started

The planning team usually includes the following staff: the JCSP co-ordinator, principal, home school community liaison co-ordinator, guidance counsellor and the learning support teacher. This team focuses on planning for the overall running of the programme in the school, looking at identifying students to participate in the programme, the curriculum and the resources required. Throughout the planning and identification processes both parents and students are consulted. To gather information for the first planning meeting the home school community liaison co-ordinator meets with the principal and teachers from the sending primary schools. Many of the potential students for JCSP have been identified as at risk of early school leaving in primary education and are already participating in the School Completion Programme.

Students have the opportunity to settle into school for the month of September. This is to give teachers time to get a sense of the students' abilities and needs, to see how attendance is in the first month and how well students are coping with the transition from primary school. A general staff meeting is held, to gather feedback on how all the first year students are doing. In October, the planning team meet to look at which students would benefit most out of participating in the JCSP. Once information is gathered from the various sources (staff at the sending primary schools, attendance records, IEPs (where applicable), feedback from the first year teachers and parents) the planning team select the students that would benefit most from participating in the programme. The home school community liaison co-ordinator follows this up with a visit to the homes of students to inform the parents about the programme. Throughout the junior cycle parents are invited to acknowledge and celebrate their child's success at school.

## Introducing the programme to students

When explaining the programme to students it is important that they don't feel any different from their peers and that they do not feel like they are the less able group. To achieve this, the JCSP is explained as *the Junior Certificate with a plus* and that they will receive extra support to help them, particularly with their literacy and numeracy skills.

## Day-to-day running

The core team meets for one class period once a week. This year (the members of the team can change from year to year) the team includes the JCSP co-ordinator, the home economics teacher, the business studies teacher, the principal or the deputy principal and the home school community liaison co-ordinator. Due to timetable restrictions, the other members of the core team, the English and mathematics teachers meet at another class period with the JCSP co-ordinator. The core team discuss the day-to-day running of the JCSP and this includes the following:

- establishing students' strengths and challenges using screening and diagnostic test results, interests, needs and IEPs (where applicable).
- selecting statements (see table 1) - generally the teachers select the statements for their individual subjects and the core team selects the cross-curricular statements. For example the second year students are completing an action project to help the school retain its Green Flag.
- discussing students who are giving cause for concern (for example issues around attendance) and students who have done well are discussed.
- planning JCSP events, initiatives and projects.
- looking at different ways to recognise students' achievement and ways to give feedback to individual students.

**Table 1:** Subject and cross-curricular statements selected for this year

Subject statements	Cross-curricular statements
<p>For this school year, students are profiled in the following subject statements (not all students are doing the same statements, they are selected based on the individual needs of each student).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Geography statements 1-7</li> <li>■ Mathematic statements 1-8</li> <li>■ Home economics statements 3-8</li> <li>■ English statement 1-12</li> <li>■ Business studies statement 1-7</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Make a Book statement</i></b></p> <p>This statement is based on the Make a Book project<sup>5</sup> - second year students are producing a cook book for teenagers with reading difficulties. Each recipe is described using basic text, photographs and illustrations. Using the photographs students are explaining how each recipe is completed, the instructions are set out in a step-by-step manner. During home economics, the students are cooking the dishes, and in art, craft, design, students are designing a cover for the book.</p> <p><b><i>Action project statement (Environmental project)</i></b></p> <p>This year the school is being re-assessed for the Green Schools Flag<sup>6</sup> ( Green-Schools, is an international environmental education programme, environmental management system and award scheme that promotes and acknowledges long-term, whole school action for the environment).</p> <p>Students are creating numerous slogans promoting energy conservation, for example, <i>be bright, switch off the light</i>. Using the slogans, posters are made and displayed in all the classrooms. Students also help run the <i>Green-Schools Action Day</i> by setting up a display at lunch time on the effects of global warming on animals. They encourage students to sign a pledge to reduce energy using the information from the website <a href="http://www.Change.ie">www.Change.ie</a> and students receive pencils made from recycled CD cases.</p> <p><b><i>Personal and Social statements</i></b> - students are working on a range of statements in this area, for example, 2nd year students are doing statements relating to behaviour and respect towards others.</p>

<sup>5</sup> Make a Book project – is a national project organised by the JCSP Support Service. Each year students are invited to display their books for other schools at venues in Dublin and Cork.

<sup>6</sup> For more details see: <http://www.greenschoolsireland.org>

## Recording progress and achievement

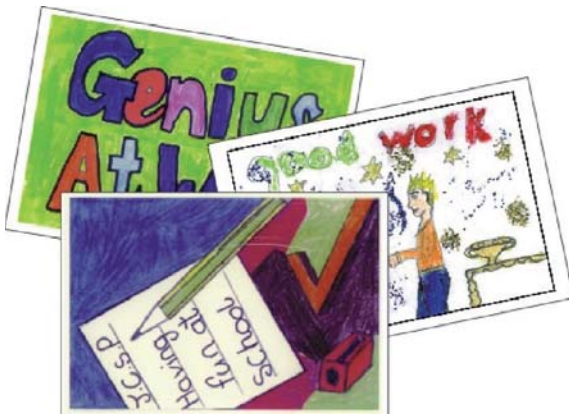
Each student has a JCSP portfolio which is stored in the classroom cabinet in the co-ordinator's room. The portfolio contains a copy of all the subject statements completed or to be completed by the student, a record of the certificates of achievement, a selection of good work for each subject. They also contain a copy of tests/exams and photographs of activities and celebrations. Students record their progress using the three box reviewing system.



## Profile meetings

The profiling team includes the teachers involved in profiling students, and members from both the planning and core teams. The profiling team meets twice a year to profile students, once at the start of the year and again at the end of the year. At the start of the year, the team discuss each student's strengths and challenges. All teachers are given a selection of stickers, postcards and bookmarks to acknowledge student progress and achievement.

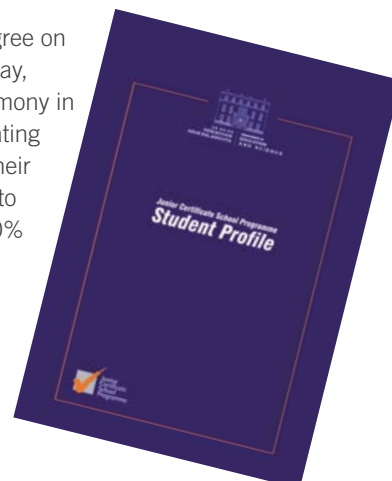
Teachers send a postcard home to inform parents about their child's good or improved behaviour/



attitude/work. At the end-of-year profile meeting, the team record the number of statements each student has completed. Teachers are aware from the start of the programme that a statement should not be started with a student unless they can almost guarantee that 80% of the learning targets will be completed. The idea here is that a student never feels a sense of failure because he/she have not completed a statement. The team also discusses each student's attendance, punctuality, homework, behaviour and skills in working alone and with others. At

the end-of-year meeting, the co-ordinator gives a PowerPoint presentation to highlight each student's achievements over the year. This is also used as a means to review and plan the programme for next year. At this meeting, consideration is given to whether students participating in the programme still require its support and consideration is given to other students who might need the support of the programme.

At the final profile meeting in third year, teachers come together to agree on the statements each student will receive in their Student Profile. In May, students receive their Student Profile and this is celebrated at a ceremony in the school. After completing the JCSP programme, students participating in the programme consult with the guidance counsellor to consider their options in senior cycle. To date, approximately 50% of students go into Transition year, 20% move directly into the Leaving Certificate and 30% participate in the Leaving Certificate Applied.

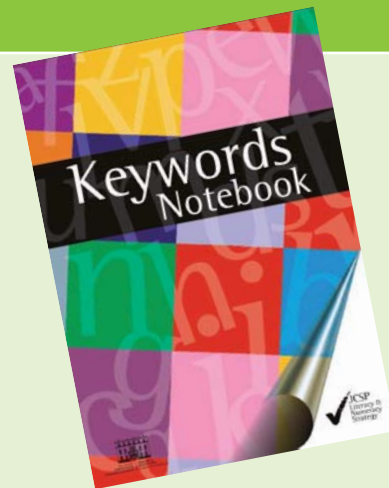


## Literacy and numeracy

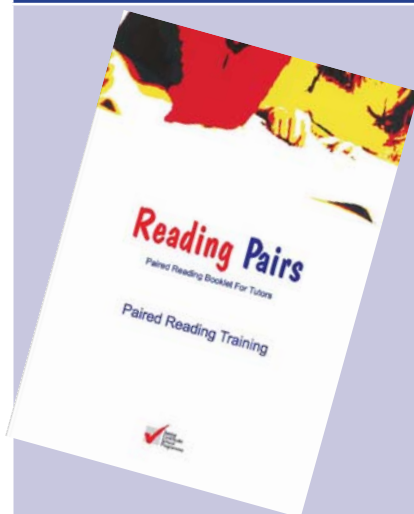
The JCSP co-ordinator works closely with the learning support and resource teachers. (A literacy and numeracy policy was developed as part of DEIS). A major focus of the JCSP is the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. This is a main concern as the vast majority of the students in the programme have literacy and numeracy difficulties, with many scoring below the 20th percentile in literacy tests and below the 12th percentile in numeracy tests. A whole school approach is used to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills. The main JCSP strategies used are *Keywords*, *Paired Reading Programme*, *Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)*, *Cross-aged Paired Maths and Maths Games*, all of which are described in greater detail below. Many of the approaches are used for short periods of time, usually four to six weeks, to ensure the momentum can be maintained. The school also has a library with a selection of reading materials and internet access.

### Keywords

Keywords are new subject-specific vocabulary, which are pre-taught before the topics in which they appear are introduced. This vocabulary needs to be mastered before students can access the topic in a subject. The idea is that the student is able to read the word, understand what it means and knows how to spell it before encountering it in a topic. As students learn new keywords they record the words in their notebooks and place the keywords into a sentence. All students in junior cycle have the keyword notebooks and this is an example of a JCSP practice being used with all students.



### Paired reading programme



Each student receives the book *Tales of Despereaux* along with a question sheet for their parents. The student agrees on the number of pages to be read each night. Parents are encouraged to read the book along with their child and if they have the time they can ask questions from the question sheet. When the four week reading period is over, the student and their parents are invited into a *Tales of Despereaux* afternoon, where the book is discussed, refreshments distributed and the *Tales of Despereaux* film is shown. At the end of the activity, students receive a certificate of achievement. This activity enables the student to read a manageable novel and then watch the film of the novel in a fun and enjoyable way. Also it provides an opportunity for parents to engage in a literacy activity with their child.



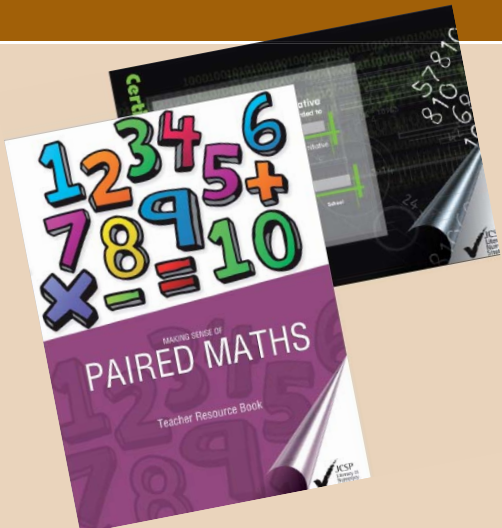
### Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)

The idea of DEAR is that at a set time, everyday for a week, everybody at school stops what they are doing and reads for fifteen minutes. This includes the principal, the teachers, secretaries, and all visitors to the school. DEAR is implemented during English week. There is wide scale promotion of the week and everyone is made aware of the time they can read in. It is also pointed out to the student that it is ok to read magazines or read from the internet. It promotes reading across the school, highlights the enjoyment of reading and demonstrates to the student that you do not have to write something every time you read a book. Given the literacy difficulties of many of students in JCSP, high interest and low reading age readers are used. Students really enjoy reading the *Barrington and Stoke*<sup>7</sup> books. These books are short, illustrated and manageable for students. At the end of DEAR parents are invited to celebrate and students are awarded certificates of completion.



### Cross-aged paired maths

This strategy involves students training as tutors and working with 3<sup>rd</sup> class primary school students, over a six week period. Topics covered are basic maths skills such as adding and subtracting. The idea is that the mathematical skills of both groups of students are enhanced through this activity. The impact on students is great, particularly the students in the programme, as tutors they have opportunities to gain competency and confidence in their mathematical skills in a fun way.



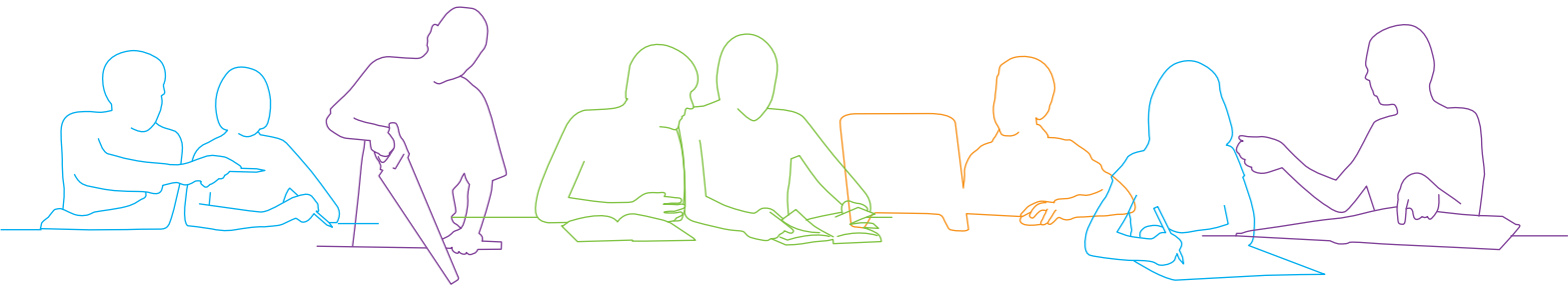
<sup>7</sup> Barrington and Stoke are publishers of the reluctant reader's series of books. For more details see [www.barringtonstokes.co.uk](http://www.barringtonstokes.co.uk)



## Maths games

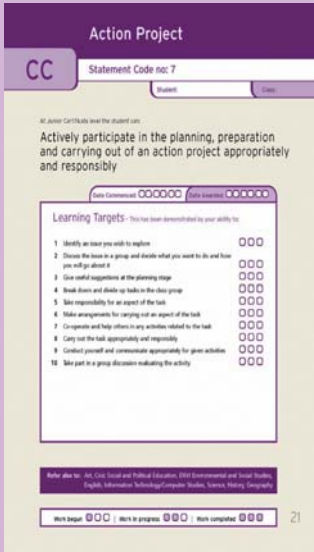


For six weeks, students use a range of games to build on their basic numeracy skills such as the addition, subtraction, multiplication and division tables. Games used include Times Table Snap and Mega-Fun-Card-Game. Another game, used is the Make Your Own Opoly (which is based on the “Monopoly” board game). In this game, the teacher constructs and develops a personalised, contextualised and localised board game to generate interest in mathematics. Students get a workbook and really enjoy the fun element of the game.



## Using JCSP statements in the classroom

The following pages outline two examples of using JCSP statements in the classroom. The first looks at using a cross-curricular statement *Action Project* in a geography class and the second looks at using a cross-curricular statement on personal and social development *Relationships: Self and Others*.

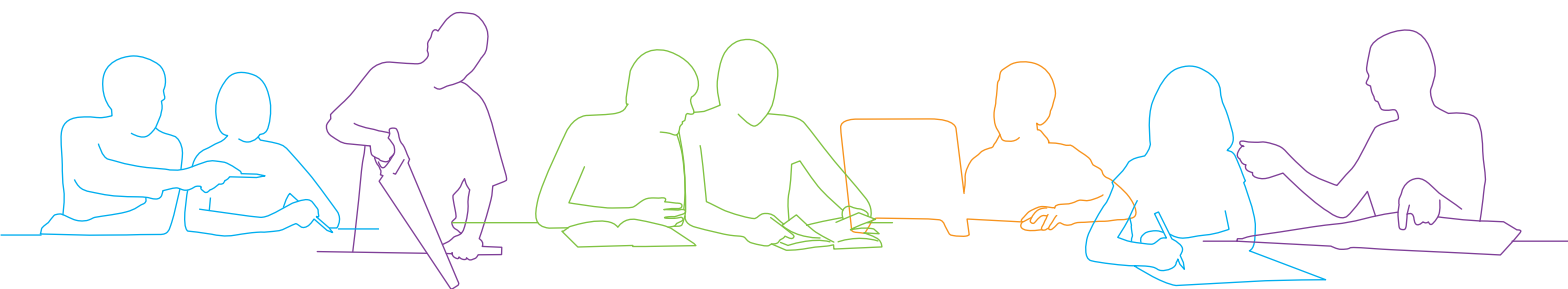
Subject statement	ACTION PROJECT - GEOGRAPHY
<p>This statement is designed for use in a number of subjects; in this case it is used in a geography class with a second year group. The aim of the action project is for students to collect different soil samples from a local area and compare/contrast the results. The topic is part of the Geography syllabus, Section A- Processes and Change Unit A3: <i>The working of our life support system (A local soil study)</i>.</p> <p>A range of active learning and teaching approaches are used, for example, modelling, brainstorming and group work. To get started, the teacher outlines the aim of the action project, and the various steps involved in the project.</p> <h3>Pre-teaching keywords</h3> <p>Using images from the internet and flashcards, students have to match the keywords (for example, components, sample, elements, silt and vegetation) with the correct images. Students then copy the words into their keywords notebooks.</p>	
Modelling the action task	
<p>The teacher starts by adding some water to the two soil samples (one dark and one light) from the school garden. After a short time, students see how the soil has separated into different layers. Working in pairs, students examine the jars and try to identify the various elements of the soil such as pebbles, sand, clay, silt and dead vegetation. Using the indicators – the darker the colour of the soil, the better quality soil and the more equal the quantities of sand, silt and clay are, the better the quality of the soil – students compare the two soil samples and decide which is the better quality soil.</p>	
Brainstorming	
<p>The action task for students is to collect a sample of soil from their back gardens in a jar, label it and bring it into school. To get students started with planning this task the class group have a brainstorming session around the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ what do you use to collect the soil?</li> <li>■ what is a good sample?</li> <li>■ is there a good time to collect the soil?</li> <li>■ how much do you collect?</li> <li>■ why do you put water in it?</li> <li>■ how much water do you put in it?</li> </ul> <p>The teacher records the various suggestions on the board.</p>	

### Group work

Students are organised into five groups of three based on how close they live to each other. Each group arranges to meet up after school to collect a soil sample from one of their gardens. Back in school the students organise into their groups. They consider the components of the soil sample, its colour and its quality. Using colour coded cards (indicating lighter to darker) students match a card with each soil sample. They also select the best quality soil sample and the poorest quality soil sample. Students then compare the quantity of the elements in each jar. Finally, students record their results by drawing a bar chart showing the levels of each element in both the best and poorest quality soil samples. At this point, the teacher and students discuss their progress and achievements. Students record their progress in their portfolios.

#### Other possible cross-curricular activities:

Science: students could bring the soil samples into science class and test them for PH value. Geography: Effect of population on soil quality.

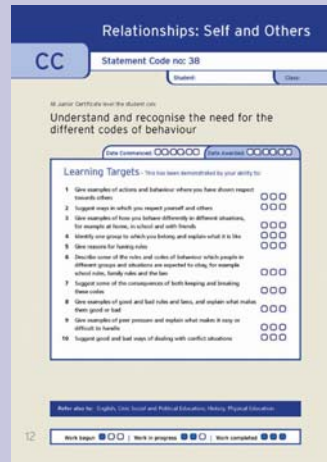


**Cross-curriculum statement:** **RELATIONSHIPS - SELF AND OTHERS**

This statement looks at personal responsibility and the need for certain rules. The learning and teaching approaches used are role-play, debating, group and pair work. Every effort is made to ensure that these activities are carried out in a fun and enjoyable way.

**Pre-teaching keywords**

One or two classes are given over to pre-teaching the keywords. Students divide up into four groups and each group is given one of the keywords. Each keyword comes with a bank of other related words/phrases (for example, the keyword *peer pressure* has the related words *friends, same age, smoking, saying no, and doing the same as your friends*). Students are asked to explain their keyword to other students using the words and phrases. Students write their keywords into their keywords notebook.

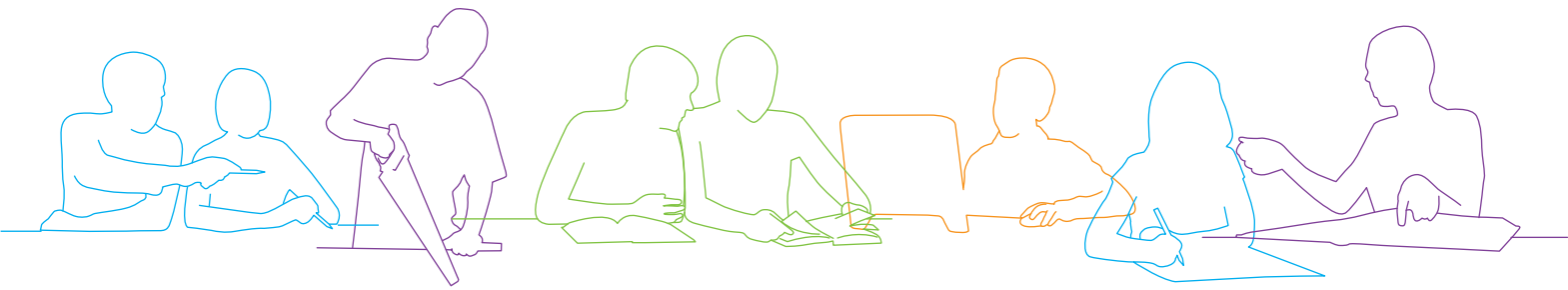


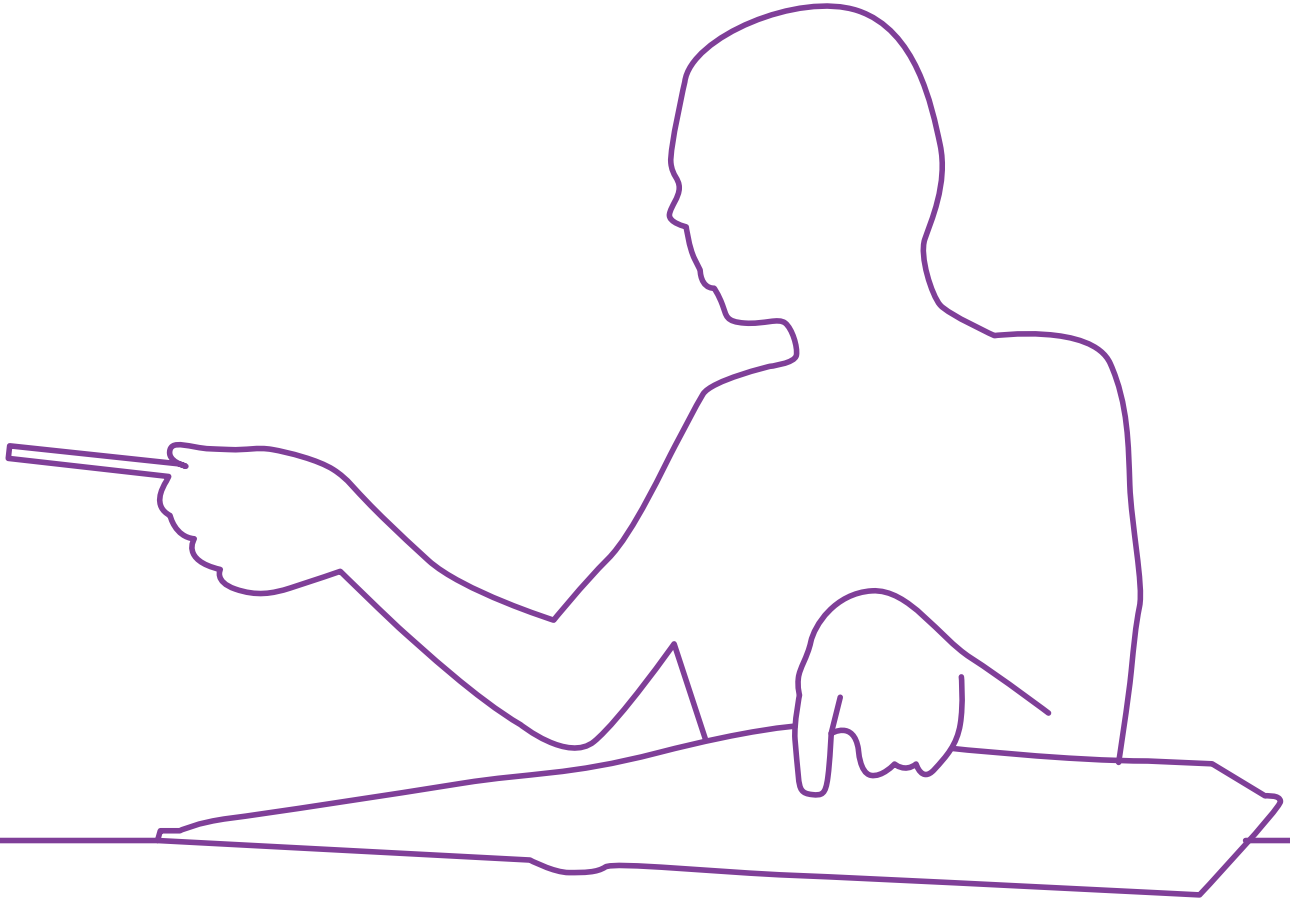
**Group work**

Students are divided into groups and asked to give one or two examples of what they think is appropriate behaviour - they have to discuss an occasion where they showed respect to themselves and others.

<p><b>Role-play</b></p>	<p>The aim of the role-play is to act out a scene where there is conflict between the principal and a student who has come to school late, the third time in a week. Students have the opportunity to make two endings to the scene, the first describes how the student argues with the principal and what the consequences are of this action and the second describes how the student 'acts' appropriately in the situation. To put students at ease the role-play is first modelled out between the teacher and a student who has experience acting.</p>
<p><b>Pair work</b></p>	<p>Students are then organised into pairs and they are encouraged to use their own script but for students who find it difficult to do this they are provided with a script. Each pair acts out the 'scenario' and the other students are asked to identify what they feel is wrong with the situation and why it is wrong. A discussion takes place and students in their pairs are invited to comment on the different scenarios.</p>
<p><b>Debating</b></p>	<p>Six students are asked to volunteer to participate in the debate. The six debating students are divided into two groups, with one group debating in favour of the motion <i>Rules are Necessary in Schools</i> and the other side opposing this motion. The adjudicator makes a decision on the winner.</p>

**Links with other subjects include:** Religion, CSPE and SPHE









CASE STUDY

# 2



# IMPLEMENTING THE JCSP IN A SPECIAL SCHOOL

This is a special school which caters for 98 students with both physical and learning disabilities. There are 19 teachers, a number of special needs assistants and a range of auxiliary staff that provide medical and other supports for the students. Within the school there is a pre-school section, a primary section and a post-primary (includes junior and senior cycles) section. The distinction between primary and post-primary education is one the school has created as the staff feel it is important to create awareness around the transition of students moving from one stage of education to another. Students want to be like their siblings and other young people their own age who make the transition into a post-primary school.

The JCSP fits right in with the ethos of the learning experiences for students in the post-primary section, as it emphasises personal development in the broadest sense. Students at this stage are becoming young teenagers, and personal development is very important for them. While the students participating have a range of special educational needs, the content of what they learn needs to reflect their interests as young people as generally they have similar interests as their non-disabled peers, for example *BeBo*, *Facebook*, *the X-Factor*, and *High School Musical*. The attendance of students is usually very good and non-attendance tends to be for reasons related to their disabilities, for example, hospitalisation, appointments or illness. After completing the junior cycle section students usually take a range of Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) courses.

## Personal and social development

As part of their curriculum, students are involved in a range of activities that develop their social and personal skills. One of these is the *Fast Friends* programme, which involves transition year (TY) students from a local post-primary school visiting our students once a week. Over the years, the school has developed activities which both sets of students can engage in on fairly equal terms, such as board games, simple cookery, improvised drama, a band competition (they make junk instruments, invent a name, logo and compose a song), karaoke and quizzes.

## School organisation

As a special school, the school is organised along the lines of a typical primary school with each class group having a main teacher. The implementation of the programme is reflected in the way the school is organised. There are two JCSP co-ordinators, both of whom are class teachers for the two junior cycle classes and share the responsibilities of the role. Other teachers involved in the programme at the moment, are the physical education teacher and the swimming teacher. Together these teachers and the co-ordinators make up the core team. The core team meets weekly to discuss the day-to-day running of the programme.



### Parental involvement in the programme

There is a lot of informal contact with parents as they attend clinic appointments and take the opportunity to have a chat with teachers. Parents in the school attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and learning goals are set for students in various areas. The meetings usually take place in September or October. A follow-up meeting is held to discuss the curriculum in general (including JCSP). Parents are enthusiastic about the programme, as they feel it offers their child an opportunity to follow a programme that is linked to the Junior Certificate.

### Introducing students to the programme

All students in the two junior cycle classes participate in the JCSP. Some of these students will take a range of subjects (English, mathematics, Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), music and Environmental Social Studies (ESS)) in the Junior Certificate examination. All students receive a JCSP portfolio, where they keep a record of their statements and evidence of their progress (on completion of a statement, students receive a statement award certificate). The portfolios are kept in the school and they are taken out on a regular basis. Students discuss with the teacher how much progress they have made and this is an opportunity to give students feedback and to acknowledge the effort and achievements they have made. Students use the three-box system to record their progress. The teacher uses a range of stickers to acknowledge the students' progress.



### Core team meetings

As previously mentioned, each student has an IEP and this gives teachers a good sense of the student's individual strengths, needs and interests. Based on this information, teachers select a range of statements that are appropriate for each individual student. (Table 1 lists the most common statements selected). During the year, some students will complete one or two statements and some students will complete as many as seventeen. In the selection of statements there is a heavy emphasis placed on developing statements which focus on students' literacy, numeracy skills and their personal and social skills.

**Table 1:** List of subject statements and cross-curricular statements

Subject statements	Cross-curricular statements	Subject statements
English 1: Personal Expression: Writing	CC Social Competence 15: Reading from Texts	SPHE 1: Alcohol
English 2: Experience of Literature and Media	CC Social Competence 16: Functional Writing	SPHE 2: Legal and Illegal Substances
English 5: Novel/Short story	CC 19: Measurement of Time	SPHE 3: Bullying
English 6: Poetry	CC 23: Money Management	CSPE: 1
English 7: Play/Film	CC 36: Positive Communication	CSPE: 2
English 8: Letter Writing	CC 37: Relationships: Self-Awareness	P.E. 3: Invasion Games Level 1
English 11: Advertisements	CC 38: Self and Others	P.E 7: Aquatics
English 12: Print Media	Computer 3: Computer	Art: Printmaking
Basic Skills: Reading	Computer 1: Keyboarding	
Basic Skills: Writing	Computer 4: Word Processing	
Basic Skills: Arithmetic	Statements on Attendance	
Maths 1: Use of Number		
Irish: Cultural Studies		
ESS: Examining the Past		

### Student Profiles

On completion of the programme, the core team meet to consider each student’s progress and achievements. Agreement is reached on the statements to award to students; this is recorded and students are given feedback from the meeting. A final celebration is held and parents are invited to a ceremony where students are awarded their Student Profile.



## Literacy and numeracy

As a special school developing students' literacy and numeracy skills is part and parcel of every lesson. Many of the students have poor written skills and aside from having general literacy difficulties some have impaired hand function and visual/perceptual problems. The school runs several of the JCSP short-term initiatives, the most popular are - *Who wants to be a Word Millionaire*, *Reading Challenge* and *Handheld devices (Flashmaster)*. These are described in more details in the next few paragraphs.

### Reading Challenge

This aim of the Reading Challenge is to improve students' reading skills. Over a five week period students working in small groups are 'challenged' to read a book a week. (The target for each student differs suiting their own individual level.) Parents are encouraged to help students reach their 'challenge'. At the end of each week the student records (using their Reading Challenge booklet) details of their book, saying what they like or dislike about the book and whether they would recommend it. Each week the parent signs the student's book review. On completion of the challenge, parents are invited to the school and students are awarded a certificate.



### Who wants to be a word millionaire?



The aim of this initiative is for students, (over a period of four weeks) to read the magic threshold of one million words. The students have low reading ages so the target is usually accumulated through a group effort. If someone reads a story to a number of students then the number of words is multiplied by the number of students present. The word millionaire initiative is always a great buzz and it really boosts reading during this period as students are very motivated to read. The number of words is totalled each day and displayed on the wall charts. On reaching the one million words, students receive a little gift and a certificate.

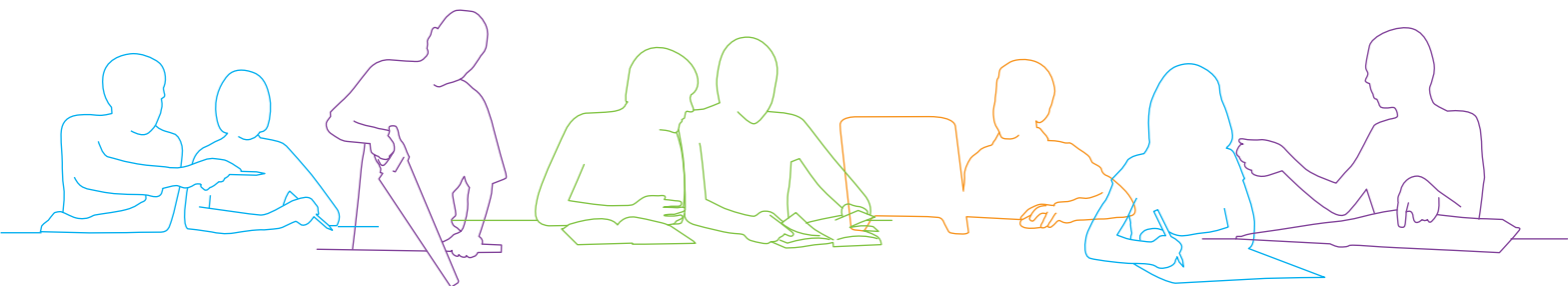
### Handheld devices (Flashmaster)

A handheld device called Flashmaster is used to develop students' mathematical skills. Flashmaster is a handheld micro-computer which has been designed to provide practice and drill in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division tables. It contains multiple time settings and nine different levels of arithmetical challenge. The student is presented with his/her score at the end of each programmed activity. They really love being able to see their results in percentages and to compare them to a previous one or to their friends. Students take to the Flashmasters immediately as the format of these handheld devices is so like the computer games they play.



### Maths Game

Two teachers decided to develop a maths game to reinforce basic mathematical concepts among a group of learning/physically disabled teenagers. A giant chequerboard of approximately 3m by 3m with numbers from 1 to 20 was designed. The numbers were painted on the fabric by the students using stencil. Each square could accommodate one wheelchair. When students solve a problem they could go to the answer square. The board can be adapted to a variety of games.



## Using JCSP statements in the classroom

The following pages outline examples of using two JCSP statements in the classroom. They describe a cross-curricular statement Make a Book and a subject statement Environmental Social Studies (ESS) Examining the Past. *The Make a Book project*<sup>8</sup> gives students an opportunity to be involved in imaginative and creative cross-curricular activities. The project is an annual event, which links student writing with cross-curricular work. Students select their own topic and books can be represented in a variety of formats using a range of materials such as papier-mache, crafted models in wood, metal and clay.



### The topic

Each year students decide on a different topic and this year students selected *the Vikings* (a topic in the ESS course). Using the ESS statement: *Examining the past* students are required to give a brief description of - *the lifestyle of the people of the time - of the living conditions of the people in towns and to make a model of a settlement.*

### Getting Started

To get students started they watch a DVD on the Vikings made by the Viking Centre in York.<sup>9</sup> In this video, an actress tells the story of how a woman tricked her husband into giving her a divorce. The students loved this idea and came up with a title and a plot - *The Viking Swap* based around two Viking couples who divorce and marry each other's partners.

### Brainstorming

To try something different we decided to produce the book in a comic format using *Comic Life*. This is a free desktop publishing programme designed to create comic strips. Students were very enthusiastic about using this format. Roles were assigned in a number of ways. Students were asked to "audition" for roles which were more or less a formality as students had fairly definite ideas about the parts they wanted. Students agreed on what would happen in each scene and the dialogue was created by the students and teachers. There was a lot of discussion about props and costumes. It was great fun improvising costumes and making weaponry.



Students dressed as Viking characters and were photographed acting out the different scenes. The photographs were then projected on to an interactive whiteboard and dialogue was dictated by the students to insert in the speech bubbles. Once the book was printed, it was laminated and bound for display at the *Make a Book* venue.

<sup>8</sup> Make a Book project is a national project organised by the JCSP Support Service. Each year students are invited to display their books for other schools at venues in Dublin and Cork.

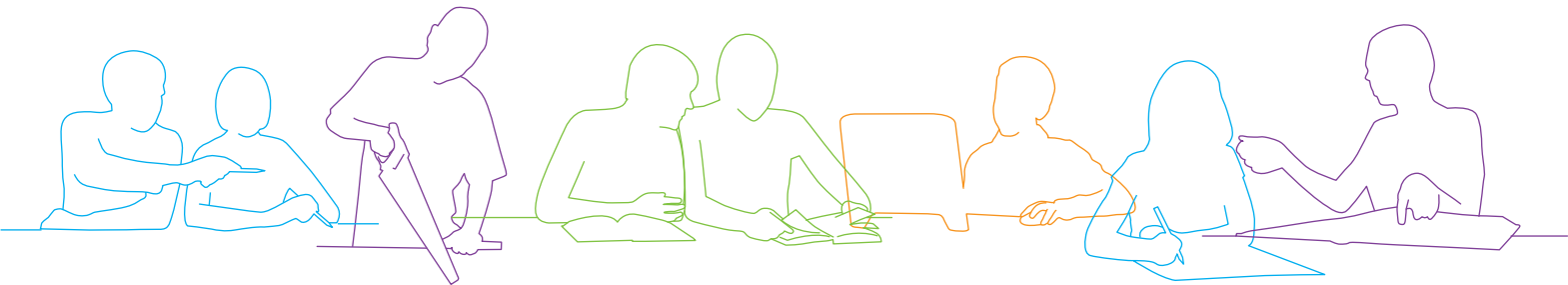
<sup>9</sup> For more information see <http://www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk/> (accessed 11.10.09)

### The film

So much work went into the book and it was decided to make it into a film. The roles had been assigned, the props were made and the dialogue worked out. The filming took a long time with the usual problems, *actors going sick, actresses fluffing their lines, and noises on set*. However, the students really enjoyed making the film. Once the filming was completed it was edited and each student received a copy of the film.

### Outcomes

During the work on the Make A Book project, including the making of the film, students learned a lot about Viking life including marriage customs. They learned about their weapons and warfare as the main characters were warriors who had been abroad robbing treasures. The helmets and weapons were made in the art class and students learned about Viking dress. Some scenes took place in the kitchen and market place so they learned how Viking people shopped and cooked. Because of the method used to make the book they had the opportunity to learn more about multi-media. They also learned that planning and organisation are a necessary part of the project. They learned to take responsibility and work as part of a team. Most importantly for students, all of this learning took place in a fun and enjoyable way!





## Cross-curricular activities

The school places an emphasis on using cross-curricular learning and teaching activities. Students really enjoy these activities as they are supported in making links in learning across a range of subject areas. One example of this is the Christmas celebration.

### Christmas celebration

This cross-curricular activity is based on the JCSP statement *Organising and Planning a School Function*. Everyone involved with the students during the year, for example, parents, bus drivers, nurses, therapists, school secretary and representatives of the *Fast Friends* programme are invited to attend the Christmas celebration. For four weeks prior to the event students are preparing for it. This is truly a cross-curricular project as it involves oral language (planning), written language (making invitations), mathematics (budgeting, shopping, cooking) as well as art (decorations) and home economics. Its contribution to the development of the students' social skills is very important. Students have to work as part of a team and they feel they have a valuable role to play. This is particularly important for young people with disabilities.



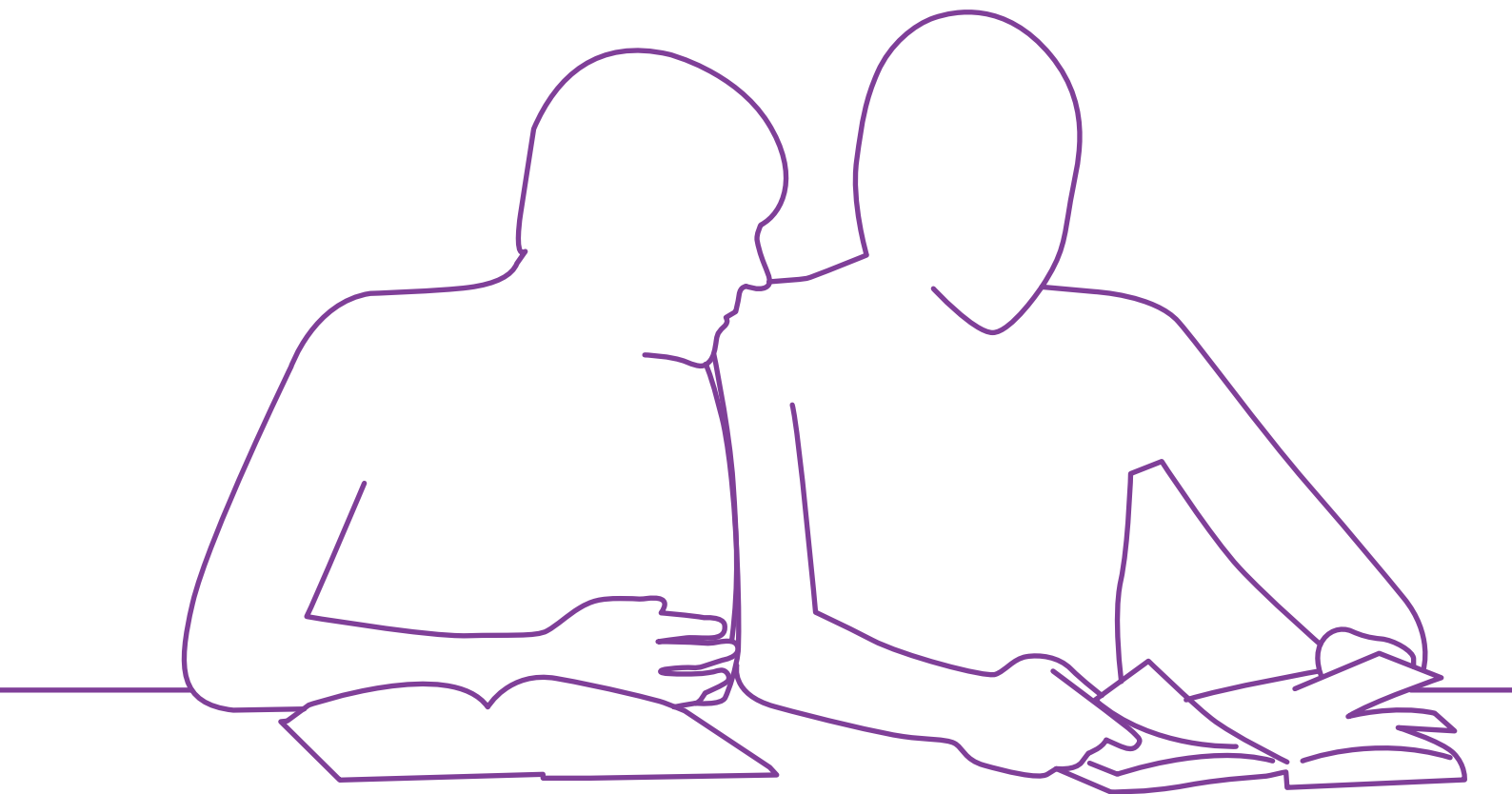
### Preparing across the subjects

English	Writing Christmas stories.
Mathematics	In mathematic class some students generate a budget and others do the actual shopping.
Home Economics	Shopping for and baking cakes.
ICT	Students make invitations using the software <i>Print Shop</i> programme.
Art, Craft, Design	Making decorations for the party.

### On the day

Each student is assigned a role at the celebration - pouring tea, meeting and greeting, being a waiter/waitress, cleaning up, or making a speech. Students help set out the food and decorate the room. They display their portfolios and are awarded certificates for their progress and achievements throughout the year.









# JCS P

CASE STUDY

# 3



# IMPLEMENTING THE JCSP IN A POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Introduction

This school is a rural co-educational community college and has designated disadvantaged status (DEIS). There are 484 students (including PLC students). The school offers the following programmes - the JCSP, the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school is involved in the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme and the School Completion Programme (SCP). In addressing the needs of the students who are at risk of early school leaving, a whole school approach is adopted. There are strong links between the SCP co-ordinator and the HSCL co-ordinator as typically the students who are involved in the SCP are the same students participating in the JCSP. To strengthen the home and school relationship, the HSCL co-ordinator shares the role of JCSP co-ordinator with another teacher. The school has a strong pastoral care system with class tutors and year heads.

## Selecting students

Across the three years of junior cycle there are 70 students participating in the programme. The process to select students to participate in the programme is a collaborative one which includes the JCSP co-ordinators, the special needs co-ordinator, the guidance counsellor, the principal, the deputy principal, parents and students. Several visits are made to the sending primary schools to gather information about all incoming first year students.

Parents and students are given lots of details about the programme before they decide on whether they want to participate in the programme or not. The programme is presented as an opportunity for students to achieve more success at school. Parents are invited to a JCSP information night at the start of the first term. At the meeting, the programme is outlined with a particular focus on the ways in which the individual student's progress and achievements can be acknowledged and recognised. Parents are encouraged to become involved in supporting the programme. One example of how parents do this is by taking part in the paired reading initiative with their child.

Once students have been selected, each student's strengths and challenges are established using a range of screening and diagnostic tests. On average, students have reading and mathematical ages ranging from 6 to 10 years. Some of the students also have special educational needs (usually within the mild general learning disability range).

## Curriculum

Students following the programme take a range of Junior Certificate subjects which includes Irish, English, mathematics, science, Environmental Social Studies (ESS), home economics (HE), metalwork, metal technology wood, art, craft, design, religion, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), physical education (PE) and Civic, Social Political Education (CSPE). One afternoon per week, first year students participating in the JCSP have an elective class - this class is to make learning more relevant and enjoyable for students as the focus is on a cross-curricular and a multi-intelligence approach to learning. During this time a range of activities are engaged in by the

students, which occur both in the school and outside of the school. Two examples of elective classes include taking a basic life saving certificate and taking a history tour of the local area.

## School organisation

While the main staff organising the JCSP in the school are the co-ordinators, the school promotes a collaborative approach to its implementation, with planning, core and profiling teams.

### Getting started - planning meeting

The planning team consists of the co-ordinators (including the HSCL co-ordinator), the guidance counsellor, the principal, and the learning support/resource teachers. This team meets usually in May, and considers the students to participate in the programme, the curriculum and the resources required to implement the programme throughout the year.

### Core team

To oversee the day-to-day running of the programme, a core team meets once a week for one class period. This team includes the JCSP co-ordinators and a small number of subject teachers. During these meetings, the core team considers the following:

- reviewing and recording the student's progress
- planning for JCSP events and celebrations
- preparing for profile meetings.

Other staff members are informed of JCSP activities through a daily school newsletter which is circulated to all teachers each morning. This is a general newsletter that contains 'news' relevant to the whole school.

### Profile meetings

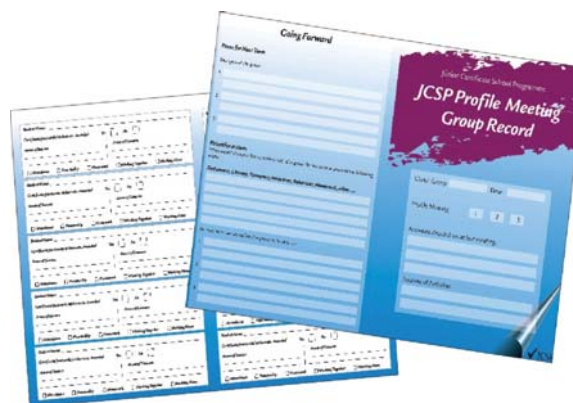
The co-ordinators and all subject teachers involved in the programme attend the profile meetings. Profile meetings are usually held once a term. The first profile meeting is a planning meeting, usually held in October. At the planning meeting, the school uses the *Planning Notes for Student Learning* template. This template is useful for the initial planning stage as it provides a focus for teachers to consider the profile of students who are new to the programme. It promotes discussion on the student's individual strengths, challenges, interests and hobbies. It outlines the student's reading and mathematical ages, social abilities, ability to work in pairs, oral communication ability, quality of written work and preferred learning styles. A range of short and long term goals are selected for each student. The other profile meetings are held in February and in April. The team used the *JCSP Profile Group Meeting Record* template as it is a quick and easy way to focus the discussion and record the outcomes of the meeting at the same time. The template allows for a quick update on each student and teachers can get an overview of how each student is getting on - who's doing well and who isn't, and what actions are necessary.





During the profile meetings the team also looks at the following:

- selecting subject statements (subject teachers usually wait for a few weeks in the first term before selecting appropriate subject statements so they can get familiar with the general and more specific needs of the students).
- selecting cross-curricular statements, for example first year students are working towards the following statements
  - school function (Christmas celebration)
  - make a book project
  - visiting an art gallery and museum
  - measurement.
- profiling students' progress and achievements (including ways to give feedback to students)
- agreeing on and setting further learning targets
- using the JCSP strategy in cross-curricular areas, for example, literacy and numeracy.



### Reviewing the programme

The programme review happens weekly in the core group meetings as well as at the profile meetings. This ensures that the team reviews what works at profile meetings and what doesn't work. The profile agenda may then be altered, added to, or items removed. Information regarding students' achievements is often sought from teachers through the staff daily newsletter. Teachers are encouraged to give constant feedback to the team so that processes or plans can be updated or changed. Teachers generally approach any member of the core team individually and they subsequently bring the issue to the weekly meetings.

### Final profile meeting

At the end of third year, the final profile meeting takes place in April. Prior to the meeting teachers will discuss with each student their progress to date and review the number of statements he/she has achieved. At the final profile meeting, agreement is reached on the statements to award each student. Discussion also follows on which cross-curricular statements a student should be awarded based on achieving 80% of the learning targets. Each student's final profile will be different depending on his/her level of achievement and progress over the three years. The school has started to do its profiling online and finds it easy to use. Usually sometime in May, the school then invites the students and their parents to a celebration ceremony where students receive their *Student Profiles*. This is a great occasion as students, parents and teachers get to acknowledge the achievements of the learners over the three years.



## JCSP initiatives

The school use a range of active learning and teaching approaches based on the JCSP initiatives. The short term initiatives found to be the most successful include *Celebrity Chef*, *Arts and Crafts*, *Paired Reading* as described below.

### Celebrity Chef

This initiative was a huge success, particularly as one or two of the male students were very reluctant to partake in home economics - being sport fanatics they insisted that home economics was too sissy! Using the JCSP initiative, the teacher had the idea of getting a successful male chef as a role model. A famous celebrity chef, Conor Spacey, agreed to come into the school and cook with the class over a number of weeks. Having a 'macho', six-foot tall sportsman cooking helped the male students revise their thoughts of home economics as a sissy subject! The students really liked these classes and found them to be great fun.



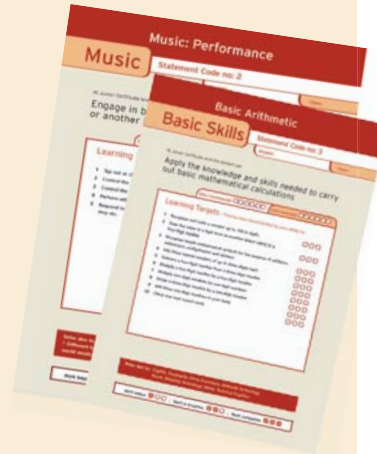
### Arts and crafts initiative



The areas of ESS and art, craft, design are covered in this cross-curricular initiative. This initiative involved students going on a field trip to the National Gallery of Ireland and the National Museum of Ireland. The aim was to increase student interest and learning about different epochs in art and history over the ages with particular emphasis on Ancient History. A group of first year students made this trip recently and the highlight of the trip was learning interactively about Bog Bodies, ancient artefacts, and Egyptian monuments. In both ESS and art, craft, design, imagery and visuals play an enormous part in terms of project work and practical exams. Many of the JCSP students learn best through interactive methods, where learning is done in a multi-dimensional way. This trip facilitated that learning, and was also helped by preparatory information received from the gallery and museum before the trip. This ensured maximum engagement on the day for all of the students.

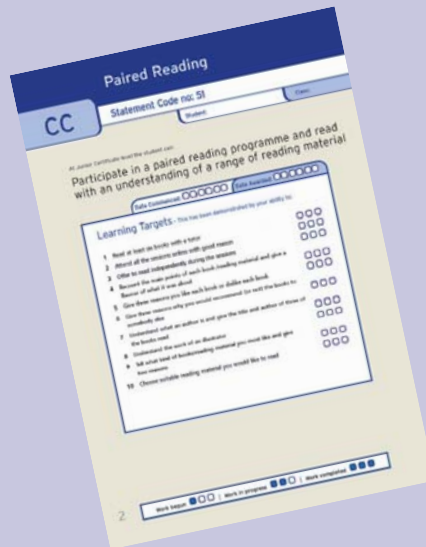
### Maths and music initiative

This initiative involves learning mathematics through music and rhythm using percussion over a six week period. Once a week, the latter half of a double maths class is spent learning how to play the drums. The class slowly builds up from no experience, to being able to play complicated rhythms. The lessons ranged from learning basic rhythms based on counting drum beats to more complicated rhythms and sequences. Some of the sequences are understood by using basic maths skills, addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Students are encouraged to devise their own rhythms and lead sessions as well as taking part in a team production. The students learn to read beats on a music sheet and play them out on a drum. Students love this initiative and are always very disappointed when it comes to an end.



### Paired reading initiative

This initiative is run every year in conjunction with the statement entitled *Participated in a paired reading programme and read with an understanding of a range of reading materials*. It involves several teachers and minimum of 24 students, usually 12 from first year and 12 from fifth year. The initiative runs for six weeks between the Halloween and the Christmas break, four days a week for 20 minutes at lunchtimes. The initiative follows a strict schedule where planning starts in late September and names are taken of those interested in October. The initiative has a whole school approach and is open to any student. The students from fifth year are trained to become tutors and they build up good relationships with the first year students (tutees). Reading skills are developed in a fun and enjoyable way.



## Using a JCSP Statement in the classroom

### Word Millionaire statement

The Word Millionaire statement is implemented over a six-week period. Students receive constant encouragement to keep them working towards their aim of reading 1,000,000 words (as a class group). The students are very motivated by watching the word total figure every week. Students who are not regular readers became frequent readers and make their way through a volume of short, high interest books.

*I had hardly ever read more than three pages in a book before and now I can't believe that I have actually completed one book and am half way through another and now I don't notice myself getting through the pages!*

**(Student)**

The main highlights in this initiative are reaching each milestone along the way for example 100,000 words, 250,000 words, and 500,000 words.



### Outcomes

*Big change in my son's attitude to reading – now he actually goes up to his room before bedtime and will lie there just reading his book, and will be much more relaxed than before when going to bed.* **(Parent)**

Over the duration of this initiative the reading levels of all students improve. Students' confidence also really improves as they see that they are making a very valid contribution to the overall target of 1,000,000 words for the class. This is seen to be very important as sometimes reading can lose its appeal for students if they are not working towards a specific goal. In the case of the Word Millionaire, the target is very specific, measurable and more and more obtainable as the six weeks of the initiative progresses and the class word total seems to accelerate along the way.



The students demonstrate very positive attitudes during the initiative in terms of giving their opinions on a book which they had just read and it becomes easily apparent who the most popular authors are. This also helps to develop their social and communication skills. This leads to a general improvement in the behaviour of the students as they are preoccupied and seem to put a lot of their energy into reaching the target of reading 1,000,000 words. The students also become more independent and self-disciplined in terms of picking a book and being patient in the start until they "got into" the book and then sticking with that book until completion.

A celebration is held to mark the success of the initiative. Parents are invited and students are involved in planning this initiative. Each student has a different role to play – welcoming parents or doing the catering. A PowerPoint slideshow runs showing the students' involvement in the programme. The Principal gives a certificate to each student for his or her participation in the initiative.

