

# THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS FOR POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2016 - 2020

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## Step 1 Identify Focus

Chapter 3 of the  
SSE Guidelines  
2016-2020

Domain  
Standards

In the next cycle of school self-evaluation, **teaching and learning continues to be the focus**. Schools should continue to use the process to implement national initiatives and to identify and work on aspects of their own teaching and learning practices which require development and improvement. These aspects of teaching and learning will vary according to the needs of schools. Typically, most schools will use the process to assist them in introducing and embedding relevant aspects of the *Framework for Junior Cycle*. It is expected that schools will also use the process to maintain a meaningful focus on literacy and numeracy.

\* Schools should select a minimum of two and a maximum of four aspects of **teaching and learning** as the focus for their self-evaluation process from 2016 to 2020. e.g. assessment practices, teaching and learning the key skills, engagement in learning. (see *Circular 0040/2016*). They should use the teaching and learning section of *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-primary Schools* in Chapter 3 of the revised *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines* as a benchmark when reflecting on and evaluating their current practice and to identify the domain most relevant to their school - *Domains and Standards* are summarised below.

### Learner Outcomes

Attitude to learning  
Understanding of themselves and others  
Acquisition of curriculum knowledge & skills  
Levels of attainment

### Learner Experiences

Levels of engagement as learners  
Growth as learners  
Self-reflection & ownership as learners  
Development as life-long learners

### Teachers' individual practice

Teachers' knowledge & skills  
Use of practice that progress students' learning  
Use of appropriate teaching approaches  
Responsiveness to individual learning needs

### Teachers' collective/collaborative practice

Teachers' professional development & collaboration  
Co-operation to extend students' learning opportunities  
Collective use of dependable assessment practices  
Sharing of expertise to build capacity

## Step 2 Gather Evidence

Chapters 4 and 5 of  
the SSE Guidelines  
2016-2020

Always consider - relevance, simplicity & clarity, efficiency, protocol and validity of qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered.

Schools may decide to analyse assessment data and records of student progress as a starting point.

Teachers' views and their records (assessment, uptake at foundation, ordinary and higher level in specific subjects and attainment in state examinations) are useful examples of evidence.

Schools should gather information from students and parents to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge to make accurate judgements.

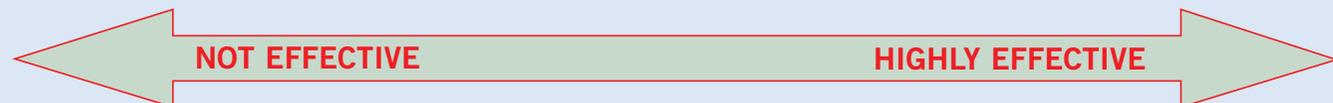
Professional reflection and dialogue between teachers, focusing on specific aspects of teaching and learning, are very important when gathering evidence.

As collaborative practices are further developed among the teaching staff, team teaching and professional collaborative review will become an effective means of gathering evidence.

Sample tools to support the effective gathering of evidence may be accessed at [www.schoolselfevaluation.ie](http://www.schoolselfevaluation.ie) and should be adapted to suit the particular context of each school.

## Step 3 Analyse and Make Judgements

Chapter 4 of the SSE  
Guidelines 2016-2020



Evaluate the effectiveness of your current practice using **statements of practice** on pages 15 to 21 of the *SSE Guidelines 2016-2020*.

Using the statements as a benchmark, schools can evaluate their own practice and make sound judgements based on the evidence they have gathered. Schools will naturally aspire to very effective practice, but should in the first instance compare their findings to the statements of effective practice. In this way, they can identify existing strengths as well as possible gaps or weaknesses. Then, by considering the statements of highly effective practice, schools can build on existing strengths and work towards excellence.

## Step 4 Write and Share Report and Improvement Plan

Chapter 6 of the SSE  
Guidelines 2016-2020

Typically, the school self-evaluation report and improvement plan should be a **single document** of no more than three pages in length. Normally, it should be completed once annually. A template for this document is available on [www.schoolself-evaluation.ie](http://www.schoolself-evaluation.ie).

The first section of the document is the **report** and should outline:

- An account of progress that has been made on implementing improvement in areas that were the subject of evaluation and improvement plans in the previous year
- The new aspect of teaching and learning chosen for self-evaluation, where relevant
- The areas that the school has prioritised for improvement

The second section of the document is the **improvement plan** and should contain:

- Targets for improvement with a focus on learner outcomes (*The setting of specific targets is the starting point. Having formed a judgement based on the relevant information or evidence, a school will be in a position to decide on specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound (SMART) targets to bring about improvement. This is an important step in determining the actions that need to be taken.*)
- The actions that are required to achieve the targets over three years
- Reference to who will undertake the actions outlined
- Reference to who will monitor and review the implementation and progress
- Reference to how parents can help
- A timeframe for the achievement of the targets

The final part of this step asks schools to share a **summary** of the self-evaluation report and improvement plan with the whole school community.

**Note re: DEIS schools:** The school's DEIS action plan is its school improvement plan for the purposes of school self-evaluation, and no additional or separate improvement plan is required.

## Step 5 Put Improvement Plan into Action

**This is the key step in the process.** It is only when the actions in the improvement plan are implemented that the work of the school can improve. All relevant school personnel should share ownership of the actions to be implemented at individual teacher, subject department, or whole-school level. **These actions should become part of the normal teaching and learning process.**

## Step 6 Monitor Actions and Evaluate Impact

In order to evaluate the impact of the actions, they must be monitored. A number of questions are useful when considering this:

- Has practice changed in classrooms?
- What are teachers' experiences of the agreed changes?
- What are students' experiences of the agreed changes?

Schools will need to decide:

- How monitoring will occur
- Who will be responsible for monitoring
- How progress will be determined and reported
- When and to whom progress will be reported (for example, at staff meetings, planning meetings, board meetings)
- If targets and actions are realistic or need to be changed

The role of those leading the process, and the role of all teachers, in the ongoing and systematic monitoring of the implementation of the plan is important. In this regard, the gathering and use of information at specified intervals to check if the required improvements are being made is necessary. The implementation of the school improvement plan ultimately leads to a new cycle of school self-evaluation.

\* The four year period allows for an investigation year for scoping out and developing the improvement plan, and preparing for its implementation. However some schools may feel confident that they can implement an improvement plan without a preliminary investigation year, for example where baseline data is already available and the actions required are clear.

The graphic below (taken from page 3 of Circular 0040/2016) sets out how the process would work over a four-year period in which a school selects three aspects of teaching and learning. For **illustrative purposes only**, it provides examples of how aspects of the Framework for Junior Cycle can be implemented through the self-evaluation process. Schools should refer to Circular 0024/2016, Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle, for specific requirements.

