

School self-evaluation builds on good school development planning

Teachers frequently reflect on their work and the learning that their pupils achieve. For many years, teachers and school boards of management have used the School Development Planning process to identify what is working well in their schools and what might be improved.

School self-evaluation is a way in which this process of reflection, improvement and development can take place in a more systematic way.

School self-evaluation brings real benefits

Teachers in Ireland and in many other countries have shown us that by reflecting on their practice regularly, they can improve the learning achieved by their pupils. This happens when the main focus of school self-evaluation is on what happens in classrooms and not on paperwork.

That's why all schools are being asked to engage in more systematic school self-evaluation from the 2012-13 school year onwards.

School self-evaluation empowers teachers and schools

School self-evaluation recognises that teachers and school communities know what is best for their pupils and context.

In school self-evaluation teachers make judgements about their practice based on evidence they have gathered. This enables them to affirm good practice and make decisions about what they would like to improve or further develop.

School self-evaluation facilitates schools in telling their own unique story to their school community.

What will schools be asked to do?

Schools are being asked to build on their existing school development planning processes by engaging in school self-evaluation of teaching and learning from the 2012-2013 school year onwards.

The Department has prepared a circular to guide schools as they engage in school self-evaluation. The circular will be available at www.education.ie early in the school year.

Start small and build!

Experience in Ireland and other countries has shown that it takes a number of years to build good self-evaluation processes in schools. In the initial stages, school self-evaluation works best when it focuses on small, discrete aspects of the school's work. This gives teachers and the school community an opportunity to really examine the chosen aspect of the school's work and plan how it can be improved.

That's why the Department's circular will ask schools to examine a **small** number of priority aspects of their work in the early stages of school self-evaluation. In the four years from 2012/13 to 2015/16, the circular will ask schools to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in literacy, numeracy and at least one other curriculum area. Schools will write a short school self-evaluation report in each area that they examine, including a summary for parents. They will devise a school improvement plan for the aspects of practice identified for development in each of the areas evaluated.

How does this link with the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy?

Many schools have already begun to examine and improve the teaching, learning and assessment of literacy and numeracy in response to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. School self-evaluation provides schools with a supportive and systematic way to affirm good practice and improve literacy and numeracy.

What help will be available?

An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools has been prepared for schools. This, user-friendly guide was developed by the Inspectorate in cooperation with the education partners. The short guide summarises what is involved in school self-evaluation and answers a range of questions about the topic. It will be available early in the school year at www.schoolself-evaluation.ie. Printed copies will also be sent to schools.

School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary Schools have also been prepared to assist schools in the school self-evaluation process. This is a more detailed publication which has been developed in consultation with the education partners. An early draft of this was used in a trial phase by a small number of schools. These guidelines outline the school self-evaluation process and provide evaluation criteria and quality statements for teaching and learning, along with sample tools to assist in gathering evidence. School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary Schools will be available early in the school year at www.schoolself-evaluation.ie. Printed copies will also be provided for schools.

Guidance and support for school self-evaluation will also be offered to schools by the PDST and the Inspectorate. In order to facilitate all teaching staff to attend support sessions, it is suggested that schools assign a portion of the additional time allocated under the Croke Park Agreement to school self-evaluation. This will enable presentations to be made and questions and queries to be answered within specific school contexts.

A dedicated website will be set up to provide further support for schools at www.schoolself-evaluation.ie. The website will contain presentations, guidelines, tools and messages from school principals who have already undertaken SSE activities. As additional resources are developed, these will be placed on the website. Over time, schools may wish to share their school self-evaluation resources or experiences. The website will facilitate such sharing. If you would like to contribute to the website you may send your suggestions to info@schoolself-evaluation.ie.



School Self-Evaluation

An update for primary schools

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Inspectorate Guidelines for Schools

PROMOTING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING