



School Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan Summary – Literacy 2025

School self-evaluation of learning and teaching is part of the on-going work of Abbeyleix South National School. As well as continuing our work in Wellbeing, the focus of the school self-evaluation for 2024 - 2027 Literacy is approaches to the teaching and learning of spelling/phonics.

Our SSE process has allowed us to reflect and review many of our day-to-day classroom practices that have a meaningful impact on how teaching takes place and how we encourage and support our students to become independent, effective and engaged lifelong learners. It is our continuing goal to use this process to make meaningful changes to enhance teacher practice and improve student outcomes based on information gathered from various sources, and using this to collaboratively plan and implement positive change.

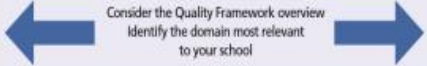
Abbeyleix South National School is a Church of Ireland Parish School under the Patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel and Ossory.

There are four mainstream teachers including two Special Education Teachers. There are four SNAs on staff. We have an active Parents' Association and a supportive Board of Management.

Our school is a vibrant, friendly, exciting and happy place of learning. The staff in our school aim to create an atmosphere where all pupils are equally valued and respected. We endeavour to establish and maintain high standards of behaviour, discipline and achievement. Our pupils experience a sense of caring and belonging and are encouraged to reach their full potential. We believe education is about developing the whole person, giving them life-long skills and preparing them to participate as good citizens in an ever-changing society. Of paramount importance is the happiness of each child under our care.



Table 2.1 APPLYING THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

TEACHING AND LEARNING				
Step 1: Identify Focus Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 3				
Step 2: Gather Evidence Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapters 4 and 5	Learner outcomes	Learner experiences	Teachers' individual practice	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice
	Investigate your area of focus			
Step 3: Analyse and make judgements Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 4				
	Evaluate the effectiveness of your current practice using statements of practice			
Step 4: Write and share report and improvement plan Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 6	Record your findings and develop your school improvement plan			
	Share a summary of this record with the parents and school community			
Step 5: Put improvement plan into action	Actions at the level of the individual class			
	Actions at the level of a group of classes (e.g. all second classes)			
	Actions at the level of the whole school			
Step 6 Monitor actions and evaluate impact	Changes in practice			
	Teacher experiences			
	Pupils' experiences			
	Impact on learning			

Following a study and discussion on aspects of the document ‘**Looking at Our School 2022 – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools**’, we will keep in mind the two dimensions and the four domains for each dimension as outlined in the table below. The standards of ‘effective’ and ‘highly effective’ will guide us and help us to build on and improve existing effective practice.

Looking at Our School 2022 A Quality Framework		
Dimension	Domain	Standards
Teaching and Learning (1)	Domain 1	Pupils enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners
	Learner Outcomes	Pupils have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand themselves and their relationships Pupils demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the curriculum Pupils attain the stated learning outcomes for the term and year.
Teaching and Learning (1)	Domain 2	Pupils engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities
	Learner Experiences	Pupils grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive Pupils reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning Pupils experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning.
Teaching and Learning (1)	Domain 3	The teacher has the requisite curriculum knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills
	Teachers’ Individual Practice	The teacher selects and uses preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils’ learning The teacher selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the intended learning outcome and to pupils’ learning needs The teacher responds to individual learning needs and differentiates learning and teaching

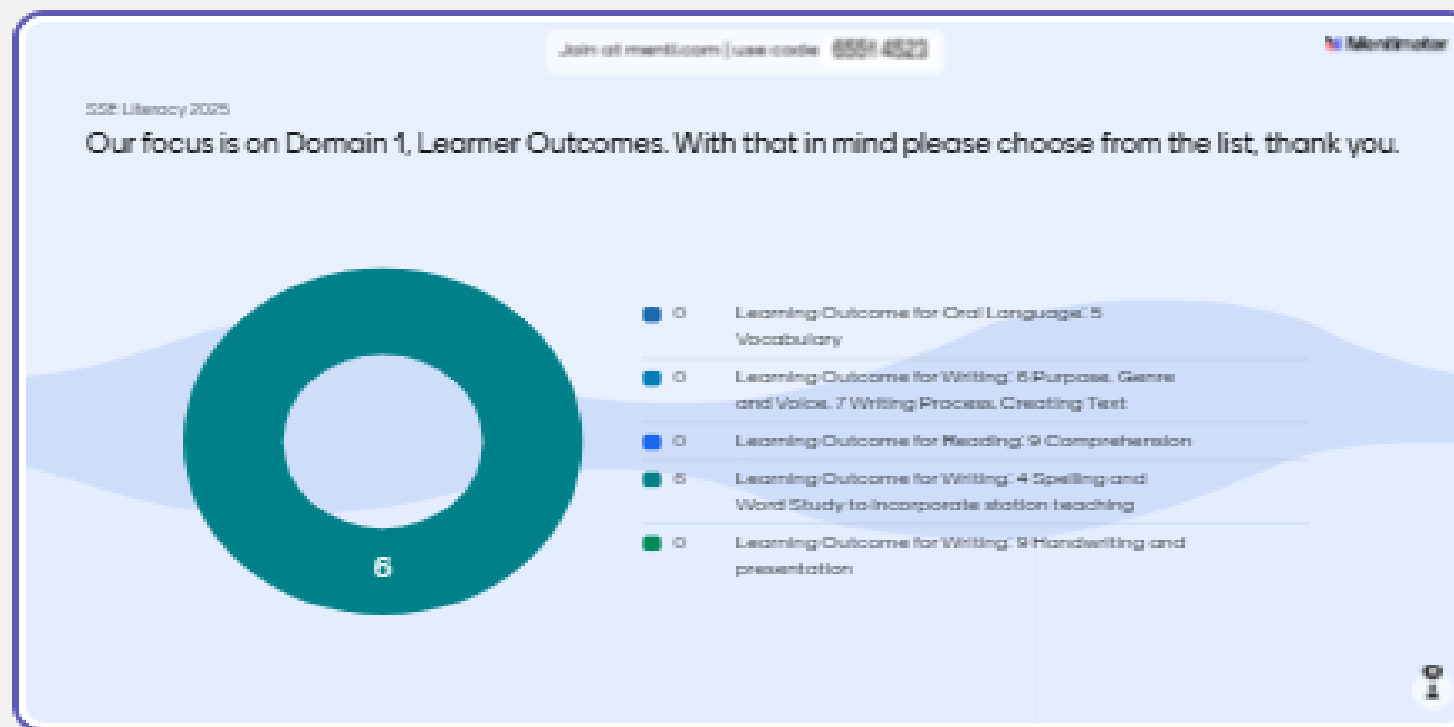
		activities as necessary.
Teaching and Learning (1)	Domain 4 Teachers’ Collective/Collaborative Practice	Teachers value and engage in professional learning and professional collaboration. Teachers work together to devise learning opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum. Teachers collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practice. Teachers contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise.
Leadership and Management (2)	Domain 1 Leading Teaching and Learning	School leaders promote a culture of reflection, improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment School leaders foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil School leaders manage the planning and implementation of the school curriculum School leaders foster teacher professional learning that enriches teachers’ and pupils’ learning.
Leadership and Management (2)	Domain 2 Managing the Organisation	School leaders create and maintain a positive school culture and a safe, healthy and purposeful learning environment, and sustain it through effective communication. School leaders manage the school’s human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation. School leaders manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice. School leaders develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability.
Leadership and Management (2)	Domain 3 Leading School Development	School leaders communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation. School leaders lead the school’s engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation. School leaders build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with

		the wider community. School leaders manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education.
Leadership and Management (2)	Domain 4 Developing Leadership Capacity	School leaders critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership. School leaders empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles. School leaders promote and facilitate the development of pupil participation, pupil leadership and parent participation. School leaders build professional networks with other school leaders.

Following a discussion the staff used Menti.com to establish our focus for learning in Literacy.

Initial Staff discussion

- The literacy attainments of pupils in standardised tests are well above the national norm.
- There are a number of whole school initiatives to promote a positive attitude to literacy among the pupils eg. Buddy Reading, DEAR and use of novel.
- There is a willingness among staff to develop teaching practices in line with current best practice and all staff avail of CPD.
- There is a willingness among staff to share information and skills learned from CPD training and we need to use staff expertise more.
- Staff identified a weakness in the area of spelling and identified the class spelling book as being a resource of the past.



Initially, we studied the Learner Outcomes from The Primary Language Curriculum in relation to Reading and Writing and the element Understanding with a focus on **outcome 5. Phonics, word recognition and word study (reading strand) and outcome 4. Spelling and word study (writing strand).**

To develop a whole staff understanding of the outcomes expected the staff studied the **Progression Continua** document which describes aspects of the Learning Outcomes in more detail.

SSE Review of Current Practice in teaching spelling

- Teachers feel that pupils display positive attitudes to writing and spelling.
- We test spelling rather than teach spelling. We need to teach spelling explicitly.
- All teachers feel that the spelling workbook format is not of value and wish to introduce all classes to the Words Their Way Programme.
- The teaching of spelling linked with phonics needs to be timetabled explicitly in class timetables.
- There is a need to develop more structured methods of assessing pupils' spelling skills.
- Pupils' ability to reflect on and self-assess their skills in spelling needs to be developed.
- Teachers feel parents would benefit from more information about helping their child with developing spelling skills.

The findings

In order to gather evidence for a programme of improvement the school employed a number of strategies of investigation.

- Analysis of pre and post testing in spelling, Words their Way Programme
- A study of free writing copies September and April, examining spelling
- Staff discussion on station teaching during Croke Park planning time
- A questionnaire given to pupils

Our Strengths

- Pupils enjoy their learning in Literacy, are motivated to learn and are eager to achieve
- Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of Literacy skills and knowledge
- Pupils work hard to achieve objectives in Literacy planned by the class teacher
- Pupils engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities
- Pupils grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive
- Pupils reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning
- Teachers avail of CPD training in Literacy and share knowledge with the teaching staff
- Teachers monitor progress of pupils and reflect on progress regularly
- Teachers plan and prepare lesson appropriate for the class and differentiate work when needed
- Teachers use a wide range of teaching approaches to meet learning objectives
- Pupils have a positive attitude towards the use of digital technologies in Literacy
- Pupils can use a range of digital technologies to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the Primary Language curriculum
- School leaders promote a culture of reflection, improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment
- School leaders foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil

- School leaders manage the planning and implementation of the school curriculum
- School leaders foster teacher professional learning that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning.

We know these are our strengths because they are reflected in the findings of the various information-gathering mechanisms that we employed.

Staff Questionnaire

We will use this data to identify strengths, developmental needs and collaboration opportunities for continuous improvement in Literacy teaching.

Brief set of insights

- Daily writing activities are dominated by copybook exercises (6), whiteboard writing (5) showing strong daily engagement in these tasks.
- Genre samples and free writing have a more balanced frequency distribution across daily, frequent, and occasional use, each averaging around 2.
- Creative writing tasks such as taught genres, reading to an audience, and writing on own topics are mostly done frequently rather than daily.
- Most literacy dimensions in professional preparedness are rated "Well prepared" (3) or "Extremely well prepared" (2), particularly in writing, reading foundations, and comprehension.

Pupils Questionnaire

This data provides a comprehensive overview of student perceptions and experiences in English classes. It highlights key trends in motivation, confidence, support, and the perceived impact of various teaching strategies across different class levels. The data will be utilised to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and actionable insights for enhancing English learning experiences.

Brief set of insights

- 42.2% of English students feel most confident in written work, making it the dominant area of confidence.
- Confidence in reading is the second highest at 31.3%, while oral skills lag behind at 26.6%, indicating a need for increased oral practice.
- The piloted new spelling programme shows the strongest positive impact on First and Second Class pupils, with 7 "Yes" responses each.
- Third and Fourth Class pupils show more mixed reactions to the spelling programme, with only 4 "Yes" responses each and higher "Not sure" and "No" counts, suggesting variable effectiveness in upper classes.
- Students rate Choice and Teacher Support as equally the most "Very Important" learning supports, each receiving 29 votes, highlighting the importance of autonomy and feedback.
- Feedback is rated as the most "Important" support overall with 36 votes, while Hands-on activities (18) and Self-Assessment (15) receive notable "Less important" ratings.
- The WALT/WILF support strategy has the highest "Not important" count at 10, indicating it may require re-evaluation.
- First and Second Class students report the highest sense of support at 88.9% and 90.9% respectively, while Third Class students report a lower support level at 66.7%.
- Feelings of challenge are highest in First Class at 88.9%, but drop sharply in Third Class (11.1%) and Sixth Class (25.0%), showing uneven distribution of challenge across grade levels

Our school has decided to prioritise the following areas of development.

Areas for Development/Improvement Targets

- Provide explicit instruction of spelling as part of station teaching and the spelling programme, Words their way
- Teachers who are familiar with the programme Words their Way to share expertise and knowledge at staff meeting workshop
- Assess progress (pre and post testing) as pupils work through the spelling programme
- Increase emphasis on the assessment of spelling through analysis of writing eg. Free writing
- Utilise high interest word-walls in classrooms
- Teach dictionary skills from Second class onwards
- Introduce the use Thesaurus' for Fifth class and Sixth class. Increase word study activities in Senior classes using dictionaries and thesaurus
- Work towards developing whole school plan for spelling
- Encourage teachers to participate in ongoing continuous professional development and collaboration to stay current on best practices for teaching spelling and phonological awareness and to support the development of skills in children.

Improvement Targets:	Required Actions:	Success Criteria:	Persons Responsible:	Monitor and Review	Timeframe for Action:
1) Provide explicit instruction of spelling as part of station teaching and the spelling programme, Words their way.	Evaluate progress this year with trial of Words their Way Programme. Timetable for Station Teaching in Literacy for 2025-2026.	Results of pre and post tests.	SET All Class Teachers to engage	Monitor at Staff Meetings Formulate timetable September 2025 Study spelling pre and post tests at staff meetings – SSE time.	Piloted 2024 – 2025 First and Second Class
Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: Learner Outcomes Standard(s): Pupils have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes and understanding required by the curriculum.					
Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: Learner Experiences Standard(s): Pupils experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning.					
Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: Teachers' Individual Practice Standard(s): The teacher responds to individual learning needs and differentiates learning and teaching.					
Dimension: Leadership and Management Domain: Leading, Teaching and Learning Standard(s): School leaders promote a culture of reflection, improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment.					
2) Assess progress (pre and post testing) as pupils work through the spelling programme, Words their Way.					

Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: Teachers' Individual Practice Standard(s): The teacher selects and uses preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils' learning. Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: Teachers' Collective/Collaborative Practice Standard(s): Teachers collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practice.					
3) Teachers who are familiar with the programme Words their Way to share expertise and knowledge at staff meeting workshop. Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: 4 Teachers' Collective/Collaborative Practice Standard(s): Teachers contribute to building whole staff capacity by sharing their expertise. Dimension: Leadership and Management Domain: Developing Leadership Capacity Standard(s): School leaders empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles.	1 hour staff meeting workshop 'Words their Way' spelling programme.		SET All class teachers engage	SET to communicate with teaching staff regarding spelling programme review	September 2025
4) Increase emphasis on the assessment of spelling through analysis of writing eg. Free writing	Free writing copies for all pupils.	Spelling test results	All class teachers	Discuss progress at staff meeting SSE time.	Ongoing – from May 2025

Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: Teachers' Individual Practice Standard(s): The teacher selects and uses preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils' learning.	Teacher to note and identify recurrent spelling errors that can be explicitly taught.	improve. Improvements seen in free writing spelling.	engage SET		
5) Utilise high interest word-walls in classrooms.	To use word walls to develop spelling.	Pupils use words in their writing.	SET All class teachers	Discuss progress at staff meeting SSE time.	Ongoing – from May 2025
Teach dictionary skills from Second class onwards. Introduce the use of the thesaurus for Fifth class and Sixth class. Increase word study activities in Senior classes using dictionaries and thesauruses.	Audit of dictionaries etc. in classrooms. Purchase resources.	Observation of pupils using dictionaries and thesauruses.	SET All class teachers Office staff		May 2025
Dimension: Teaching and Learning Domain: Learner Experiences Standard(s): Pupils experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning. Pupils engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities. Pupils grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive. Pupils reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning.					
6) Work towards developing whole school plan for spelling (Revise school Literacy Plan)	As a staff review our Literacy Plan with a particular focus on a whole school plan for	Ratification of the plan by the Board of Management.	Teaching staff Board of	Review plan as part of the SSE process.	May – June 2025

Dimension: Leadership and Management Domain: Leading School Development Standard(s): School leaders lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation. Dimension: Leadership and Management Domain: Leading Teaching and Learning Standard(s): School leaders manage the planning and implementation of the school curriculum.	spelling linked with phonics.		Management Parent Body PA		
7) Encourage teachers to participate in ongoing continuous professional development and collaboration to stay current on best practices for teaching spelling and phonological awareness and to support the development of skills in children.	Display all courses, webinars etc related to Literacy CPD on staff room noticeboard.				
Dimension: Leadership and Management Domain: Leading Teaching and Learning Standard(s): School leaders foster teacher professional learning that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning. Dimension: Leadership and Development Domain: Leading School Development Standard(s): School leaders lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation. School leaders manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education.					