

SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION AND CURRICULUM ENACTMENT: IPPN PROPOSAL

The recently published [*Whole School Curriculum Planning Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools*](#) recognises the central role that school leaders play in enacting the curriculum. It highlights the “opportunities, new thinking, and exciting possibilities for school communities” (p.2) that are envisaged by the *Primary Curriculum Framework* while also recognising that it brings “new approaches to planning and working with the curriculum” (p.2). IPPN is seeking clarification on behalf of school leaders as to how School Self Evaluation aligns with curriculum enactment and these new approaches to planning.

The Guidance states that curriculum plans should “be grounded in School self-evaluation and improvement processes” (p.11). Section 4 of the Guidance (p.13) specifically notes how schools can use an SSE mindset to identify school specific needs and take targeted action. This section describes the use of the SSE process to develop curriculum enactment “action plans”. IPPN is seeking advice from the Inspectorate regarding SSE and these actions plans. For example:

- Is SSE a two year process instead of a three year process in line with curriculum enactment?
- Does SSE consist of one action plan per curriculum area over the two year enactment cycle?
- Does SSE consist of one action plan per subject area over the two year enactment cycle?
- Is SSE to be reimagined as a ‘way of working’ or “mindset” through which schools develop their curriculum plans?

In this final conceptualisation of School Self Evaluation, SSE is the process through which school Reflect, Select and Enact the curriculum. Curriculum enactment and SSE become one and the same thing, which would mean that there is not a requirement for duplication of processes or multiple improvement cycles happening at the same time. In fact, schools could do any number of sequential smaller evidence-based action plans over each curriculum two year enactment period to work on priorities, track progress, and monitor to make adjustments as necessary.

IPPN notes that the [*Inspectorate Strategy Statement 2026-2029*](#) is grounded in trust (p.3). IPPN believes that school leaders and inspectors are natural partners in enabling school improvement. In our respective roles, we share a commitment to supporting every learner to flourish. IPPN believes that the strengthening and development of trust between school leaders and inspectors will be crucial to successful curriculum enactment.

IPPN recognises that this work is currently underway by the Inspectorate through the [Feabhsú](#) model, which provides “meaningful, reciprocal engagement on issues of quality between those involved in external evaluation (the Inspectorate) and internal evaluation (schools)” (*Department of Education and Youth Inspectorate Report [2024] and Thematic Review*, p.146). IPPN also recognises that the Inspectorate is engaging in its own professional development journey to locate its practices within curriculum creation at the level of each school. The *Whole School Curriculum Guidance* states that the “redeveloped primary curriculum envisages school leaders and teachers as active agents who interpret and mediate the curriculum framework and specifications into learner experiences that are responsive to the context of the child, classroom and school” (p.2). This is a new departure for school leaders and teachers and will require trust and collaboration from all agencies within the system, including the Inspectorate. This is especially true if there is also a reimagining of SSE as developing a series of action plans for each curriculum enactment two-year period.

To develop this trust and collaboration, IPPN would support the pausing of all incidental inspections and curriculum area/subject specification external evaluations by the Inspectorate for the first two year enactment cycle, while understanding that other types of external evaluations will continue. IPPN believes that this would create the opportunity for the Inspectorate to engage in a number of *Feabhsú* visits with every school. The focus of these visits would be to engage in co-professional dialogue and collaborative sense-making through:

- Professional dialogue and reflection between teachers, school leaders and inspectors on school curriculum enactment action plan(s)
- Professional support from the Inspectorate for school leaders and teachers on monitoring their action plans, specifically using relevant data (work samples, tests, checklists, focused discussions, surveys, etc.)

The time and date of these visits would be agreed and organised in advance by the relevant Inspector and Principal. This type of model is in line with two of the five pillars to support delivery of the Inspectorate strategy (p.9):

- Building capacity for improvement in schools and settings
- Building partnerships through engagement

Lastly, curriculum enactment, SSE and action planning require time. IPPN acknowledges and welcomes the time and support that will be provided by the DEY and Oide for professional learning in 2026-27, especially through school closure days. IPPN also understands that, as per the features of effective whole-school curriculum planning (*Whole School Curriculum*

Planning Guidance, p.4), school leaders will be developing bespoke professional learning action plans for their schools to ensure consistent and effective enactment of agreed whole-school pedagogical approaches, support the use of assessment, and provide opportunities for review and improvement. Within this, the most effective form of professional learning for teachers is to observe other teachers teaching.

Due to the limited existence of leadership time during the school day in the primary sector, which is in marked contrast to the approach taken to the allocation of leadership time in post-primary schools, this is almost impossible for school leaders to organise. IPPN's [Budget submission](#) prioritises providing time for school leaders to lead. IPPN recommends that in each of the next six years, every school be allocated six additional leadership and management days. These additional leadership and management days can be availed of by the person best placed in the school to lead the specific curriculum enactment work prioritised by the school, such as providing teaching cover for classes or special education roles to enable teachers to observe and learn from each other in real time as they use a new pedagogical approach or assessment methodology. IPPN asks for the support of the Inspectorate in advocating for the realisation of this priority, which will significantly enable successful curriculum enactment and the achievement of better learning experiences and outcomes for all learners in our primary schools.