



School Improvement Plan

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School Improvement Plan

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School Improvement Plans

A School Improvement Plan is simply a part of the documentation of the School Self Evaluation process. Together with the Legislative and Regulatory checklist and the School Report, these three documents are the only necessary ones to document progress in the SSE process.

The School Improvement Plan is a short two or three page document which should include the following:

- A list of your school's strengths
- A list of the areas in need of improvement
- The targets agreed on
- The actions necessary to meet the targets
- The people responsible
- The timeframe for action
- The success criteria
- Review Dates



Step 1: Listing the School's Strengths

An example of a simple approach to this is the following:

After the SSE process has been explained to the entire staff with input from the Inspectorate, explain to the staff that the first step will be a general look at the school, before focusing on a specific curricular area. Get the entire staff, including all teaching and support staff, to answer the following on a questionnaire:

- What things are going well in the school/ are in the best interest of our students?
- What are our successes/achievements that we are proud of?
- What makes life easier for me as a teacher/support staff member?
- What makes our school special and unique?

These questions may be answered individually or used as the basis of your thoughts on your school.

This questionnaire or a similar one devised to reflect your own individual school situation focuses everyone on what is good about their school, what makes it a good place to work and why they are happy to be members of the staff.

During this process, it is quite likely that members of staff, SNAs, the secretary, caretaker and cleaner, teachers of different classes, support teachers in resource, learning support and language teachers who have strengths in specific areas, teachers who provide after-school support, teachers with posts of responsibility and those in senior management positions, will receive compliments.

The following is a snap shot of one school's variety of answers in this area:

- Good channels of communication between staff, pupils and parents
- Staff are very supportive of each other
- Issues are dealt with in an effective manner
- Policies are well addressed
- Continued positive reinforcement of pupils and teachers alike
- Achievements are always applauded
- Everyone is involved in decision making
- The warm relationships between the teachers and the pupils make this school special
- The children are generally very happy.
- The support from colleagues makes my job a lot easier
- I enjoy the camaraderie and the banter
- The dedication of the staff and the concern they have for the children is something we should be all proud of
- A great team spirit
- The school is very well supplied with teaching resources
- The staff are just brilliant
- We have a lovely, comfortable building
- We have a caring atmosphere and a hard -working, dedicated staff
- The support from the principal and colleagues makes my life easier
- The co-operative staff and the friendliness makes me glad I work in this school
- We have a very friendly and caring environment with a lovely atmosphere
- The children are happy and are very well cared for in a safe environment
- It is important that the children see how well we get on and to see humour amongst ourselves. It makes us seem more approachable to them There are great opportunities for the children to participate in a good variety of activities
- The children are valued and are made to feel special
- The parents are happy and appreciative
- The children love school and are very supportive of their teachers
- Endless chocolate biscuits and treats at 11-00am!
- Consistency throughout the school with regard to academic areas and the Code of Behaviour

- People are very caring of others going through a difficult time
- Working with others means you never feel isolated
- It is a very welcoming school for visitors and new comers

Step 2: Listing of the Challenges



The next step is to have a look at what is not going so well in the school. Once again, get the entire staff to list the following:

- What are the things that are not going well in the school and not in the best interests of the children?
- What are the things that are very time consuming?
- What worries or stresses me?
- What are the areas that need to be addressed?
- What are the areas that are dangerous from a Health and Safety point of view?

These questions may be answered individually or used as the basis of your thoughts on your school

The following is a snapshot of some of the challenges one school had to deal with:

- ❖ Falling standards worry me. Even though everyone is working so hard, why is this still happening?
- ❖ The school playground, particularly the backyard, is extremely dangerous, with too many loose stones
- ❖ Lack of respect for staff members particularly from 6th class girls
- ❖ Lack of enthusiasm, drive and pride in their work
- ❖ Children's inability to listen and follow instructions. I'm forever repeating myself
- ❖ The staffroom at lunch time is so busy and warm
- ❖ Behaviour in the senior yard, particularly at lining up time is very difficult
- ❖ Differentiation especially for maths and english is very difficult and I feel I don't get to teach each group properly
- ❖ Negative attitude towards change
- ❖ Teachers not picking up their classes promptly after breaks
- ❖ Too many work experience students
- ❖ Too many interruptions during class time
- ❖ I am concerned about stress levels and general morale amongst staff
- ❖ Stressful staffroom - over crowded

- ❖ The 'blurring' of roles within the school - those of teachers, SNA's, 'helpers' etc worries me. I feel it erodes our professionalism and only serves to confuse the children
- ❖ Possibility of time to review as a group the progress of the Plean Scoile

Beginning in this way will help focus staff members on the challenges of the school as collective challenges that will benefit from being discussed, listed, targeted and worked on with the staff as a whole.

Step 3: Agreeing the Targets

The school now needs to make a decision on whether there should be a focus on literacy or numeracy. This decision will be made after collaborative discussion, which will take into account the work which has been achieved recently in the school.

Numeracy starting point

This is where the robust evidence must be used. What proof do we have to justify the emphasis on numeracy for example?



This evidence could be something like the following:

A. We examined our standardised maths test results and determined the following:

- We are 8% higher than the national norm in sTen 1-3
- We are 5% higher than the national norm in sTens 4-6
- In sTen 7, we have 6% less students than the national norm
- In sTen 8-10, we have 10% more students than the national norm

B. Look more closely at a cross section of the tests eg 3rd and 4th class or a random selection of tests from all class levels.

How are the students performing in each strand of the maths curriculum? Perhaps begin with computation only? Below average scores here could indicate a need for an action plan on tables and mental maths.

C. What other SSE tools will the school choose to reinforce this evidence?

- Checklists
- Questionnaires

- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Reflection Sheets
- Collaborative Review

One or two of these assessment tools is sufficient along with the analysis of standardised tests. These assessment tools serve the purpose of gathering information to explain the standardised test results and provide qualitative as well as quantitative data.

Step 4: The Targets

- Reduce the 8% in sTen 1-3 to 6% in Year 1, 5% in Year 2 and 4% in Year 3
- Reduce the 5% in sten 4-6 to 3% in Year 1, 1% in Year 2 and to 2% lower than the national norm in Year 3
- Increase the 6% in sTen 7 to 8% in Year 1, 10% in Year 2 and to 2% above the national norm in Year 3
- Increase the 10% in sTen 8-10 to 12%, 14% in Year 2 and 15% in Year 3

Step 5: The Action Plan

- Continuous speed tests in tables (oral and written)
- Begin with patterns and rhymes
- Move onto 'pure tables' chanted as a class
- Move onto mixing the tables
- Aim at reducing the time
- Accept that some children need to use their hands or other concrete materials but these children must also be showing signs of progress
- Revise the language of comprehension together as a staff
- Inform parents and the BoM.

Step 6: The People Responsible

- Distribution of the decisions from meetings Deputy Principal
- Collation and presentation of test results Maths/Special Needs Co-ordinator
- The Action Plan Every teacher and SNA
- Overview of the process Principal

Step 7: The Timeframe

The Action Plan will continue until standardised testing next year.

Step 8: Success Criteria

- Teacher feedback
- Support staff feedback
- Parental feedback
- Students' work in the classrooms
- Results of the next round of standardised testing

Step 9: Review

A review of the above 'Action Plan' will take place at each staff meeting with staff and parental observations will be recorded. At the meetings, staff members will have the opportunity to discuss the challenges and successes of the action plan and to add to or amend the actual plan if thought necessary.

Literacy Starting Point

Step 3: Agreeing the Targets

This evidence could be something like the following:

A. We examined our standardised English test results and determined the following:

- We are 8% higher than the national norm in sTen 1-3
- We are 3% higher than the national norm in sTens 4-6
- In sTen 7, we have 5% less students than the national norm
- In sTen 8-10, we have 4% less students than the national norm

B. Look more closely at a cross section of the tests eg 3rd and 4th class or a random selection of tests from all class levels.

How are the students performing in each strand of the English curriculum?

The overall scores indicate the need for work on comprehension, spellings and reading

fluency. The staff decides that their first two focus areas will be spellings and comprehension.

C. What other SSE tools will the school choose to reinforce this evidence?

- Checklists
- Questionnaires
- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Reflection Sheets
- Collaborative Review

One or two of these assessment tools is sufficient along with the analysis of standardised tests. These assessment tools serve the purpose of gathering information to explain the standardised test results and provide qualitative as well as quantitative data.

Step 4: The Targets

- Reduce the 8% in sTen 1-3 to 6% in Year 1, 5% in Year 2 and 4% in Year 3
- Reduce the 3% in sten 4-6 to 2% in Year 1, 1% in Year 2 and to be equal to the national norm in Year 3
- Increase the 5% in sTen 7 to 3% in Year 1, to equal the national norm in Year 2 and to 2% above the national norm in Year 3
- Increase the 4% in sTen 8-10 to equal the national norm in Year1, to be 2% above it in Year 2 and 4% above it in Year 3

Step 5: The Action Plan

- Take three comprehension strategies – predicting, visualisation and determining importance
- Each teacher and support teacher teaches these strategies from April to June of this year. The continuation of the teaching of these strategies will depend on the review schedule
- Suitable texts and resources will be listed and supplied
- All members of staff will receive in-service on comprehension strategies
- This approach to comprehension is loosely based on 'Building Bridges of Understanding' by Martin Gleeson



- Inform parents and the BoM
- One single spelling workbook will be used throughout the school
- The teaching of spellings:
 - By the look, say, cover, write check method for homework and extra work at home
 - Each spelling is written out five times at home to consolidate its learning
 - Sounding out of each spelling to be learned
 - Examining of letter patterns and the listing of other similar words
 - The partition of words- breaking up the sounds
 - Finding smaller words in the word
 - The inclusion of the phonics lesson for that week, e.g. silent letters and recent phonics work
- An information meeting will be held for parents to explain the comprehension strategies and the teaching spelling methodologies so that they can be practised at home
- Two months will be set aside from the spelling workbooks list to do high and low frequency words. All classes will complete this during the same two month period.

Step 6: The People Responsible

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| • Distribution of the decisions from meetings | Deputy Principal |
| • Collation and presentation of test results | English/Special Needs
Co-ordinator |
| • The Action Plan | Every teacher and SNA |
| • Overview of the process | Principal |

(For the next two years, the In-School Management team have decided that each person with a Post of Responsibility, is leaving aside one aspect of their post to take on an aspect of literacy). Only a suggestion!

Step 7: The Timeframe

The Action Plan will continue until standardised testing next year.

Step 8: Success Criteria

- Teacher feedback
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Step 9: Review

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School Improvement Plan

Summary of Main Strengths	General Strengths: Relationships in the school, collegiality, the pastoral care of the children, the relationship with parents, support in times of strife, pride in the educational history of the school, the rich heritage passed on by former parents, teachers principals and boards of managements, the beautiful building, the comfortable interiors, the many successes and achievements of our students, the atmosphere of positivity and the access to resources (Also, list the work just completed in literacy or numeracy, the improvement this work has caused, and other recent school achievements and successes.)
Summary of Main Areas Requiring Improvement	List Health and Safety issues, organisational issues and finally, curriculum issues. e.g. Computation in Maths e.g. Comprehension and Spellings
Improvement Targets	List as above for either literacy or numeracy This section could also include a brief explanation of how any Health and Safety or organisational difficulties were addressed. The main emphasis here however, is on the improvement targets in literacy or numeracy

Required Actions	List the elements of the Action Plans as above for either literacy or numeracy
Persons Responsible	List as above for either literacy or numeracy
Timeframe for Action	As above
Success Criteria	As above
Review Dates	As above

It is worth considering a third area to examine in Year 3. A good idea is to match the area to where the school is at. Some examples are:

- ❖ Choosing PE because the school is involved with the Active Flag initiative
- ❖ Choosing Science because the school is involved in the Green Schools initiative
- ❖ Choosing Visual Arts because the school wants to work on the guidelines of the Arts in Education Charter

Frequently Asked Questions:



❖ **When does my school have to have an improvement plan in place?**

The DES has given schools until June 2014 to have an improvement plan in place. This has been deferred for one year to ensure access to in-service from the Inspectorate and to give schools the opportunity to gradually adjust to the SSE process. However, the original date for the Improvement Plan was June 2013, so best advice is to produce the plan as soon as you are ready to do so, but definitely by June 2014.

❖ **How long does the plan have to be?**

It is recommended that the plan is no longer than two or three pages and is only a summary of the work being achieved in the school.

❖ **How long is the plan for?**

The plan is supposed to be a three year plan, with the first year focusing on either literacy or numeracy, the second year carrying on the work of the first year and focussing on the area that was not targeted in year 1, i.e. either literacy or numeracy and the third year adding in a third area. The work will continue easily if the action plan is worked on by everyone and is accepted as best practice in the teaching and learning of a particular area, so as not to appear as extra work from year to year.

❖ **How can I convince my staff of the advantages of this plan?**

Focus on the benefit of having three years of work evident on two or three pages, the

advantage of having the entire staff working collaboratively to achieve improvement in teaching and learning, the knowledge that everyone knows what has been achieved so far and what needs to be achieved in the future and the celebrating of successes alongside a collaborative approach to challenges.

❖ **Can I adjust my plan as we meet unexpected challenges?**

The plan can always be adjusted to meet the changing needs of the school, but an interesting approach is to keep the original plan and document why changes had to be made. This causes powerful learning opportunities.

❖ **How should I distribute the School Improvement Plan?**

Every teacher and support staff member should have a copy of the plan. It is good practice to share the content of the plan with the Board of Management. A shorter school report should then be decided on by the staff in consultation with the Board of Management to distribute to the wider school community. The School Improvement Plan should be available to parents, but does not have to be distributed to them.

Useful Resources Available

This document is interactive, by clicking the name of the resources will bring you directly the resource which is available online.

- **www.ippn.ie - Supports**
 - [School Improvement Report](#)
 - [Maths – Problem-Solving Resources](#)
 - [School Self-evaluation: Oral Language Questionnaire](#)

- **Department of Education & Skills - Publications**
 - [School Self-Evaluation, Guidelines for Primary Schools \(2012\)](#)
 - [An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools \(2012\)](#)
 - [Arts in Education Charter, \(2013\) Department of Education and Skills and Department of Arts, Heritage agus Gaeltachta \(2013\)](#)

- **Department of Education & Skills - Circulars**
 - [Circular 56/2011 - Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy](#)
 - [Circular 39/2012 - Implementation of School Self Evaluation-Primary](#)

- **Other Websites**
 - [Professional Development Services for Teachers](#)
 - [Department of Education & Skills](#)
 - [School Self Evaluation](#)