

School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Primary Schools

Inspectorate Guidelines for Schools



PROMOTING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce these *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Primary Schools*. I know that teachers must be at the heart of any effort to improve learning for students and these Guidelines are designed to support teachers, principals and staff as they collaborate to ensure better outcomes for the young people in their schools.

These Guidelines bring best national and international practice into Irish schools. Experience and research in Ireland and in many countries show us that some of the most beneficial changes in schools occur when the principal and teachers collaborate in a focussed way to improve how they teach and assess pupils' learning. By asking questions of themselves about how teaching takes place and how well pupils are learning, teachers can readily identify what needs to change within the school to get better outcomes for their pupils.

School self-evaluation is simply a structure to enable teachers, principals and the management of schools to have that focussed conversation about teaching and learning. School self-evaluation seeks to build the capacity of teachers and schools to improve – the approaches and tools in these *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines* are simply ways to support that capacity building in schools.

For many teachers and schools, school self-evaluation is not new. Teachers and boards of management have used the school development planning process over a number of years to identify what is working well and what might need to be improved in their schools. School self-evaluation builds on this solid foundation. What's different about school self-evaluation is the emphasis it places on using solid evidence to inform the discussions that teachers have about teaching and learning. As teachers discuss the work of the school in self-evaluation and ask "*How good is teaching in this school?*" they will also ask "*How do we know?*" Collecting the information to answer these questions will be an opportunity to use not only existing information in the school but also to seek the views of parents and students. When the self-evaluation conversation is really successful, school staffs will move on naturally to discuss "*What do we need to do now to improve?*" and they will work collaboratively to change their practice and improve the learning experience for students. This sort of collaboration is invigorating and professionally rewarding as teachers come to see how much it can support them in their work with students.

School self-evaluation also empowers schools to tell their own story. Each school's context and work are unique. School self-evaluation enables schools to affirm and celebrate what they are doing well, to decide on changes *they* would like to make based on the evidence they have gathered, and to report this to their school communities. In this way, school self-evaluation can bring schools and their communities closer together. It enables the school to share information about the standards of learning that students achieve in all aspects of their learning – academic, cultural, social and personal – in a meaningful way.

Introducing school self-evaluation to complement the external inspections that already take place is a major new innovation in the Irish school system. I am conscious that such change will take time to become fully established and that teachers, principals and others involved will need to be supported. These Guidelines are an important element of a range of supports developed by my Department's Inspectorate in collaboration with teachers, principals, parents, members of boards of management, patron and management organisations, teacher unions and other bodies such as the Equality Authority, the Ombudsman for Children and the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network. I want to thank all involved in this collaboration and to wish all involved in using these Guidelines in schools every success.

Ruairí Quinn, TD
Minister for Education and Skills
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Context

School self-evaluation (SSE) empowers a school community to affirm good practice, to identify areas that merit improvement and to decide on actions that should be taken to bring about improvements in those areas. It gives teachers and schools the opportunity to tell their own story. SSE enriches the learning and the teaching experience for the benefit of all concerned. SSE is primarily about schools taking ownership of their own development and improvement.

Schools are already familiar with many elements of school self-evaluation through engagement in the school development planning process. The Inspectorate publication of the self-evaluation framework, *Looking at Our School; An aid to self-evaluation in primary schools* in 2003, has assisted school communities in reviewing and evaluating the work of their school.

The Programme for Government, 2011 sets out specific targets in relation to self-evaluation and school improvement. Similarly, the National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* requires "...all schools to engage in robust self-evaluation"

1.2 The purpose of these guidelines

These *Guidelines* have been prepared by the Inspectorate, with the assistance of schools and the education partners, to provide practical support to schools in undertaking school self-evaluation. This publication is intended to support schools as they evaluate **teaching and learning**. Over time the guidelines will be further developed to support schools as they evaluate other key dimensions of school provision. Guidelines focusing on three key **dimensions** of school provision will be developed as follows:

Dimension A: Teaching and learning

Dimension B: Management and leadership

Dimension C: Support for pupils

The focus of school self-evaluation in this publication is **Dimension A: Teaching and learning**.

These *Guidelines* offer a framework and structure for the evaluation of teaching and learning and will assist schools to:

- Gather the information needed to enable them to identify accurately what is working well in teaching and learning and where improvement is needed
- Report on their school self-evaluation processes
- Develop school improvement plans.

By reflecting on what teachers teach and how they teach it, and on what pupils learn and how they learn, school management and teachers will become aware that certain aspects of the education provided are effective and that improvement is needed in others.

The *Guidelines* provide practical suggestions as to how schools might make judgements about practice and about how well their pupils are doing. They include evaluation criteria to guide schools in making quality judgements about their work and sample school self-evaluation tools to assist in the gathering of evidence.

1.3 Who are the Guidelines for?

The *Guidelines* are:

- For **all** those who have responsibility for ensuring that our schools provide quality education for pupils
- For **trustees and patron bodies** who may wish to ensure that the school self-evaluation process reflects the school's ethos and includes suitable consultation with the entire school community
- For **boards of management, principals, deputy principals and teachers** to enable them to use appropriate information to affirm good practice and to have a clear focus on the specific areas that need to be targeted for improvement or development
- Intended to support, in a practical way, the inclusion of the voice of **pupils and parents** in school self-evaluation processes.

1.4 Using the Guidelines

The *Guidelines* are intended to help schools in the school self-evaluation process. Regardless of the stage a school is at in terms of school development planning and school review, the *Guidelines* can be used: to provide direction for reflection on teaching and learning practices; to inform professional dialogue; to affirm what is working well; and to decide on priorities for action. Each school will decide where best to start. The content and structure of the *Guidelines* are outlined in section 1.5.

1.5 The content and structure of the Guidelines

Chapter 2, *The school self-evaluation process*, highlights school self-evaluation as a process and illustrates a step-by-step approach to getting school self-evaluation started.

Chapter 3, *A school self-evaluation quality framework: teaching and learning*, presents a framework outlining themes and sub-themes to enable schools to evaluate teaching and learning in a systematic and coherent way.

Chapter 4, *Evaluation criteria and quality statements*, outlines a set of standards to assist schools in making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.

Chapter 5, *Evaluation approaches and methods*, describes a range of evaluation approaches and methods that schools can use to gather the evidence necessary for school self-evaluation.

Chapter 6, *The school self-evaluation report and school improvement plan*, provides guidance to schools about reporting on their self-evaluation and a framework to assist in developing a school improvement plan.

Appendix, *Sample school self-evaluation tools*, offers a range of sample tools that schools may use for the SSE process.

Chapter 2

The school self-evaluation process

This chapter highlights school self-evaluation as a process and illustrates a step-by-step approach to getting the process started.

2.1 What is school self-evaluation?

School self-evaluation is a collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal school review. During school self-evaluation the principal, deputy principal and teachers, under the direction of the board of management and the patron and in consultation with parents and pupils, engage in reflective enquiry on the work of the school. When engaging in school self-evaluation, schools reflect on their aims, consider criteria for success within the school's context and ethos, and determine appropriate methods for judging the quality of educational provision in the school. It is an evidence-based approach which involves gathering evidence from a range of sources and making judgements with a view to bringing about improvements in pupils' learning. SSE requires a school to address the following key questions with regard to an aspect or aspects of its work:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know? What evidence do we have?
- How can we find out more?
- What are our strengths?
- What are our areas for improvement? How can we improve?

The key principles of school self-evaluation are outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 PRINCIPLES OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

Collaborative, inclusive	Effective school self-evaluation involves principals, deputy principals, teachers and boards working together in a climate of trust and respect, in consultation with parents and pupils, to bring about school improvement.
Leadership	Effective school self-evaluation requires effective leadership.
Reflective	Effective school self-evaluation involves schools thinking critically about the aims and key priorities of the school and what needs to be done to bring about improvements in their pupils' learning.
Evidence based	Decisions taken during effective school self-evaluation are based on sound, reliable and specific information or evidence.
Flexible	Flexibility, creativity and a willingness to rethink, revise and redesign ways of doing things on the part of teachers, principals, deputy principals and school management are features of effective school self-evaluation.
Continual, ongoing	Each step of effective school self-evaluation is part of an ongoing cycle focused on improving the work of the school and the learning of the pupils. Evaluation findings inform school improvement plans and strategies for improvement, the impact and effect of which are in turn evaluated.
Improves teaching	Effective school self-evaluation is focused on making a positive, measurable and significant difference to the quality of teaching in the school.
Improves pupils' learning	Effective school self-evaluation is focused on making a positive, measurable and significant difference to the learning of the pupils and the work of the school.
Communication	Effective school self-evaluation provides the school with a mechanism to engage in open and transparent communication with the entire school community.

2.2 Whole-school evaluation and school self-evaluation

There is a clear link between external evaluation and school self-evaluation. During whole-school evaluation (WSE), inspectors evaluate and report on the effectiveness of each school's self-evaluation processes. As schools engage in robust school self-evaluation processes that are informed by evidence-based judgements, the approach to external evaluation will change. External evaluation processes such as WSE will take increased account of the self-evaluation engaged in by schools.

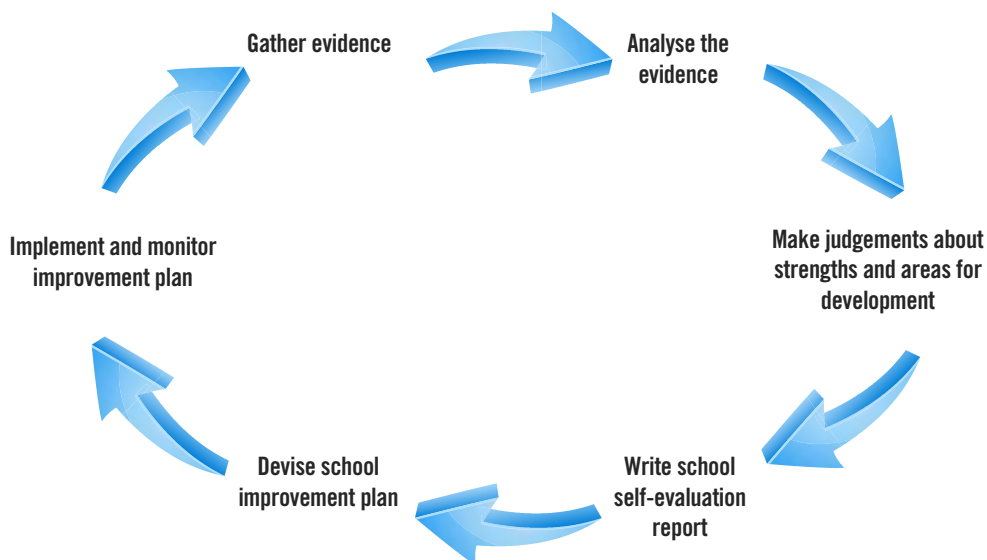
2.3 School self-evaluation and school development planning

School self-evaluation is grounded in the school development planning process. The school development planning process entails a cycle consisting of review, planning, implementation and evaluation. School self-evaluation reframes the school development planning cycle. It gives greater focus to gathering evidence, analysing evidence and judging quality. What distinguishes school self-evaluation from school development planning is the emphasis that school self-evaluation places on making evidence-based evaluative judgements and on the link between those evaluative judgements and the school's actions for improvement. The actions for improvement are outlined in a school improvement plan which becomes part of the developmental section of the overall school plan.

2.4 The school self-evaluation process

School self-evaluation builds on the school development planning process. The framework below (Figure 2.1) highlights a six-step school self-evaluation process. The process is iterative in that it facilitates repeated cycles of analysis or a return to a previous stage of the cycle as required.

Figure 2.1: THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS



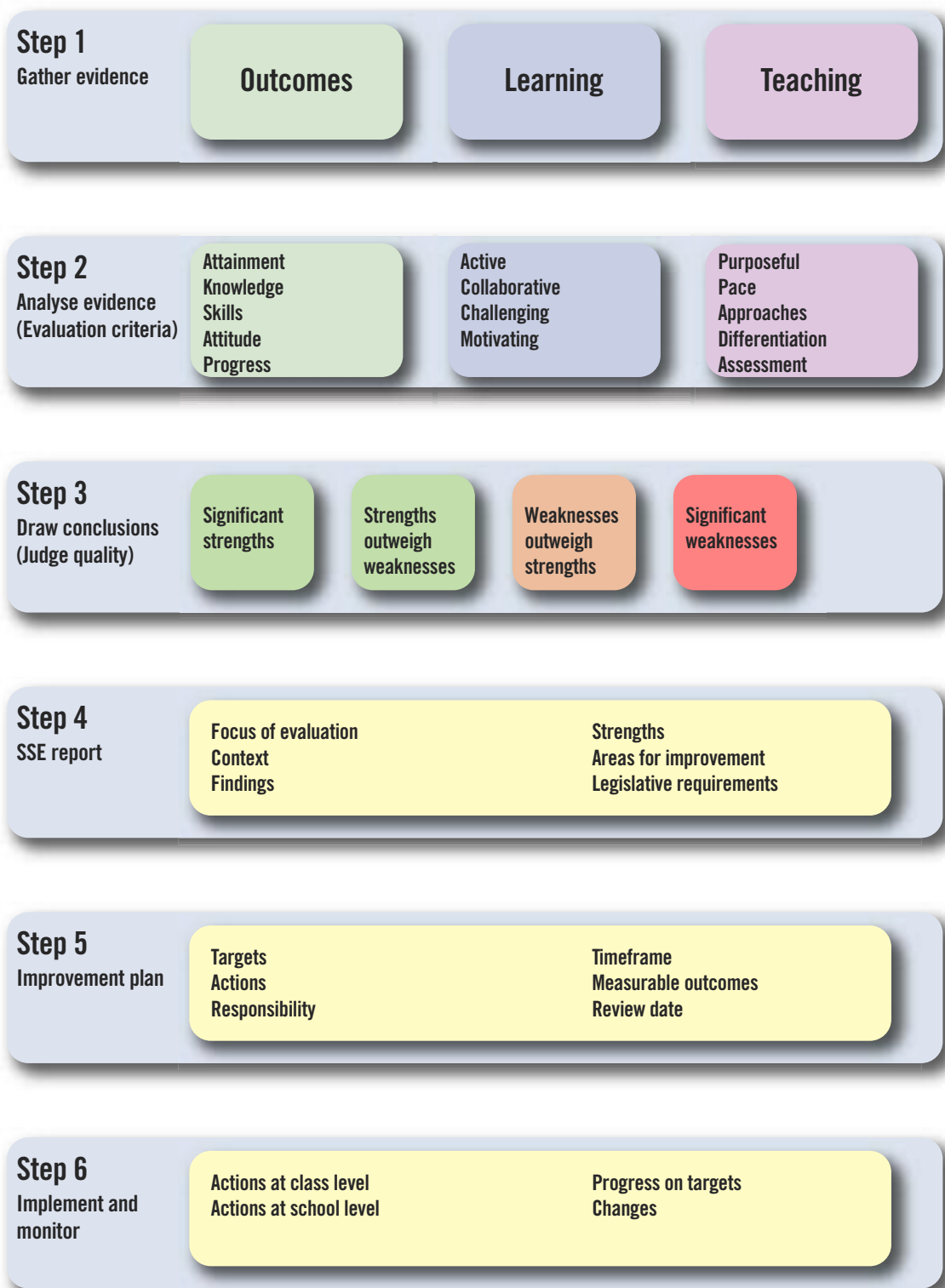
2.5 Key steps in the SSE process

The school self-evaluation process is best described as a series of six steps. Schools and teachers will already be familiar with many of these steps from their experience of school development planning (SDP).

The first three steps outline the review element of the SDP process. These important steps ensure that conclusions about strengths and areas for improvement are based on evidence from a range of relevant sources. The next steps ensure that schools retain a record of the evaluation and describe the actions for improvement. The final step, implement and monitor, takes place over a three-year period.

The six-step process is outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS



Step 1: Gathering evidence

Step 1 is the gathering evidence phase. Typically, information should be gathered from a number of sources. The type of information or evidence that needs to be gathered will depend on the focus of the school's evaluation. It may include both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data relates to data that can be expressed numerically or statistically and qualitative data relates to data arising from people's views or opinions. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be gathered from a range of sources including teachers, pupils, parents, management, classrooms and other learning settings in the school.

It is important to guard against gathering too much information.

Schools already gather data for a variety of purposes and much of this will prove beneficial in the SSE process. Teachers' views and their records (assessment data, standardised test results) are useful examples of evidence. It is also important to ensure that the views of others form part of the evidence base. The following list will help schools to decide which sources of evidence are most valuable to the aspects of practice being evaluated.

Possible sources of information for evaluating teaching and learning:

- Assessment records and data – formative and summative
- Learner and parent surveys (pupil/parent voice)
- Focus-group discussion (teachers, board, pupils, parents)
- Interviews (teachers, board, pupils, parents)
- Individual teacher reflection
- Whole-school reflection
- Peer dialogue/sharing experience
- Team planning and team teaching
- Professional collaborative review.

In the early stages of SSE, schools may decide to analyse assessment data and records of pupil progress as a starting point. They should also gather information from pupils 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, will be 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.

Step 2: Analyse your evidence

When evidence has been gathered, schools will need to decide how to record and analyse the information. Step 2 involves analysing the information gathered, and in light of the school's context, benchmarking this against standards for the aspect(s) of practice being evaluated. **Evaluation criteria** are available in Chapter 4 for this purpose.

Example

When a school evaluates the quality of its provision in the area of literacy, pupil outcomes are an obvious place to start. Teachers might:

- Check knowledge and skills
 - Oral (listening and speaking)
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Application of knowledge and skills

- Check attainment levels
 - Value added (improvement or maintenance of standards)
 - Specific criteria (checklists)
 - National norms (standardised tests results)
 - In-school trends

- Check pupil disposition
 - Motivation
 - Attitudes
 - Engagement in learning

- Use evaluation criteria and literacy checklist to help identify strengths and areas for development.

Step 3: Draw conclusions

Step 3 is about drawing conclusions based on the analysed data. Schools should determine, affirm and celebrate the strengths they identify in the aspects of practice being evaluated. They should also acknowledge the areas that should be prioritised for improvement. In order to be as objective as possible they should judge the quality using the **quality statements** in Chapter 4 as a set of standards, taking due cognisance of the school's context. The quality statements illustrate the highest level of practice. Schools may have considerable strengths without reaching this level.

Example

Judging attainment levels, progress or outcomes of learning for pupils can require comparisons such as the following to be made:

- What progress have our senior infant pupils made with regard to phonological awareness since enrolling in the school?
- How does our pupils' attainment in literacy compare with national norms?
- How does our pupils' attainment in numeracy compare with national norms?
- How do our pupils' achievements in reading compare with their achievements over the last five years?
- What progress have the senior pupils made in developing problem-solving skills over the past year?
- What progress has been made in the past year in developing pupils' ability to work scientifically?
- What progress has been made throughout the school in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the elements of Art and their ability to respond to Art?

Step 4: Complete the self-evaluation report

Step 4 ensures that schools keep a record of their self-evaluation and particularly of the findings. The school self-evaluation report provides a basis for discussion and reflection amongst teachers, management and others in relation to the work of the school. It may be used by boards of management as an important information source in reporting to parents on the work of the school. It will provide a basis upon which school improvement targets can be developed and a school improvement plan agreed.

The school self-evaluation report should be no more than 2/3 pages in length. It should record:

- Aspects of practice chosen for self-evaluation
- A brief account of the school context
- The findings
- Progression made on previous improvement targets
- A summary of strengths (affirm and celebrate)
- A summary of areas requiring improvement
- Legislative and regulatory requirements to be addressed.

Schools should provide a **summary report** to the whole school community. Such a report will be very short and will provide details of the findings with regard to the strengths identified and the areas the school intends to prioritise for improvement.

Step 5: Develop a school improvement plan

School self-evaluation should result in action. The setting of specific targets is the starting point of

action for improvement. 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.

In Step 5, schools will devise a school improvement plan outlining the actions to be implemented over a three-year period. A template for this purpose is provided in Chapter 6.

The plan will contain:

- A summary of strengths and areas for improvement
- Targets for improvement with a focus on learner outcomes
- Actions required to achieve the targets
- Reference to those who are responsible for undertaking actions
- A statement of how schools will check if the targets have been achieved
- A timeframe for the achievement of the targets.

The school improvement plan should be no more than one/two pages long. A **short summary** of the improvement plan should be provided to the whole school community.

Each school improvement plan becomes part of the developmental section of the whole school plan.

Step 6: Implement and monitor

Step 6, the final step, is vital if the SSE process is to bring about improvement. 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 be aware of the actions to be implemented at individual teacher, class, or whole-school level. These actions should become part of the normal teaching and learning process.

Actions must be monitored. 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 the principal, deputy principal and 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.

Chapter 3

**A school self-evaluation quality framework:
teaching and learning**

This chapter presents a school self-evaluation quality framework for teaching and learning. The framework outlines themes and sub-themes to enable schools to evaluate teaching and learning in a systematic and coherent way.

3.1 Teaching and learning evaluation themes

School self-evaluation is about maintaining high standards and improving the learning experiences and educational outcomes for the pupils in our schools. It is important that in developing their school self-evaluation processes, schools focus in the first instance on the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms and in other learning settings in the school. It is also important for a school to adopt a planned approach to self-evaluation in order to obtain relevant and reliable information on an ongoing basis that can be used to inform school improvement targets. Clarity around what is to be evaluated, how it is to be evaluated, and when and by whom it is to be evaluated is required. Schools should be aware of how the aspect of practice they are evaluating fits within a broad teaching and learning framework.

To assist schools in this regard, a quality framework for evaluating teaching and learning is provided. According to the framework, teaching and learning are viewed from the following three distinct, although nonetheless interrelated and sometimes overlapping, **themes**:

- 1 The quality of learner outcomes
- 2 The quality of pupils' learning experiences
- 3 The quality of teachers' practice

Figure 3.1 TEACHING AND LEARNING THEMES



3.2 Teaching and learning evaluation sub-themes

Under each of the evaluation themes, a number of important evaluation **sub-themes** are identified.

1 The quality of learner outcomes

- **Attainment of curriculum objectives** relates to pupils' learning and achievements and their progress in learning across all areas of the curriculum, including literacy and numeracy.

2 The quality of pupils' learning experiences

- **Learning environment** relates to the quality of the physical setting in which teaching and learning takes place
- **Pupils' engagement in learning** relates to pupils' learning experiences in terms of the range and suitability of the curriculum approaches the pupils experience in the course of their learning
- **Learning to learn** relates to how pupils' learning skills are developed and how schools equip pupils with the tools and skills needed for learning now and into the future.

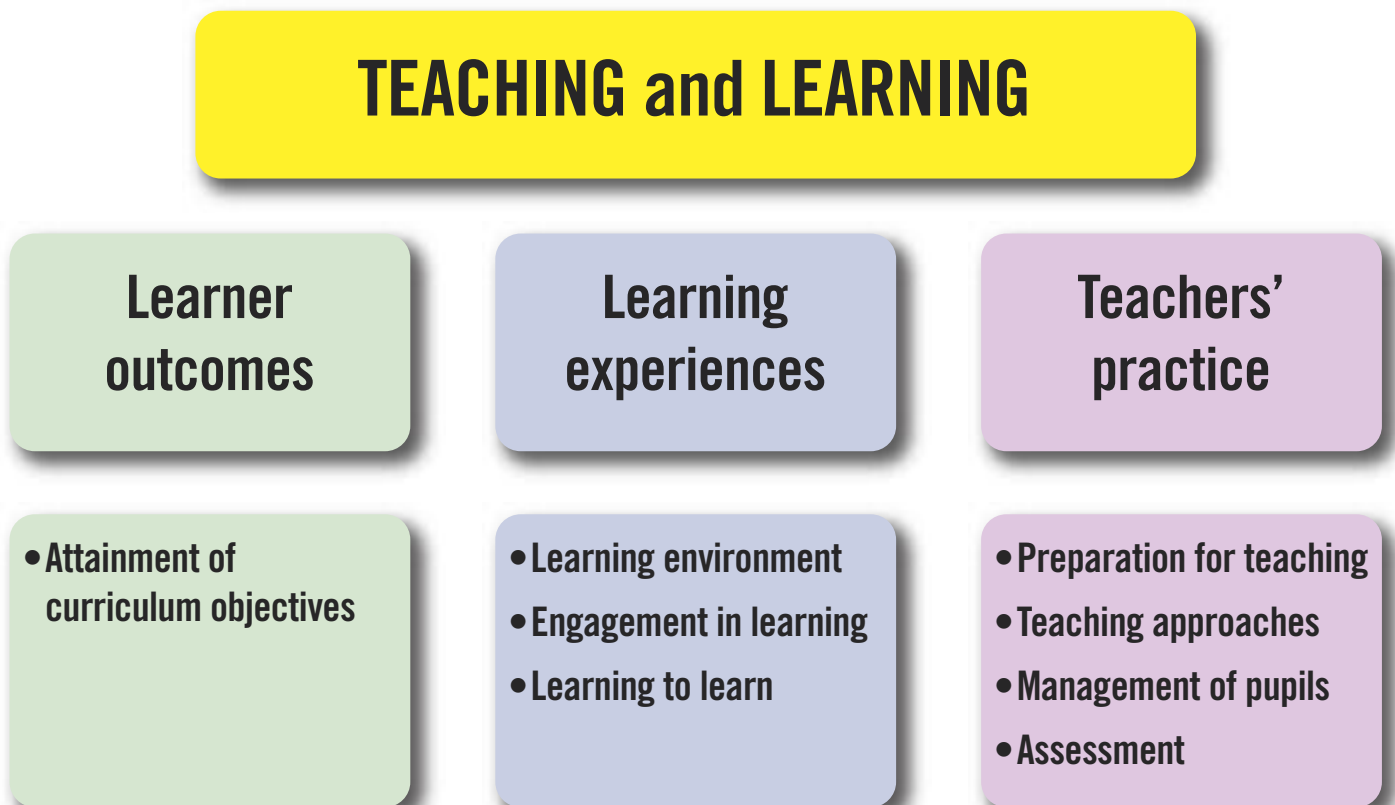
3 The quality of teachers' practice

- **Preparation for teaching** relates to how prepared teachers are for the delivery of the curriculum through the lessons they teach
- **Teaching approaches** relates to the effectiveness of the teaching approaches used in classrooms and in other learning settings in the school
- **Management of pupils** relates to the nature of teacher-pupil interactions and how pupils are managed and organised during learning activities
- **Assessment** relates to the effectiveness of the school's assessment policy and practices in terms of how they contribute to assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment of learning (AoL).

3.3 School self-evaluation quality framework: teaching and learning

The evaluation themes and sub-themes to which they relate are set out in the teaching and Learning Quality Framework in Figure 3.2. The framework highlights the links between learner outcomes and the teaching and learning processes that underpin the achievement of those outcomes.

Figure 3.2 THE TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY FRAMEWORK



3.4 Getting started: using the teaching and learning framework

While schools have different contexts and will be at different stages of development, there are some key aspects of practice that each school should consider as it starts to engage with the school self-evaluation process. By reflecting on the teaching and learning quality themes - learner outcomes, learning experiences and teachers' practice - schools will be able to quickly gauge the aspects of practice that are working well and those they might prioritise for improvement.

As school self-evaluation is a collaborative process, it is important that the focus of SSE each year is identified through a process of consultation. Answering the question ‘how well are we doing?’ is a good starting point for school self-evaluation. At the beginning of each year, teachers and management should reflect on the three evaluation themes, using professional knowledge and evidence already available in the school, such as teachers’ records of assessment and results of standardised tests. This will enable them to highlight the aspects of their practice that are working well and to identify aspects which require more detailed investigation.

An overview of good practice in the three evaluation themes (Figure 3.3) may be useful for general reflection on teaching and learning.

Figure 3.3 EVALUATION THEMES: AN OVERVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICE

Learner outcomes	Learning experiences	Teachers’ practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils’ overall attainment, with regard to knowledge, understanding and skills, has improved significantly in line with curriculum objectives; and expected outcomes have been achieved • Pupils enjoy learning and have developed appropriate attitudes as set out in the curriculum • Pupils can apply the literacy and numeracy skills necessary in each curriculum area • Pupils at risk of underachieving have made good progress • Pupils’ overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is improving or remains high and performance in literacy and numeracy compares favourably with national norms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning settings are safe, well maintained, visually stimulating and supportive of learning and of literacy and numeracy • Pupils have access to relevant resources, including ICT, to support learning • Pupils are enabled to engage actively in a range of suitably challenging, relevant and interesting learning opportunities • Pupils are given support as needed • Pupils are equipped with tools and skills for learning now and in the future • Pupils are involved in monitoring their own work and are taught to reflect on their learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons; expected learning outcomes including literacy and numeracy development, are clearly stated; and appropriate resources are in place • Expected learning outcomes are clearly communicated; lessons are suitably paced to enable progression in development of knowledge and skills • Teaching is focused, stimulating and relevant. All aspects of the curriculum, including literacy and numeracy, are thoroughly taught • All pupils are respected; high but realistic expectations are communicated; and efforts and achievements are affirmed • A range of assessment methods is used effectively to assess progress.

Following identification and agreement about the aspects of practice to be evaluated, schools should select the themes and sub-themes that require more investigation. It is suggested that schools start by looking at outcomes for pupils. The evaluation criteria for pupils' learning outcomes in Chapter 4 will serve as a useful benchmark in assisting schools to decide on the effectiveness of their practice. This will lead teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and of the learning experiences they provide for pupils. It will affirm good practice and inform the development of relevant and focused targets for improvement which will be a key part of a school's improvement plan.

Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People, requires schools to engage in robust self-evaluation from 2012-2013 and to put in place a three-year improvement plan which includes specific targets for the promotion and improvement of literacy and numeracy. For this reason, Schools are asked to start the school self-evaluation process by focusing on **either literacy or numeracy**. Schools might reflect on and analyse assessment data and standardised test results but will also seek the views of pupils and parents about attitudes to aspects of literacy or numeracy.

Schools will need to identify who will be responsible for the school self-evaluation process. Some elements of the process will take place within classrooms as part of the teaching and learning process. However, schools will need to decide how the overall process will be coordinated and how evidence will be gathered and analysed. They will also need to agree who will take responsibility for writing a concise SSE report, for developing a school improvement plan and for implementing the actions for improvement.

Chapter 4

Evaluation criteria and quality statements

When schools have gathered evidence and analysed the relevant information, they will wish to draw conclusions about their practice. To ensure that the judgements they are making are sound, evaluation criteria and quality statements are provided as benchmarks or standards.

4.1 Evaluation criteria

In subsequent pages, sample evaluation criteria related to each evaluation theme and sub-theme are provided to help schools develop their self-evaluation processes. The criteria delineate what quality means in specific aspects of each of the sub-themes and will help to guide schools in making judgements about pupils' achievement or aspects of teaching and learning. In addition, the criteria will provide management, teachers and other education partners with real clarity about what is important and a language for discussing what is working well and what needs to be improved. It is suggested that schools use the quality framework with themes, sub-themes and related criteria to organise their evaluation activities. This will allow schools to undertake an in-depth enquiry into teaching and learning, and literacy and numeracy in a systematic and coherent way.

Schools will not focus on all evaluation sub-themes when engaging in self-evaluation. Rather they should:

- Select an aspect of practice on which to focus, for example literacy or numeracy or another curriculum area
- Examine pupil outcomes in that area
- Reflect on the teaching and the learning experiences that led to the outcomes.

4.2 Quality statements

It is important, when engaging in self-evaluation, that schools arrive at sound and realistic evaluative judgements about the quality of the education they provide. Having gathered all the necessary evidence, the school will need to draw conclusions about the quality of learner outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning practices so that areas for improvement can be identified. An important requirement for arriving at sound and realistic evaluative judgements is the consistent use of valid benchmarks against which to judge quality.

To assist schools in this regard, exemplar quality statements for each evaluation sub-theme are presented alongside the evaluation criteria. The quality statements are exemplars which describe schools with significant strengths in the context of each theme. Schools can use these statements as a benchmark against which to judge their own performance and to determine their strengths and if there are aspects of their work that need to be improved or developed.

The quality statements describe schools that have significant strengths. While it is desirable that schools aspire to this level, many schools will have a range of strengths and will have attained an acceptable standard without reaching this level.

The evidence-based findings of schools in relation to their strengths and the areas in which improvements are required will inform both the school self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan.

4.3 Using evaluation criteria and quality statements

The evaluation criteria are presented in bullet point form to enable schools to check what is important and what quality means in each of the sub-themes. The quality statements are presented in narrative form and describe a school that has reached a high standard in each sub-theme. They are presented side-by-side so that schools can use either or both when examining their own practice and making judgements about the quality of their performance.

The evaluation criteria and the quality statements will assist schools in making judgements. Based on the information or evidence gathered, schools should indicate, in the context of each evaluation sub-theme, whether:

- There are significant strengths
- Strengths outweigh weaknesses
- Weaknesses outweigh strengths
- There are significant weaknesses.

4.4 Evaluation criteria and quality statements

Teaching and learning	
THEME 1	Learner outcomes
SUB-THEME 1.1	Attainment of curriculum objectives in each curriculum area
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Knowledge, understanding and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding for the curriculum area reflect the learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for each class level The pupils use their knowledge and skills in the curriculum area competently and confidently. They are able to apply their knowledge and skills independently in a variety of contexts The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the curriculum area are developing in a progressive way as the pupils move from class level to class level
Attitudes and dispositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pupils have developed the appropriate attitudes and dispositions set out in the curriculum for their class level Pupils enjoy their learning of the curriculum area and are motivated to learn
Literacy and numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils competently and confidently use and apply the literacy and numeracy skills that are necessary to develop their learning in each curriculum area
Attainment trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall attainment of the pupils with regard to the curriculum area is improving or remains at a high standard in accordance with the learning outcomes¹ of the Primary School Curriculum Pupils at risk of underachieving are attaining well, in accordance with their ability, and make very good progress from their prior levels of achievement
School improvement plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learning targets² set out in the school improvement plan for the curriculum area have been achieved.

¹ Note that the general curriculum objectives of the Primary School Curriculum articulate learning outcomes and learning experiences for all areas of the curriculum. The content objectives encompass the learning experiences and the activities that enable the child to acquire and develop knowledge and understandings that the strands and strand units address within each curricular area.

² Note that learning targets must be SMART

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON ATTAINMENT OF CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

A school with significant strengths

The overall attainment of the pupils with regard to the curriculum area is improving or remains at a high standard in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Primary School Curriculum. Pupils at risk of underachieving are attaining well and make very good progress.

The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding for the curriculum area reflect the learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for each class level. Pupils are able to apply the knowledge and skills associated with the curriculum area independently in a variety of contexts.

The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the curriculum area are developing in a progressive way as they move from class level to class level. The learning targets set out in the school improvement plan for the curriculum area have been achieved. Pupils enjoy their learning of the curriculum area and are motivated to learn. Pupils competently and confidently use and apply the literacy and numeracy skills that are necessary to develop their learning in the curriculum area.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

Teaching and learning	
THEME 2	Pupils' learning experiences
SUB-THEME 2.1	Learning environment
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Organisation of learning areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All classrooms/learning settings are organised in a manner that supports learning. They are appropriately laid out for lessons, well resourced, and orderly Access to appropriate learning settings is available to all pupils Classroom learning environments provide for the needs of all pupils³
Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teachers are aware of and follow the National Child Protection Guidelines A copy of the school's Child Protection Guidelines is readily accessible in every classroom
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classrooms are properly heated, properly ventilated, clean and well maintained Due attention is given to pupil safety in the organisation, layout and furnishing of classrooms and other learning settings Due attention is given to pupil safety during lessons Pupils are properly supervised at all times
Necessary resources including ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils have access (including individual/ paired/ group access as required) to necessary and relevant resources during lessons Pupils have access to appropriate library resources A laptop/PC and data projector/interactive whiteboard for teaching purposes is permanently in every classroom Pupils have access to ICT during lessons to support their learning and to enable them to be active learners
Displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school and classroom environment supports, encourages and celebrates pupils' learning and achievement (concrete and visual materials, centres of interest, displays of pupils' work) for each curriculum area Where possible, high-quality displays promoting the development of literacy and numeracy in each curriculum area are evident (print-rich environment, mathematically rich environment).

³ For example, acoustically-treated learning environments are available for students with a hearing impairment

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A school with significant strengths

A safe, stimulating learning environment is provided for the pupils in this school. Classrooms and other sections of the building are organised, clean, and well maintained. Classrooms are appropriately laid out, well resourced and orderly. All pupils have access to appropriate learning settings and learning environments provide for the needs of the pupils.

The school is decorated with displays and centres of interest that celebrate pupils' work and support their learning, including their learning of literacy and numeracy. Due attention is given to pupil safety during lessons and break times. During lessons, the pupils have access to high quality resources (including ICT) to support their learning and to enable them to be active learners. Teachers are aware of and follow the National Child Protection Guidelines.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

Teaching and learning	
THEME 2	Pupils' learning experiences
SUB-THEME 2.2	Pupils' engagement in learning
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Active learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils are enabled, when appropriate, to engage actively in their learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Pupils work purposefully during lessons o Pupils are interested in the lesson content o All pupils participate in the lesson o There is a balance between teacher input and pupil participation o Pupils get opportunities to report on/explain their learning o Pupils reflect on the activity and thus consolidate the learning that has taken place
Collaborative learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are given purposeful and frequent opportunities to engage in collaborative and cooperative learning
Independent learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are given purposeful and frequent opportunities to engage in independent learning
Progressive skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils are enabled to learn skills within each curriculum area
Challenge and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils are properly challenged in their learning • The pupils are properly supported in their learning • Pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in a range of non-classroom based activities
Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils enjoy their learning of each curriculum area and are motivated to learn
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils achieve the expected learning outcomes of lessons
Equality of opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pupils are encouraged equally to participate in lessons.

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON PUPILS' ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING

A school with significant strengths

Pupils at all class levels are enabled to engage actively in their learning and the level of pupil interest and participation is high. They are given purposeful and frequent opportunities to engage in independent learning and collaborative learning. Pupils are enabled to learn skills within the curriculum area. They are suitably challenged in the activities organised for them in the classrooms and other learning settings in the school. They are given additional support as needed. Pupils achieve the expected learning outcomes of lessons.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

Teaching and learning	
THEME 2	Pupils' learning experiences
SUB-THEME 2.3	Learning to learn
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Assessment for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils are involved in monitoring their own progress in learning • The pupils are taught to reflect constructively on their own learning styles and approaches to learning
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers independently and collaboratively prepare lessons that develop learners' skills and dispositions to learning • The pupils are enabled, in each curriculum area, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Communicate o Work with others o Engage in research o Investigate/enquire o Experiment o Analyse o Problem-solve
Personal organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils are enabled, where relevant, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Plan o Study o Organise homework o Revise o Summarise o Present their work to others o Answer questions on their work o Organise to work in teams
ICT skills in learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils are enabled, across a range of curriculum areas, including literacy and numeracy, to use ICT to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o present and illustrate their work o access, assess and retrieve information (research) o organise and produce information o express ideas o develop, support and extend their learning.

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON LEARNING TO LEARN

A school with significant strengths

The school is equipping the pupils effectively with the tools and skills they need for learning now and in the future. Pupils are helped to reflect on their work and are purposefully involved in monitoring their own progress in learning.

The teachers focus effectively on developing the pupils' abilities to communicate, work with others, engage in research, investigate/enquire, experiment, analyse and problem-solve. The pupils are guided systematically in developing the necessary skills to plan, study, organise homework, revise, summarise, present their work to others and answer questions on their work.

The pupils are provided with frequent, well-guided access to ICT and are enabled to use it to present and illustrate their work, access, assess and retrieve information, organise and produce information, express ideas, and to develop, support and extend their learning.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

Teaching and learning	
THEME 3	Teachers' practice
SUB-THEME 3.1	Preparation for teaching
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected learning outcomes are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Clear o Relevant o Differentiated as necessary to cater for the learning needs and abilities of all pupils
Written plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term and short-term plans are prepared and available • Written plans clearly indicate the expected learning outcomes of lessons and the teaching approaches, resources and activities that will facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes
Monthly progress records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers provide monthly progress records of pupils' learning in the curriculum area • The monthly progress records indicate progression and continuity in pupils' learning in the curriculum area
Literacy and numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are specific expected learning outcomes for the development of literacy and numeracy skills during lessons across all curriculum areas
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary and relevant resources, materials and equipment are identified and sourced in advance of lessons
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers plan for how they are going to assess the pupils' learning and take account of assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment of learning (AoL) approaches • The teachers' plans for assessment reflect whole-school assessment policy and take cognisance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Curriculum and NCCA guidelines o The requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

A school with significant strengths

Teachers are thoroughly prepared in terms of practical and written planning for the delivery of the curriculum through the lessons they teach. Expected learning outcomes are clear, curriculum-based and are differentiated as necessary to cater for the learning needs and abilities of all pupils in the classroom. There are specific expected learning outcomes for the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

All teachers prepare short-term and long-term plans and use their written plans to guide teaching and learning. Written plans clearly indicate the expected learning outcomes of lessons and the teaching approaches, resources and activities that will facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Necessary and relevant resources, materials and equipment are identified in advance of lessons and are available for pupils and teachers during the lessons. Teachers plan effectively for how they are going to assess the pupils' learning, taking due account of curriculum guidelines, the NCCA guidelines and *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy*.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

Teaching and learning	
THEME 3	Teachers' practice
SUB-THEME 3.2	Teaching approaches
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons are guided by expected learning outcomes(s) that are curriculum linked and are shared with the pupils • Expected learning outcomes are achieved during lessons
Focus of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is progression in pupils' learning in the strands/strand units as they move from class level to class level • Attention is given within each curriculum area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o to the systematic development and application of knowledge and skills, including ICT o to the development of positive dispositions and attitudes towards learning
Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons are well structured (introduction, development, conclusion/review) • Curriculum-appropriate teaching and learning methodologies with a focus on active learning are used including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Teacher and pupil questioning o Active learning including play o Guided activity and discovery o Co-operative/collaborative learning o Talk and discussion o Environment-based learning o Higher-order thinking and problem solving • Pupils' prior learning, interests and experiences are taken into account in lesson organisation and content • Teacher questioning is clear, includes lower and higher-order questions and stimulates appropriate responses from pupils • Attention is given to the consolidation of the pupils' learning during and at the end of lessons • A broad range of activities is provided to enhance the holistic development of the pupils
Differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The varying needs and abilities of pupils are catered for in the course of lessons through the use of differentiation • Teachers vary content, activities, methodology and resources when taking into account the range of interests, needs and experience of the pupils⁴
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are enabled to use relevant and necessary resources (including ICT) to support their learning
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment for learning is embedded in classroom practice (sharing learning outcome(s) with pupils, establishing criteria, feedback from and to pupils) • Assessment outcomes are systematically analysed and used to inform subsequent learning experiences for pupils
Literacy and numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is purposeful development of literacy and numeracy skills within and between all curriculum areas.

⁴ Differentiation is a process that allows for variation in, for example, pace, amount, content, level and method of curriculum presentation to ensure that learning experiences are appropriate for all students." *NCCA Draft Guidelines, 2002*

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON TEACHING APPROACHES

A school with significant strengths Teaching is focused, stimulating and relevant to the pupils' learning needs. Lessons in the curriculum area are guided by expected learning outcomes that are linked with the curriculum and shared with the pupils. Expected learning outcomes are achieved during lessons. There is progression in the pupils' learning in the strands/strand units as they move from class level to class level. There is systematic development and application of knowledge and skills, including ICT, in the curriculum area. Attention is also given within the curriculum area to the development of positive dispositions and attitudes towards learning. There is purposeful development of literacy and numeracy skills within the curriculum area.

Approaches recommended by the curriculum are skilfully applied to teaching and learning in the curriculum area. These approaches include teacher and pupil questioning, active learning including play, guided activity and discovery, co-operative/collaborative learning, talk and discussion, environment-based learning and a focus on higher-order thinking and problem solving. A broad range of activities is provided to enhance the holistic development of the pupil. Clear lower and higher-order questions are posed during lessons and these stimulate responses from pupils. Assessment for learning is a key feature of classroom practice. Assessment outcomes are recorded efficiently and are used to inform subsequent lessons and the school improvement plan.

Very good use is made of relevant and necessary resources (including ICT) to support pupils in their learning of the curriculum area and the development of the specific curriculum skills associated with the area, including their literacy and numeracy skills. The needs and abilities of all pupils are catered for in the course of lessons through effective differentiation of provision. Pupils' learning in the curriculum area is consolidated.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

Teaching and learning	
THEME 3	Teachers' practice
SUB-THEME 3.3	Management of pupils
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive code of behaviour including an anti-bullying policy is implemented in a fair and consistent way • The school's code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy comply with the Equal Status Acts 2000–2011 • Parents are made aware, and fully support the implementation of the code of behaviour (e-copy, hard copy)
Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions are respectful • The pupils' efforts and achievements are affirmed
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have high and realistic expectations of pupils in relation to their behaviour and their learning
Organisation of activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is order and structure to the way activities are organised • All activities have a clear learning purpose • Opportunities are provided for active learning followed by reflection and discussion, collaborative learning and independent learning • Pupils know and can apply classroom routines • Active learning activities are complemented by relevant co-curricular work that occurs outside of the classroom
Pupil voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' contributions and questions are encouraged and respected in the classroom • Due account is taken of pupils' views and opinions in accordance with their age and maturity
Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is respect for all pupils regardless of their background, ability and aptitude • Differences across the equality grounds are understood, acknowledged and valued • Equal learning opportunities are provided for boys and girls • Pupils with special education needs are treated in an inclusive and equitable way • Children from minority groups are treated in an inclusive and equitable way.

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON MANAGEMENT OF PUPILS

A school with significant strengths

The management of pupils during learning and routine activities is effective. A positive code of behaviour including an anti-bullying policy, which complies with the requirements of the Equal Status Acts (2000-2011), is implemented in a fair and consistent way. Teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher interactions are respectful. The teachers have high but realistic expectations of the pupils in relation to their behaviour and learning and they communicate these to them. There is order and structure to the way activities are organised. Appropriate opportunities for active, independent and collaborative learning are provided.

The pupil voice is strong in the school. Pupils' contributions and questions are welcomed in the classroom. Their views and opinions are listened to in accordance with their age and maturity and taken into account in the organisation of classroom activities and in the devising of relevant policies.

The school is inclusive and treats all pupils equitably and fairly. There is respect for all pupils regardless of their background. Differences across the equality grounds are understood, acknowledged and valued by all staff. Equal learning opportunities are provided for boys and girls. Pupils with special education needs and pupils from minority groups are treated in an inclusive and equitable way.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

Teaching and learning	
THEME 3	Teachers' practice
SUB-THEME 3.4	Assessment
EVALUATION CRITERIA	

Whole-school policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a written policy on assessing and reporting on pupils' progress • The school policy takes account of curriculum and NCCA guidelines on assessment⁵ and the <i>National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</i> • Relevant assessment practices and procedures are identified in the whole-school plan for each curriculum area
Assessment in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of assessment approaches, including assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment of learning (AoL), is used to evaluate pupils' understanding, progress and achievement of expected learning outcomes in each curriculum area • Pupils are involved in assessing their learning through self assessment and/or peer assessment • Pupils' work, including non-written work and homework is regularly monitored and corrected • Pupils are provided with constructive feedback on their learning. Teaching is amended in the light of feedback • Teachers check pupils' understanding during and at the end of lessons • Standardised tests are administered at specific points of the primary cycle in accordance with Department guidelines • Parents are consulted to ascertain their perspective on their children's progress
Assessment records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gathering of information on pupils' learning is timely and happens at regular intervals • Teachers' and school assessment records are useful and easy to interpret
Communication of progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful information regarding pupil progress is effectively communicated to parents at suitable intervals • Pupils are provided with meaningful feedback on their work to improve their learning • Information regarding pupil progress in the curriculum areas is shared with relevant staff members as necessary
Analysis and use of assessment information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment information is analysed and used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ inform teachers' setting of learning targets and activities for individual pupils, groups, the whole class ○ inform the school improvement plan and to revise and update whole-school improvement targets.

⁵ *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum-Guidelines for Schools*, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007. Available at www.ncca.ie

Teaching and learning

QUALITY STATEMENT ON ASSESSMENT

A school with significant strengths

The quality of assessment is effective in terms of planning, the implementation of assessment approaches and the use and reporting of assessment information. The school has a written policy on assessment and reporting on pupils' progress that takes due account of Department and NCCA publications. Relevant assessment practices and procedures are identified in the whole-school plan for each curriculum area.

A range of assessment approaches including assessment for learning (AfL)⁵ and assessment of learning (AoL) is used to evaluate pupils' understanding, progress and achievement of expected learning outcomes in each curriculum area. Pupils are involved in assessing their learning. Pupils' work, including non-written work and homework, is regularly monitored and corrected. Pupils are provided with constructive oral and written feedback on their learning and amend their learning in the light of feedback provided. Standardised tests are administered and their results are communicated to parents in accordance with Department guidelines.

Draw conclusions: the quality statement will help the school to judge the quality of this aspect of practice and place its own practice on a quality continuum

Significant strengths

Strengths outweigh weaknesses

Weaknesses outweigh strengths

Significant weaknesses

⁵ http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Primary_Education/Primary_School_Curriculum/Assessment/Assessment_Guidelines/

Chapter 5

Evaluation approaches and methods

This chapter outlines a range of evaluation approaches and methods that schools can use to gather the evidence necessary for making judgements during the school self-evaluation process.

5.1 Introduction

School self-evaluation requires systematic collection of information or evidence. Good information or evidence from one or more sources enables sound judgements about quality to be made. Limiting the scope of the information-gathering stage of self-evaluation to the collection of essential information only is important; too much information can lead to an unmanageable, unsustainable and unproductive school self-evaluation process.

Important sources of evidence in school self-evaluation processes are:

- The teaching and learning in classrooms and other learning settings in the school
- Pupils' work (for example, copies, files, folders, displays, portfolios, demonstrations of skill)
- Assessment data and information (both qualitative and quantitative)
- The views of board of management members
- The professional views of principal, deputy principal and teachers
- The views of pupils and parents
- School documents (for example, the school plan and policies, teachers' plans, the code of behaviour, school inspection reports, previous school self-evaluation reports, school improvement plans, progress reports, agendas and minutes of meetings)
- Audits (for example, health and safety, finance).

In the context of evaluating teaching and learning, the type of information or evidence that needs to be gathered and the types of approaches and methods necessary to gather the information can vary according to the evaluation theme or sub-theme. There are, however, some methods that are particularly useful for gathering information or evidence on a number of teaching and learning self-evaluation themes and sub-themes. They are:

- Reflection on teaching and learning
- Discussion of specific topics
- Eliciting the views of teachers, parents, pupils
- Analysis of assessment data and information
- Review of pupils' work
- Review of documents and records
- Team teaching or professional collaborative review.

Useful tools to support the gathering of information by one or more of the above methods include:

- Questionnaires and interview schedules
- Focus group schedules
- Checklists and reflection sheets
- Reflection/review/observation schedules for teaching and learning.

5.2 Some practical considerations

A school's development and use of agreed approaches and tools to gather information or evidence can help to promote consistency, objectivity and rigour in its information-collection process. This can contribute to sound, reliable and valid evaluative conclusions about aspects of the work of the school. However, in order for evaluation tools to be effective, their design and use should be guided by a number of practical considerations:

- **Relevance:** The tools should gather information or evidence relevant to the evaluation themes or sub-themes. They should not be designed or used to gather information extraneous to the evaluation
- **Simplicity and clarity:** Long or complex tools should be avoided
- **Efficiency:** The tools should be relatively easy and straightforward to use
- **Protocol:** The tools should be used in accordance with the school's agreed protocol for their use
- **Validity:** Consideration should be given to how the tools can assist in bringing together and comparing evidence of different kinds from a range of sources. This will contribute to establishing the validity of the conclusions drawn.

The approaches, methods and tools discussed in this chapter are presented with the aim of providing practical guidance to schools on how they can gather information or evidence during school self-evaluation. It is envisaged that schools will use tools such as those discussed in this chapter in a flexible way. Sample tools are provided in the Appendix. Schools may decide to use some or all of the tools provided or they may choose to develop their own tools to meet their self-evaluation data-gathering requirements.

5.3 Evaluation approaches, methods and tools

Evaluation approaches and methods

Schools will use a range of approaches and methods to gather evidence, depending on the area of practice being evaluated. It is important that schools build on the evidence that is already available. It is also necessary to ensure that evidence is gathered from a range of sources and that the views of all those involved in the school community are sought when relevant. A list of possible evaluation approaches and methods is outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 List of possible evaluation approaches and methods

Evaluation approaches and methods:

- Audit of school’s code of behaviour with reference to the NEWB Guidelines⁷
- Audit of the school assessment policy
- Audit of school safety statement
- Health and safety audit
- Health and safety inspection of classrooms
- Consultation with the board and teachers regarding Child Protection needs
- Analysis of suspension rates

- Review of use of ICT
- Review of written plans

- Eliciting views of teachers
- Eliciting views of pupils
- Eliciting views of parents

- Review of pupils’ copies/files/folders
- Review of current assessment records
- Review of pupil progress records
- Review of *cuntas míosúil*
- Analysis of test results where appropriate
- Analysis of quantitative and qualitative information and data on the literacy achievement and progress of the pupils
- Comparison of the outcomes of standardised tests with national norms (when available)
- Analysis of available quantitative and qualitative information and data on the numeracy achievement and progress of pupils (including standardised test results)

- Teacher discussion and reflection
- Self observation by teacher
- Team teaching and review
- Professional collaborative review of teaching and learning.

⁷ Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for School, National Educational Welfare Board, 2008, available at www.newb.ie

Evaluation tools

When deciding on the evidence to be gathered, schools will need to consider the most appropriate tools for this purpose. The list below (Table 5.2) may be useful in determining the most suitable tool for gathering the necessary evidence. It is important that schools gather only information that is appropriate to judge the quality of practice in the area being evaluated. Samples of a range of evaluation tools that schools can use to gather the information or evidence necessary for school self-evaluation are provided in the *Appendix*.

Table 5.2 List of possible evaluation tools

Evaluation Tools:

- Checklist (document review)
- Checklist (pupils' work)
- Checklist (school's safety statement)
- Checklist (classroom maintenance)
- Checklist (classroom organisation, displays)
- Checklist (NEWB returns)
- Checklist (use of ICT)
- Checklist (Review of material taught and progress made in each strand)

- Excel tool developed by PDST for analysis of standardised test results⁸
- Prompt questions to facilitate data analysis
- Drumcondra English Profiles⁹
- Próifílí Gaeilge Dhroim Conrach¹⁰

- Interview schedule
- Focus group schedule
- Questionnaires (pupil, parents, teachers)
- Teacher reflection sheet
- Reflection/review/observation schedule

- NCCA Guidelines on Assessment
- NCCA ICT framework¹¹
- Prompt questions to facilitate data analysis
- NCTE E-Learning Roadmap.

⁸ The tool for analysing standardised test results can be accessed on the assessment link at www.ncca.ie or on the DEIS link at www.pdst.ie

⁹ Drumcondra English Profiles Assessing Oral Language, Reading and Writing in Primary Schools, Educational Research Centre, 2000. Available at www.erc.ie

¹⁰ Próifílí measúnachta don Ghaeilge sna scoileanna Gaeltachta agus scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge. Lámhleabhar, Educational Research Centre, 2004. Available at www.erc.ie

¹¹ ICT Framework: A Structured Approach to ICT in Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2007). Available at www.ncca.ie

5.4 Checklists

Checklists provide a simple format for recording basic factual information across a range of criteria. Instances in which they are particularly useful in the context of school self-evaluation include the analysis of documents (for example, the school's assessment policy, teachers' planning documents or pupils' written work) and the auditing of resources (for example an audit of the availability and use of ICT resources in classrooms). In devising checklists in the context of school self-evaluation, the inclusion of an open-ended comment section in addition to the basic *yes/no* tick boxes is advised in order to facilitate the recording of additional relevant and necessary information.

Sample checklists are provided in *Appendix 1.1*. Checklists in relation to compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements are provided as appendices to the School Self-Evaluation Report template in Figure 6.1.

5.5 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a versatile school self-evaluation tool. They allow information on the work of the school to be collected from a range of people including teachers, pupils, parents and the board of management. They can be used for the purpose of obtaining:

- Factual information (for example, frequency of use of ICT in lessons, type of assessment information communicated to parents)
- Information on the experiences and perspectives of parties on the work of the school (for example, whether pupils feel they have a say on how things are done in the school)
- Information regarding parties' levels of satisfaction with the work of the school (for example, parents' satisfaction levels with how the school reports to them on their children's progress in learning).

Designing and using questionnaires

Questionnaires can be designed in different ways. They can contain structured questions or open-ended questions. In designing and using questionnaires in school self-evaluation, schools are advised to:

- Determine in advance what they want to find out
- Explain why the respondents' opinions are being sought
- Assure anonymity and confidentiality
- Limit the number of questions asked
- Avoid unnecessary questions
- Avoid leading questions
- Lay the questionnaire out in a clear and logical order

- Give clear and simple instructions
- Keep the language of every item in the questionnaire clear and unambiguous (This is particularly important in the case of pupil questionnaires; how a questionnaire item is presented may need to vary according to the age of the pupil)
- Consider, in advance, how the information gathered through the questionnaire will be used.

Structured questionnaires

A structured questionnaire consists of items to which a person is asked to respond by selecting one of a number of response options.

Figure 5.3 Example of structured questionnaire items and response options

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly agree
My child likes school					
I am aware of the code of behaviour and the school rules					
The management of pupils' behaviour is good in the school					
I get good information from the school about how my child is doing in Mathematics					
Pupils and teachers respect one another					

While structured questionnaires are a relatively manageable, low-cost way of gathering information from a range of people and are thus a very useful school self-evaluation tool, there are nonetheless some disadvantages to their use:

- Respondents may not understand or may misinterpret the questions
- The questions may miss some important facets of the matter being evaluated
- The analysis of the data can be complex and time consuming.

Open-ended questions

Questionnaires can also consist, partly or entirely, of open-ended questions. These questions lead the respondent to consider a particular issue or topic but leave the form of the response open-ended.

Figure 5.4 Example of open-ended questionnaire items

What do you like doing most in English lessons?

Is there anything in English that you find hard to do?

Is there any way the school can improve its approach to homework?

Because open-ended questions have the advantage of allowing the respondent the freedom to say whatever they feel is appropriate, they may:

- Reveal the respondent's real attitudes and perceptions
- Provide extended answers
- Provide rich qualitative information
- Throw light on aspects of a topic or issue not previously considered by the evaluator.

The fact that open-ended questions can give rise to relatively long and/or individualised answers means that the information yielded through them can sometimes be time consuming and/or difficult to analyse. However, their potential to yield valuable and valid qualitative information suggests that open-ended questions used in small numbers can greatly enrich the evidence-gathering phase of school self-evaluation.

Sample questionnaires for both parents and pupils, containing both structured and open-ended items, are provided in *Appendix 1.2*.

5.6 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a particularly useful way of collecting information during school self-evaluation in that they can be used to explore in greater depth, themes or issues emerging from other information-collection methods such as questionnaires or individual interviews.

A focus group is a semi-structured information-gathering method in which a selected set of participants, for example, a group of teachers, pupils, parents or members of the board, gather to discuss issues and concerns based on a list of key themes. The method involves the collection of information through group interaction on predetermined topics, the aim of the interaction being to further understanding of those topics. For example, a group of teachers may gather to explore in depth a number of issues related to the teaching of literacy in the school emerging from a review of lessons and questionnaires administered to parents. Much of the information yielded in a focus group discussion will be qualitative in nature.

The role of the leader or facilitator in a focus group discussion is important. For a focus group to be successful there needs to be participative discussion, reflection and scope for development and clarification of ideas and understandings. Expertise on the part of the facilitator in managing a group within a structured discussion situation is therefore required. The facilitator needs to allow participants to reflect on their experiences with the topics or themes, listen to one another's views and then build on their views. Questions during focus group discussions should ideally move from the general to the specific and from positive to negative. Before the end of the focus-group discussion, participants should be enabled to reflect on and clarify what emerged in the discussion up to then.

The potential of focus groups for collective, probing reflection on a particular topic or theme and the expertise required in managing participants for such reflection to take place are two factors that distinguish focus groups from group interviews.

Focus groups need to be:

- Carefully planned
- Limited to a maximum of 6 to 8 participants
- Convened to discuss a small number of clear topics or themes
- Conducted within an agreed, realistic time period
- Guided by an interview schedule or discussion schedule
- Supportive of participative, reflective and developmental discussion
- Skilfully managed.

Sample focus group schedules are provided in *Appendix 1.3*.

5.7 Interviews

Interviews are another practical way of gathering information on the work of the school from members of the school community including board members, the principal, deputy principal, teachers, parents or pupils. They can facilitate professional conversations about teaching and learning or about particular evaluation themes or sub-themes among teachers. Because interviews tend to be relatively open-ended in their format, they can yield wide-ranging, rich information related to one or more evaluation themes or sub-themes. They can be a particularly useful tool for a school commencing self-evaluation of a curriculum area that it has not previously evaluated by drawing attention to particular aspects of evaluation themes or sub-themes that should be investigated further.

Schools should be aware that gathering information through interviews and analysing that information can be time-consuming.

Planning and using interviews

Therefore, to maximise their potential usefulness in the context of school self-evaluation, interviews should:

- Be carefully planned
- Consist of a small number of clear, simple questions
- Be conducted within an agreed, realistic time period
- Be guided by an interview schedule
- Be flexible enough to capture unexpected or unanticipated views and opinions on the interview questions and related matters.

Sample interview schedules are provided in *Appendix 1.4*.

5.8 Reflection sheets

Reflection sheets are a useful means for capturing, in a relatively open-ended way, the perspectives of a number of different parties on key teaching and learning evaluation themes or sub-themes. For example, the sample reflection sheet provided in *Appendix 1.5* could be completed by the principal, deputy principal, teachers, board members or members of the parents' association in order to capture a range of perspectives on the work of the school. The information so gathered can be used to guide self-evaluation of particular themes or sub-themes in more depth through other evaluation methods and tools.

5.9 Professional collaborative review of teaching and learning

Professional collaborative review of teaching and learning is a practical and powerful method of obtaining direct, first-hand information or evidence about teaching and learning in classrooms and in other learning settings. It gives direct access to what pupils and teachers are doing and can be used to gather information on a range of evaluation themes or sub-themes.

In the context of school self-evaluation, professional collaborative review of teaching and learning can take a number of forms. For example a teacher could undertake self-observation of one of his/her lessons, focusing on a particular aspect of teaching and learning.

Professional collaborative review of teaching and learning can also take the form of collaborative teaching and review. This type of review takes place in a team-teaching context where two teachers engage in collaborative planning for and teaching of a number of lessons. They subsequently reflect collaboratively on those lessons and specifically on the teaching and learning that took place. For schools that have not previously engaged in observation of teaching and learning as a data-collection strategy in school self-evaluation, collaborative teaching and review may be a useful first approach to gathering information or evidence on what is happening in classrooms and other learning settings in the school.

A teacher may invite a colleague to engage in professional review of a lesson or lessons. This may involve observing a lesson and subsequently discussing it in a reflective way. Professional collaborative review of teaching and learning in school self-evaluation may be well established in some schools through observation of newly qualified teachers as part of a mentoring system or through initiatives that have encouraged teacher-to-teacher observation. For many schools, however, such observation of teaching and learning for the purpose of school self-evaluation is a relatively new development. In these schools, agreement between two teachers to observe each other's lessons focusing on a specific aspect of teaching and learning such as active learning or use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies might be a good place to start. To succeed as a method of gathering information during school self-evaluation, professional collaborative review of teaching and learning needs to be conducted in a collegial, respectful way within the terms of an agreed school protocol, using specific, planned criteria. It requires careful planning in relation to time allocation and pupil supervision arrangements.

Over time, as the practice of professional collaborative review becomes more mainstream in schools, this practice will evolve to include a wider range of colleagues, including the principal or deputy principal, engaging in collaborative review in accordance with agreed procedures.

A sample teaching and learning reflection/review/observation schedule is provided in *Appendix 1.6*. This schedule can be used as a tool for reflection by an individual teacher or to facilitate review in a collaborative teaching context.

Protocol for professional collaborative review of teaching and learning

A school protocol should be put in place to guide how professional collaborative review is to be conducted. The school's protocol for observation of teaching and learning during school self-evaluation should set out clearly the relevant processes and procedures that should occur before, during and after the observation and should include relevant schedule(s). A schedule should contain a set of clear criteria relating to particular self-evaluation themes or sub-themes. Its purpose is to guide the review and to provide a framework for recording information and for discussion. The use of a schedule for every observation thus helps to ensure that it is focused, reasonably objective and used for the purpose of gathering information on particular evaluation themes or sub-themes. It also contributes to consistency across the reviews conducted in the school.

A sample protocol for professional collaborative review of teaching and learning is provided in *Appendix 1.7*.

Information arising from professional collaborative review of teaching and learning

One of the most important aspects of a school's protocol for professional collaborative review of teaching and learning during school self-evaluation is its provisions regarding the recording, sharing and use of information arising from the review. It is suggested that access to completed schedules be restricted to the teachers involved in the review. Only relevant information that might identify trends that will inform the evaluation should be shared.

Chapter 6

The school self-evaluation report and school improvement plan

This section offers advice to schools on reporting on their school self-evaluation and on devising a school improvement plan. It provides a sample template for a school self-evaluation report and a sample structure for a school improvement plan.

6.1 The school self-evaluation report

The primary focus of school self-evaluation should not be on the written work. Nonetheless, schools should complete a concise school self-evaluation report. This report should be no more than two or three pages long.

A school self-evaluation report sets out the school's evidence-based evaluative judgements about its strengths and the areas of its work requiring improvement. Those evaluative judgements or findings are used by the school to inform the school improvement plan and specifically, the improvement targets contained in that plan.

The school self-evaluation report serves a number of functions:

- It indicates how a school has fulfilled the requirement to evaluate its performance annually
- It provides a basis for discussion and reflection among teachers, management, patron/ trustees and others in relation to the work of the school
- It can be used by boards of management as an important information source in reporting to parents and the patron on the work of the school as required under the Education Act 1998
- It provides a basis upon which a school improvement plan can be devised and specific school improvement targets set
- It can inform external evaluations undertaken by the Inspectorate.

The way in which the school self-evaluation report is written impacts on its usefulness in the context of any of the above functions. The language of the report should be clear, specific and accessible.

The report should record:

- The school context
- The main focuses of the evaluation
- A summary of the evaluation findings, namely:
 - o The school's main strengths
 - o The main areas of the school's work requiring improvement.

Schools should provide a summary report to the whole school community. Such a report will be very short and provide details of the findings with regard to the strengths identified and the areas the school intends to prioritise for development.

A sample template for a school self-evaluation report is provided in Figure 6.1. Checklists to assist the school in reviewing whether it is meeting the requirements of relevant legislation and regulation and whether it has all necessary policies in place are provided as appendices to the report.

6.2 The school improvement plan

A school improvement plan sets out, in specific terms, what needs to be done to improve the work of the school. The school improvement plan becomes part of the developmental section of the overall school plan. It sets out school improvement targets based on the school self-evaluation findings and identifies the actions required to give effect to those targets. To be useful, a school improvement plan needs to be set out in clear and practical terms. School improvement targets should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). In particular, they need to specify how achievement levels in the curriculum area should improve as a result of actions to be taken by the school. Improvement targets may relate to any aspect of pupils' achievement, including their knowledge, their skills and their attitudes. It is critical that the improvement targets are clearly linked to relevant baseline data that has been generated from the self-evaluation process engaged in by the school so that progress can be measured in an effective manner.

The following are examples of improvement targets:

- X% of our pupils are achieving above the 50th percentile in reading. In Year 1, we will increase this to X+5%, in Year 2 to X +10% and to X + 15 % in Year 3
- X% of our pupils in middle and senior classes like Mathematics. By the end of Year 3, we will increase this by 25%.

The improvement plan should also specify:

- The actions needed to achieve the improvement targets.

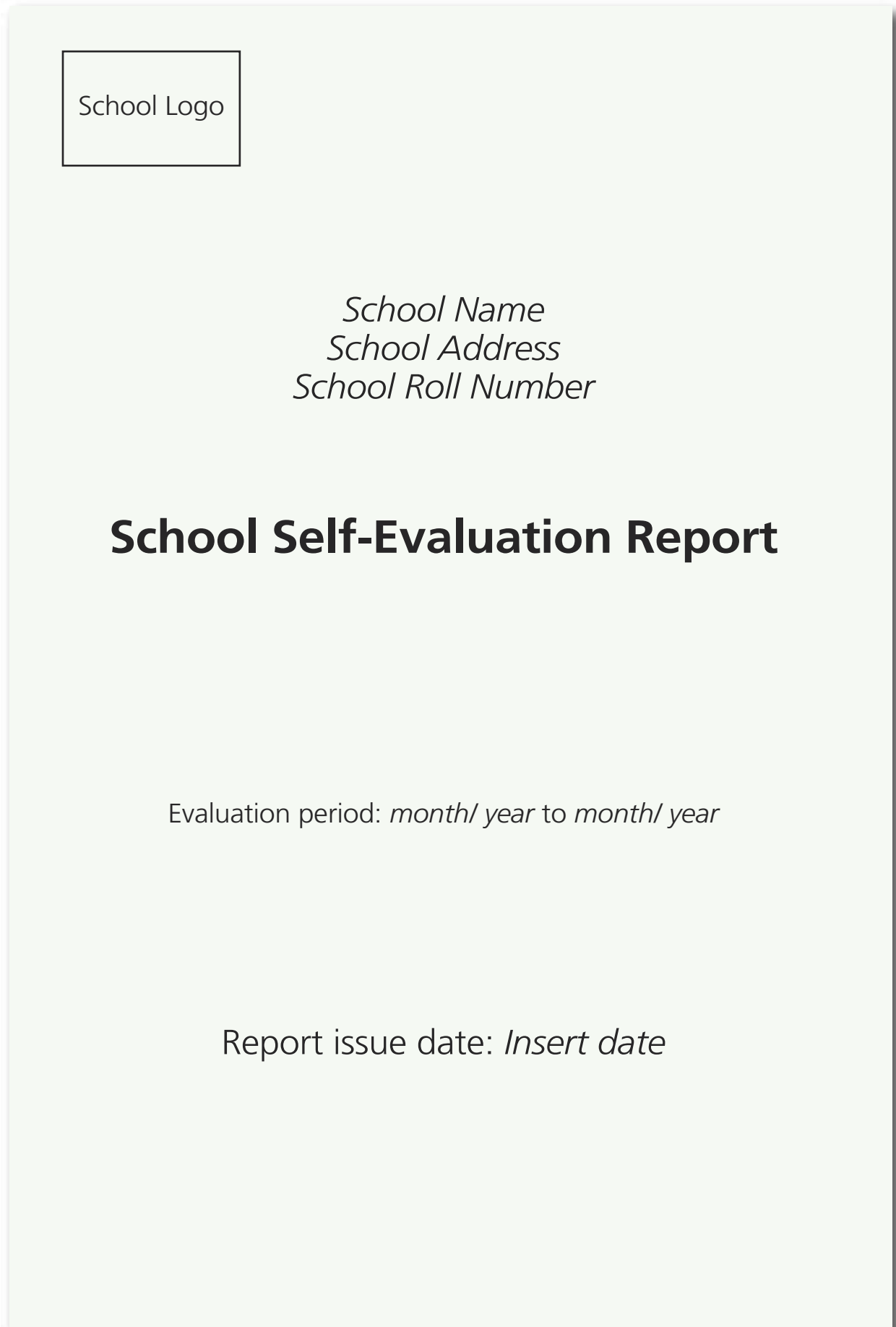
These actions need to address aspects of teaching and learning that the school has identified as areas for development. The actions should be linked with the improvement targets and be expected to have an impact on improving the areas highlighted in the targets. The action plan should identify:

- The persons responsible and the time frame for those actions
- The success criteria or measurable outcomes by which achievement of the targets will be judged.

A sample template for a school improvement plan is provided in Figure 6.2.

A summary of the school improvement plan should be provided to the whole school community.

Figure 6.1: Sample template for a school self-evaluation report



The image shows a sample template for a school self-evaluation report. It features a light green background with a white border. At the top left, there is a rectangular box labeled "School Logo". In the center, the following text is displayed in a serif font: "School Name", "School Address", and "School Roll Number". Below this, the title "School Self-Evaluation Report" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Further down, the text "Evaluation period: month/ year to month/ year" is shown in a smaller, italicized serif font. At the bottom, the text "Report issue date: Insert date" is displayed in a smaller, italicized serif font.

School Self-Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The focus of the evaluation

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in (school name) was undertaken during the period (month/year) to (month/year). During the evaluation, teaching and learning in the following curriculum areas were evaluated:

- Literacy (English in English medium schools; Irish and English in Irish medium schools)
- Numeracy: Understanding and using Mathematics
- Other curriculum areas (please list as relevant)

This is a report on the findings of the evaluation.

1.2 School context

Comment on school ethos and particular context factors affecting the work of the school (for example, pupils' profile, school participation in DEIS, school participation in other programmes or initiatives, changes in enrolment).

2. The findings

Indicate the quality of practice in relation to the aspect(s) of teaching and learning evaluated with reference to the sub-theme(s) below where relevant.

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Attainment of curriculum objectives
- Learning environment
- Pupils' engagement in learning
- Learning to learn
- Preparation for teaching
- Teaching approaches
- Management of pupils
- Assessment

3. Progress made on previously-identified improvement targets

-
-
-

4. Summary of school self-evaluation findings

4.1 Our school has **strengths** in the following areas:

(List the main strengths identified with regard to teaching and learning)

-
-
-

4.2 The following areas **are prioritised for improvement:**

(Specify the aspects of teaching and learning that need to be improved)

-
-
-

4.3 The following legislative and regulatory requirements need to be addressed:

(Specify the aspects that need to be addressed)

-
-
-

Appendix to School Self-Evaluation Report: legislative and regulatory checklist

Issue	Relevant legislation, rule or circular	Is the school fully meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation, rule or circular?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
<p>Time in school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Length of school year- minimum of 183 days - Length of school day 4 hours 40 minutes (infants); 5 hours 40 minutes (1st-6th classes) 	Circular 11/95	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Arrangements for parent/ teacher and staff meetings	Circular 14/04	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Implementation of Croke Park agreement regarding additional time requirement	Circular 0008/2011	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Standardisation of school year	Circular 034/2011	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Valid enrolment of pupils	Section 9(1), 15 (2) and 23 Education Act 1998 Sections 20 and 21, Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Rules 55, 64, 108 and 123, Rules for National Schools Circular P24/02 Staffing Schedule for current school year	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Retention of pupils	Rule 64 Rules for National Schools Circular 11/01 Circular 32/03	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Development of school plan	Section 21, Education Act 1998	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Appointments to posts of responsibility	Circular 07/03 Circular 053/2011	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Time for literacy and numeracy - assessing and reporting literacy and numeracy achievement	Circular 0056/11 Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Exemption from Irish	Circular 12/96	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Issue	Relevant legislation, rule or circular	Is the school fully meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation, rule or circular?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
<p>Implementation of child protection procedures</p>	<p>Circular 0065/2011</p> <p>Please consider the following in relation to child protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of cases where a report involving a child in the school was submitted by the DLP to the HSE <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Number of cases where a report involving a child in the school was submitted by the DLP to the HSE and the school board of management informed <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Number of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Number of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made and the school board of management informed <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	
<p>Implementation of complaints procedure as appropriate</p>	<p>Complaints Procedures, Section 28 Education Act Primary Boards of Management Information Manual November 2007</p> <p>Please consider the following in relation to complaints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of formal parental complaints received <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Number of formal complaints processed <input type="checkbox"/> ▪ Number of formal complaints not fully processed by the end of this school year <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	
<p>Refusal to enrol</p>	<p>Section 29 Education Act 1998</p> <p>Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of section 29 cases taken against the school <input type="checkbox"/> Number of cases processed at informal stage <input type="checkbox"/> Number of cases heard <input type="checkbox"/> Number of appeals upheld <input type="checkbox"/> Number of appeals dismissed <input type="checkbox"/> 		

Issue	Relevant legislation, rule or circular	Is the school fully meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation, rule or circular?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
<p>Suspension of students</p>	<p>Section 29 Education Act 1998</p> <p>Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of section 29 cases taken against the school <input type="checkbox"/> - Number of cases processed at informal stage <input type="checkbox"/> - Number of cases heard <input type="checkbox"/> - Number of appeals upheld <input type="checkbox"/> - Number of appeals dismissed <input type="checkbox"/> 		
<p>Expulsion of students</p>	<p>Section 29 Education Act 1998</p> <p>Please provide the following information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of section 29 cases taken against the school <input type="checkbox"/> Number of cases processed at informal stage <input type="checkbox"/> Number of cases heard <input type="checkbox"/> Number of appeals upheld <input type="checkbox"/> Number of appeals dismissed <input type="checkbox"/> 		

Appendix to School Self-Evaluation Report: policy checklist

Policy	Source	Has policy been approved by the board of management?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed.
Enrolment policy	Section (15)(2)(d) Education Act 1998	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Code of behaviour ¹² including anti-bullying policy	Circular 20/90 DES Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour 1993 NEWB Guidelines Section 23, Education Welfare Act 2000	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attendance and participation strategy ¹³	Section 22 Education Welfare Act 2000 Equal Status Acts 2000-2011	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Health and safety statement	Section 20 Health and Safety Act 2005	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Data protection	Data Protection Act 1988 Data Protection (Amendment Act) 2003	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Special education needs policy ¹⁴	Education Act 1998 Equal Status Acts 2000-2011 Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN) ¹⁵ 2004 Disability Act 2005	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy	Relationships and Sexuality Education: Policy Guidelines (1997)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Child protection policy	Circular 0065/2011	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Parents as partners	Circular 24/91	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Public service (Croke Park) agreement – special needs assistants	Circular 71/11	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Other			

¹² Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 23) the school's code of behaviour should conform to the specifications stated.

¹³ Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 22), the school's attendance strategy should conform with the provisions stipulated.

¹⁴ Section 9 of the Education Act (1998) requires a school to "use its available resources" to identify and provide for the educational needs of those "with a disability or other special educational needs."

¹⁵ The EPSEN Act requires that schools be inclusive of and provide an appropriate education for pupils with special educational needs.

Figure 6.2: Sample structure for a school improvement plan

OUR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
Summary of main strengths as identified in last SSE on (specify date):	
Summary of main areas requiring improvement as identified in last SSE:	
Improvement targets (related to pupils' achievement)	
Required actions (related to teaching and learning that will help to achieve the targets)	
Persons responsible	
Timeframe for action	
Success criteria / measurable outcomes	
Review dates	

Appendix

Sample school self-evaluation tools

Appendix 1.1: Sample checklists

Checklist: Teachers' written plans	Yes	No	Comment
Long-term plans are prepared			
Short-term plans are prepared			
Written plans clearly indicate the expected learning outcomes			
The expected learning outcomes are clear, curriculum-based and differentiated as necessary to cater for the varying learning needs and abilities of pupils in the classroom			
There are specific expected learning outcomes for the development of literacy skills across all curriculum areas			
There are specific expected learning outcomes for the development of numeracy skills across all curriculum areas			
Written plans clearly indicate the teaching approaches, resources and activities that will facilitate the achievement of the expected learning outcomes			
Written plans clearly indicate how the pupils' learning is to be assessed			
The written plans for assessment are in keeping with the Curriculum and NCCA guidelines			
The written plans for assessment are in keeping with the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy, <i>Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life</i>			

Checklist: Review of monitoring of pupils' written work	Yes	No	Comment
Written work including homework is monitored			
Copies, workbooks, files and folders are checked with appropriate frequency			
Written feedback is provided to pupils			
Written feedback is clear and specific, and refers to strengths and necessary next steps			
Pupils amend their work in light of the feedback given			
Samples of pupils' work are maintained and annotated			
Checklist: Assessment policy	Yes	No	Comment
The school has a written policy on assessing and reporting pupils' attainment and progress			
The assessment policy takes account of the primary curriculum and NCCA guidelines			
The assessment policy takes account of the <i>National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy</i>			
The assessment policy provides guidance on what should be assessed at each class level			
The assessment policy provides guidance on how often pupils should be assessed			
The policy provides for the assessment of skills and non-written work			
There is clear guidance on assessment for learning and assessment of learning			
There is a policy on standardised testing			
The assessment policy indicates how the results of assessments should be analysed			
The assessment policy indicates how the results of assessments should be used			

Sample checklist for evaluation of literacy¹⁶

In accordance with their level of development and ability:		
Knowledge and skills	Pupils listen attentively and with understanding	
	Pupils communicate clearly and confidently orally and in writing, use an expansive vocabulary, and are fluent and explicit in communicating ideas and experiences	
	Pupils read a variety of texts, including print and digital media, with fluency¹⁷ and understanding using a range of word identification and comprehension strategies	
	Pupils write fluently and legibly in a variety of genres for a range of audiences and have an appropriate standard of spelling, grammar, syntax and punctuation	
The overall attainment of the pupils with regard to each of the following aspects of literacy is improving or remains at a high standard in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Primary School Curriculum:		
Attainment trends	Listening and oral language	
	Reading	
	Writing	
	The understanding and critical appreciation of broadcast media	
	The understanding and critical appreciation of digital media	
Pupils, including those at risk of underachieving are attaining well in accordance with their ability and make very good progress from their prior levels of achievement		
Pupils use their literacy skills competently in their learning of all curriculum areas		
Comparison with norms	The literacy attainment of the pupils compares favourably with national norms on standardised tests (when available)	
	The literacy learning targets¹⁸ set out in the school improvement plan have been achieved	
Attitudes/dispositions	Pupils display positive attitudes to listening and speaking	
	Pupils have a love of and interest in reading	
	Pupils use their literacy skills confidently in their learning of all curriculum areas	
	Pupils are motivated to use their listening, oral, reading and writing skills for learning and communication	

¹⁶ Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. Literacy for learners in English-medium schools and settings should be understood primarily as literacy in English. In the case of Irish-medium schools, literacy should be understood as both Irish as the first language of the school and English.

¹⁷ Reading fluency includes accuracy and speed

¹⁸ Note that learning targets must be SMART

Sample checklist for evaluation of numeracy¹⁹

In accordance with their level of development and ability:		
Knowledge and skills	Pupils have an understanding of mathematical concepts and processes in all five strands of the curriculum; number, algebra, shape and space, measures and data	
	Pupils use mathematical language effectively, accurately and consistently throughout the school	
	Pupils have a proficiency in fundamental mathematical skills and in recalling basic number facts	
	Pupils have developed a range of problem-solving strategies and are able to use and apply mathematical concepts and processes in order to plan and implement solutions to problems in a variety of contexts	
The overall attainment of the pupils with regard to each of the following aspects of numeracy is improving or remains at a high standard in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Primary School Curriculum:		
Attainment trends	Applying and problem-solving	
	Communicating and expressing	
	Integrating and connecting	
	Reasoning	
	Implementing	
	Understanding and recalling	
Pupils, including those at risk of underachieving are attaining well, in accordance with their ability, and make very good progress from their prior levels of achievement		
Comparison with norms	The numeracy attainment of the pupils compares favourably with national norms (when available)	
	The numeracy learning targets ²⁰ set out in the school improvement plan have been achieved	
Attitudes/dispositions	Pupils have a positive attitude towards numeracy and have an appreciation of its practical and aesthetic aspects	
	Pupils enjoy using their numeracy skills both within discrete lessons and in integrated settings	
	Pupils are motivated to use their numeracy skills for learning	

¹⁹ Numeracy is not limited to the ability to use numbers, to add, subtract, multiply and divide. Numeracy encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings

²⁰ Note that learning targets must be SMART

Appendix 1.2: Sample questionnaires

School Name School Self-Evaluation Questionnaire for Parents

Dear parents and guardians,

We are undertaking a self-evaluation of teaching and learning in our school. To help us in that evaluation, we would be very grateful for your views and opinions on the matters in the questionnaire below. The questionnaire should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. We would be very grateful if you would complete it and return it to the school before xxxx. Please note that you may complete the questionnaire anonymously and that all individual responses will be treated confidentially.

Thank you very much.

Insert name (Principal)

Date: **Insert date**

Please put an **X** in the correct box:

My child is in:

Junior Infants

1st

3rd

5th

Senior Infants

2nd

4th

6th

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly agree
My child likes reading					
My child is doing well at reading					
I often listen to my child reading aloud					
My child enjoys learning spellings					
My child likes to write stories					
I get good information from the school about how my child is doing in English					
My child likes Maths					
I know my child's strengths in Maths					
I know my child's weaknesses in Maths					
The Maths my child learns is at just the right level of difficulty					
My child regularly requires help to complete his/her maths homework					
I get good information from the school about how my child is doing in Maths					

Please turn over: Questions continued overleaf

Is there any way the school could help you to help your child with English (spoken English, reading, writing or spellings)?

Is there any way the school could help you to help your child with Maths?

Is there any way the school can improve its approach to homework?

Any other comments or suggestions?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

School Name
School Self-Evaluation Questionnaire for Pupils

Please put an **X** in the correct box:

I am in: 3rd 4th 5th 6th
 I am a: Boy Girl

	Yes	No	Don't know
I like reading			
There are good books to read in my classroom			
We sometimes read newspapers in school			
I am a good reader			
I find spellings easy to learn			
I sometimes use the computer to write stories in school			
I like Maths			
I would like to spend more time in school learning Maths			
I find maths problems easy			
I am good at Maths			
I play maths games on the computer or interactive whiteboard in school			

Please turn over: Questions continued overleaf

What do you like doing most in English lessons?

What do you find hard to learn during English lessons?

What do you like doing most in maths lessons?

What do you find hard to learn during maths lessons?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix 1.3: Sample focus group schedules

Focus Group Schedule for teachers			
Focus group participants		Class(es) taught	
Facilitator		Date	
For discussion		Discussion	
General topics	Key questions	Main points made	
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our strengths in relation to the teaching of literacy? • What are our concerns? • How can we improve? 		
Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our strengths in relation to the teaching of problem-solving skills in Mathematics? • What are our concerns? • How can we improve? 		
Spoken Irish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our strengths in relation to the teaching of spoken Irish? • What do we need to do at each of the following class levels to improve the standard of the pupils' spoken Irish? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Junior classes o Middle classes o Senior classes 		

Focus Group Schedule for teachers			
Focus group participants		Class(es) taught	
Facilitator		Date	
For discussion		Discussion	
General topics	Key questions	Main points made	
Co-operative/ collaborative learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In which curriculum areas are we most successful at developing and using co-operative/ collaborative learning approaches and skills? • How can we improve our work in relation to co-operative/ collaborative learning? 		
Environment- based learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our strengths in relation to environment-based learning? (refer to individual curriculum areas) • In which curriculum areas do we need to develop environment-based learning more? • What steps do we need to take to do this? 		

Appendix 1.4: Interview schedules

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: NUMERACY AND MATHEMATICS			
<i>Teacher</i>		<i>Interviewer</i>	
<i>Teacher's class(es)</i>		<i>Date</i>	
CURRICULUM AREA: NUMERACY AND MATHEMATICS			
How successfully do we teach Numeracy and Maths?			
What aspects of provision are effective?			
Are there any problem areas?			
How effective are we in teaching the strands of the maths curriculum? <i>Early mathematical activities? Data? Shape and space? Measures? Algebra? Number?</i>			
How effective are we in developing pupils' problem-solving skills? Are there any difficulties? How can we improve the teaching and learning of problem-solving?			
How effective are we in developing the other mathematical skills outlined in the curriculum? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicating and expressing - Integrating and connecting - Reasoning - Implementing - Understanding and recalling 			
Are there any difficulties? How can we improve the teaching and learning of these skills?			
Does our assessment of Numeracy and Maths help us to improve teaching and learning?			
How well are we catering for pupils with special education needs?			
How well are we catering for pupils with very good mathematical ability?			
How well are we using resources to support maths teaching and learning? Is there over use of textbooks?			
How are we using ICT in the teaching and learning of Maths?			
What changes should we consider regarding how we teach Maths? What action can we take?			

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: LITERACY			
<i>Teacher</i>		<i>Interviewer</i>	
<i>Teacher's class(es)</i>		<i>Date</i>	
LITERACY (ENGLISH OR IRISH)			
What are our strengths in the teaching of literacy?			
Are there any areas of concern?			
How effectively do we teach pupils to read (development of fluency and comprehension)?			
How effectively do we teach oral language skills?			
How effectively do we teach writing skills (fluency and legibility in handwriting; functional and structural aspects; attention to writing process; range of genres, various audiences)?			
Do we maximise opportunities to develop literacy in curriculum areas other than English or Irish? Are these opportunities effective? What other strategies could we use?			
What English or Irish resources do you find most useful in your teaching? What other resources do you need? What other resources does the school more generally need?			
How effectively do we involve parents in raising literacy standards in the school? How do we know?			
What changes should we make to how we currently teach literacy in the school?			

Appendix 1.5: Sample reflection sheets

Sample self-reflection sheet 1

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN OUR SCHOOL	
Strengths	Why
Areas for improvement	Why
Priorities for action	Why

Sample self-reflection sheet 2

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THIS LESSON
What worked well? Why?
What did not go according to plan? Why?
What will I do differently when teaching this lesson or topic again or when using the same strategies?

Appendix 1.6: Sample teaching and learning reflection/ review/ observation schedule

Sample Lesson Observation Schedule ²¹			
<i>Class:</i>	<i>No of pupils:</i>	<i>Date:</i>	<i>Teacher:</i>
<i>Curriculum area:</i>	<i>Time:</i>	<i>Duration:</i>	<i>Observer:</i>
NOTE: SELECT RELEVANT POINTS DURING LESSON OBSERVATION. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO COMMENT ON ALL PROMPTS			
<p><i>Preparation for teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Necessary resources and materials are organised and readily available in advance of the lesson <p><i>Teaching approaches</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lesson is guided by expected learning outcomes which are linked to the curriculum and which are shared with the pupils The lesson is well structured (introduction, development, conclusion/review) A range of teaching approaches is used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and pupil questioning Active learning including play Guided activity and discovery Co-operative/collaborative learning Talk and discussion Environment-based learning Higher-order thinking and problem solving Necessary and relevant resources including ICT by teacher and/or pupils are used to support pupils' learning The varying needs and abilities of pupils are catered for through the use of differentiation Teacher questioning is clear, includes lower and higher order questions and stimulates response from pupils Effective use is made of opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills Attention is given to the consolidation of pupils' learning Constructive feedback is provided to pupils on their learning and teaching and learning is amended in the light of that feedback <p><i>Management of pupils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions are respectful The pupils' efforts are affirmed The teacher has high and realistic expectations of the pupils Pupils' contributions and questions are welcomed <p><i>Pupils' engagement in learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils work purposefully during the lesson Pupils are interested in the lesson content All pupils participate in the lesson Pupils are properly challenged in their learning Pupils achieve the expected learning outcome(s) of the lesson 			<i>Observation/comments</i>
<i>Key points discussed:</i>			
<i>Signed (Teacher)</i>		<i>Signed (Observer)</i>	
<i>Date</i>		<i>Date</i>	

Template for teaching and learning reflection/ review/ observation

Lesson Observation Schedule			
<i>Class:</i>	<i>No of pupils:</i>	<i>Date:</i>	<i>Teacher:</i>
<i>Curriculum area:</i>	<i>Time:</i>	<i>Duration:</i>	<i>Observer:</i>
<i>Areas to be reviewed (select relevant aspects of practice from the sample schedule)</i>		<i>Observation/comments</i>	
<i>Key points discussed:</i>			
<i>Signed (Teacher)</i>		<i>Signed (Observer)</i>	
<i>Date</i>		<i>Date</i>	

Appendix 1.7: Sample school protocol²²

Protocol for professional collaborative review of teaching and learning
<p>Prior to the lesson</p> <p>Whole -staff meetings to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the process • Confirm the focus of the process (the evaluation theme or sub-themes) • Develop/share/finalise the lesson reflection/review schedule • Confirm that the purpose of the process is school improvement • Agree the information that will be maintained and shared. <p>The teachers engaging in professional collaborative review of teaching and learning meet to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the lesson or lessons to be taught and reviewed or observed • Agree the time and length of the professional collaborative teaching period • Agree a time and venue for their review discussion and completion of the lesson reflection/review schedule • Agree the focus of the review. <p>The lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lesson or lessons are taught and observed or reviewed. <p>After the lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers discuss the teaching and learning that took place with reference to the criteria in the lesson reflection/review schedule • The teachers complete the lesson reflection/review schedule together • A record of information relevant to the area of focus of school self-evaluation is maintained • Access to the completed lesson reflection/review schedule is restricted to those agreed prior to the lesson • Relevant information to inform the school self-evaluation is extracted and shared as agreed prior to the lesson • Aggregated information derived from all the lesson reflection/review schedules on a particular evaluation sub-theme is used as agreed to inform the school self-evaluation report.

²² School leaders should ensure that all aspects of the protocol are thoroughly discussed and agreed

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