

**Portumna Community School
School Improvement Plan
(SSE) Plan 2025–2026
Principal: Shane McClearn**

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Introduction

Portumna Community School is committed to continuous improvement in teaching and learning. As part of our ongoing engagement with the School Self-Evaluation process, the school has identified three key focus areas for the 2025–2026 academic year. These areas were chosen following consultation with staff, students, and parents, and align with the national framework Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools (LAOS).

School Self-Evaluation Six-Step Process

1. Step 1: Identify Focus
2. Step 2: Gather Evidence
3. Step 3: Analyse and Make Judgements
4. Step 4: Write and Share Improvement Plan
5. Step 5: Put Improvement Plan into Action
6. Step 6: Monitor Actions and Evaluate Impact

Focus Area 1: Homework – Improving the Consistency, Recording, and Monitoring of Homework

Rationale / Why this area was chosen:

Homework plays a vital role in reinforcing classroom learning, building independent study habits, and developing student's responsibility for learning. Teachers/Year heads/Parents observed that students were not consistently recording or completing homework, and that clearer structures would help support engagement and accountability.

Linked LAOS Domains and Standards:

- Domain 2: Learner Experiences – Students engage purposefully in learning activities; Students reflect on their progress.
- Domain 3: Teachers' Individual Practice – Teachers use effective planning and assessment practices.
- Domain 4: Teachers' Collaborative Practice – Teachers work together to implement assessment and feedback.

- Domain 1: Learner Outcomes – Students demonstrate the skills and attitudes necessary for effective learning.

Improvement Actions:

- Homework written clearly on the board in all classes. (59% currently always-target 91% by end of the year-Staff survey Sept 2025)
- Students record homework daily in journals.
- YHs will continue to stamp journals- juniors
- 'Show Me' strategy for junior students – showing journals before leaving class.
- Adequate time provided to record homework at end of class.
- SPHE classes used to reinforce routine of recording subjects and homework.
- Students record some form of homework in every subject (study, review, or revision).
- Year Heads to monitor homework from post-midterm to Christmas. Agenda item at all YH meetings.
- Three or more 'No Homework' incidents (in any subject) trigger intervention by Year Head.
- Parents encouraged to check journals regularly.
- Focus also on recent inspection report recommendation *"Teachers should consider not only students who need additional support but also those who would benefit from more challenging class and homework tasks to further extend their learning."*

Success Criteria:

Increased consistency in homework recording.

Reduction in 'No Homework' incidents.

Improved student organisation and preparedness.

Positive feedback from teachers and parents and year heads.

Focus Area 2: Promoting Student Responsibility for Learning

Rationale:

To empower students to take ownership of their learning, set realistic goals, and reflect on progress using the Athena system. This aligns with our aim of fostering lifelong learners who are self-directed and reflective. **(Continued focus from last year)**

Linked LAOS Domains and Standards:

- Domain 2: Learner Experiences – Students reflect on their progress and develop ownership.
- Domain 1: Learner Outcomes – Students achieve their potential in learning.
- Domain 3: Teachers' Individual Practice – Teachers use assessment to support

learning.

- Domain 4: Teachers' Collaborative Practice – Teachers work together to plan and review impact.

Improvement Actions:

- Students set targets each term (Weeks 10, 20, 30) using Athena.
- Self-reflection templates completed after each assessment cycle (in journals-Forbairt project).
- Parents informed of targets and progress via Athena. Athena report provided to parents/guardians. Parents encouraged to monitor child's Athena account.
- Academic Director/Teachers/YHs/SMT use Athena data for mentoring and feedback. (currently 57% have explored Athena platform and use it to support tracking and performance-target 91% by end of year) Targeted support for 34% of teachers requesting further training by the SSE team & Academic Director
- In relation to oral feedback *"Teachers should encourage their students to record the oral feedback so that it can be used to guide them in their work."*
- SPHE and Assemblies reinforce goal setting and self-management.

Success Criteria:

All students set termly targets on Athena.

Reflection templates completed and reviewed.

Increased student awareness of goals.

Evidence of oral feedback recorded by students

Improved engagement and motivation.

91% of teachers using Athena

Focus Area 3: Subject Planning (Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Reform)

Rationale:

To continue building on progress in Junior Cycle subject planning 24/25 and to prepare for upcoming Senior Cycle reforms.

Linked LAOS Domains and Standards:

- Domain 4: Teachers' Collaborative Practice – Teachers plan collaboratively to enhance learning and assessment.
- Domain 3: Teachers' Individual Practice – Teachers plan and review lessons to progress learning.
- Domain 1: Learner Outcomes – Students achieve their potential through improved planning and delivery.

Improvement Actions:

- Continue structured subject department meetings for Junior Cycle planning. (T&L team will provide a follow up support model)
- Update Junior Cycle subject plans using the subject department booklet template designed last year-ACCS middle leaders' course-focus on:
"Teachers should use their plans as live documents to inform their teaching and learning, and update time frames where necessary"
- Begin Senior Cycle reform planning (new specifications and assessment models-Fiona Kenny). Focus on inspectorate recommendation: *"Teachers should extend the planning of Junior Cycle with clear learning activities and differentiation strategies to their Senior Cycle plans. Well-defined time frames together with specific learning activities will help maintain a balanced pace and allow teachers to monitor progress effectively, ensuring that learning objectives are met within the allotted time."*-Tranch 1 ONLY
- Staff CPD in the area of L2 programmes-identified on the staff survey as a need-Niamh and Deirdre (Sen incidental Oct 2025)

Success Criteria:

- Updated Junior Cycle subject plans completed.
- Initial Senior Cycle planning documents prepared FK
- Increased teacher confidence in Athena.
- Positive feedback from staff and parents
- Provide workshop for staff on the L2 programmes with 100% of attendance by those teaching this programme

Focus Area 4-continued focus from 2024/2025

SSE Focus Area: Clarifying and Connecting Learning Intentions

Domain: Teaching and Learning

Standard: Teachers clearly identify and communicate the learning intentions and success criteria of lessons.

Rationale: This has been identified as an area of focus from a number of inspection reports.

General Advice for Improving Lesson Clarity and Student Engagement-DES Inspectorate:

- *When sharing learning intentions at the start of a lesson, focus on the **skills and knowledge** students will develop—not just the tasks they'll complete.*
- *Make clear connections between the activities and the learning goals so students understand **why** they're doing each task.*
- *Leave time at the end of lessons to **recap and review** what has been learned. This helps reinforce understanding and gives students a chance to reflect.*

- *Using interactive methods (like games or quizzes) to review learning can boost engagement and help assess student progress.*

Improvement Actions:

- Teachers should ensure that learning intentions are framed around the skills and knowledge students are expected to acquire, rather than just listing activities.
- Learning intentions should be explicitly connected to the tasks and activities during the lesson to help students understand the purpose of their learning.
- Teachers should allocate time at the end of each lesson to recap learning, clarify misconceptions, and reinforce key concepts. This could include strategies such as exit tickets, mini plenaries, or interactive review activities.
- T&L team will provide supports in this area

Expected Impact:

- Currently 46% of staff always use Learning intentions to structure lessons and revisit them with students (Staff survey Sept 2025) we want to increase this number to 87% by the end of the year
- Improved student understanding of lesson objectives.
- Increased student engagement and motivation through clearer understanding of skills and knowledge needed to make progress in class

Summary of SSE Priorities 2025–2026

1. Homework – Improve consistency, recording, and monitoring of homework.
2. Student Responsibility – Strengthen ownership of learning through target-setting and reflection.
3. Subject Planning – Enhance collaborative planning for Junior Cycle and prepare for Senior Cycle reform.
4. Clearly identify and communicate the learning intentions and success criteria of lessons.