



Portmarnock Community School

School Self-Evaluation 2024 - 2025

At Portmarnock Community School, we believe in continuously improving our educational environment. Our **School Self-Evaluation (SSE)** process is a collaborative effort involving our entire school community. It allows us to identify and celebrate effective practices while also pinpointing areas where we can grow and enhance teaching and learning experiences for all students. This process is about our school taking ownership of its own development, informed by evidence and focused on creating meaningful targets for improvement.

Our Current Focus: Inclusion Through Questioning (2024-2025)

For the 2024-2025 academic year, we are **continuing our focus on 'Inclusion through Questioning'**. This builds upon previous years' efforts to address the impact of the pandemic on student socialisation and their ability to engage and speak out in class. Initially, we focused on Differentiation, which then evolved into a broader emphasis on Inclusion. To embed these strategies and ensure consistent development, we centered our efforts around the powerful tool of questioning.

This continuation was strongly supported by positive feedback and recommendations from our May 2024 Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership, and Learning (WSE-MLL) Inspection. Our ongoing aim is to get students more actively involved in their learning, increase student voice, improve social skills and confidence in class, enhance engagement, foster self-reliance and self-esteem, and ultimately, boost students' academic wellbeing and motivation.

Subject Departments across the school are actively working on this by:

- Analysing assessment results to identify successes and areas for improvement.
- Implementing specific questioning strategies (e.g., using Higher Order and Lower Order questions, effective wait time, encouraging student-generated questions).
- Building in opportunities for both teacher and learner reflection.

Positive Changes and Progress Observed

We are delighted to report significant progress in embedding these practices across the school:

Increased Student Engagement and Confidence:

- Surveys from May 2025 show a **significant increase in student participation and enjoyment**. For instance, 45% of students "Strongly agreed" (up from 37% last year) and 41% "Agreed" (up from 35%) that they like completing group and peer work. (411 Student Respondents)
- Students feel more encouraged to ask questions, with 15% "Strongly agreeing" (up from 6%) and 68% "Agreeing" (up from 39%) with this statement.
- There's also a notable rise in comfort when asking and answering questions in class, with 15% "Strongly agreeing" (up from 7%) and 57% "Agreeing" (up from 25%).
- Overall, nearly **60% of students now feel "more confident"** sharing their thoughts in class.
- Teachers have observed increased hand-raising, greater willingness to participate, and improved confidence, particularly among students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN), where participation increased from 78% to 81%.

Enhanced Teaching Practices:

- Our staff overwhelmingly reports that questioning is clear, differentiated, equitably distributed, and encourages higher-order thinking (100% "Always/Often" for these categories).
- There's a consistent application of various questioning techniques, leading to increased student engagement and volunteering.
- The use of reflection sheets and exit slips is now a regular part of classroom practice, promoting metacognitive reflection.

Academic Outcomes:

- Analysis of November 2024 assessments showed that in some subjects up to **19% of second-year students scored over 90%** on definitions of question words.
- We've observed fewer marks lost due to misinterpreting questions, particularly by Easter of First Year, indicating improved comprehension skills.

Parental Feedback (202 Respondents):

- Parent/Guardian surveys from May 2025 also reflect positive changes:
 - **75% agreed** their child feels comfortable completing group/peer work (up from 74%).
 - **58.4% agreed** their child feels comfortable asking/answering questions (up from 58%), with a decrease in those disagreeing (4.5% down from 8%).
 - **62% agreed** their child is more confident and content in school in recent years (up from 57%).

Looking Ahead: Future SSE Focus (Proposed 2025-2026)

Based on comprehensive feedback from students, parents/guardians, and staff, we are exploring potential future SSE focuses for the 2025-2026 academic year. Initial feedback suggests interest in two key areas:

- **Reflection/Reflective Practices:** Supporting students to critically evaluate their own learning and progress.
- **Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Development:** Enhancing awareness and integration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals into our curriculum and daily school life.

These proposed areas will be subject to further evaluation and feedback, ensuring our School Improvement Plan continues to be responsive to the evolving needs of our school community. We are committed to fostering an environment where every student can thrive and succeed.