



## Brannoxtown Community National School (BCNS) School Self-Evaluation (SSE) *School Improvement Plan 2020-2021*

### 1. Introduction

#### School Self-Evaluation

School self-evaluation (SSE) is a collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal school review. During school self-evaluation the principal and teachers, under the direction of the board of management and patron and in consultation with parents and children, engage in reflective enquiry on one or two aspects of the work of the school.

#### Context and Timeline

School self-evaluation was introduced by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in 2012 as a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review, focused on school improvement. The DES required all schools to engage in the school self-evaluation process and set out its purpose and rationale (Circular 39/2012).

In 2016, the DES published a framework for primary schools to engage with SSE (*Looking at Our School, 2016*) and DES advised schools on how to engage with the SSE process (DES, Circular 39/2016). However, also in the same year, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) issued a directive to teachers, not to engage with the SSE process, in response to a government ban on promotion in schools and reports of increasing teacher workload. In 2018, the INTO lifted their directive on SSE, to ensure the continuity of pay restoration for primary teachers. Accordingly, the DES updated their advice to schools on engaging with SSE (DES, Circular 16/2018).

#### SSE Six-Step Process

The Framework for SSE originally published in 2016 (Circular 39/2016) and unchanged in the subsequent advice (Circular 16/2018), sets out a six-step, iterative process of evaluation.



**Identify focus:** Identify the domains most relevant for your school.

**Gather evidence:** Determine the evidence sources of most value.

**Analyse and make judgements:** Specify strengths and areas for improvement.

**Write and share report and improvement plan:** Draft the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

**Put improvement plan into action:** School staff take responsibility for implementing the plan; actions become part of the teaching and learning process.

**Monitor actions and evaluate impact:** Regularly review progress as a whole school staff and share findings with children, parents and the Board.

School Self-Evaluation: Six-step process (DES, 2016)



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Using the six-step process, all school staff engage in self-evaluation in the context of a shared school goal. This involves looking at evidence of children's learning, analysing it, interpreting it and acting on it to improve outcomes across the school. The Framework also includes *Teaching and Learning Domains and Standards* and *Statements of Practice*. The principal and teachers are advised to use these as the basis for looking at their school and ultimately identifying their focus for SSE.

## 2. Brannoxtown CNS and SSE

### Beginning the SSE process

Schools are asked to identify one or two curriculum areas or aspects of teaching and learning for improvement (DES, Circular 39/2016). At Brannoxtown Community National School, we have identified the **Writing Workshop** as the focus of our SSE. During the 2019/2020 school year, the staff met to engage with the SSE process beginning with the following questions: *How well are we doing? How do we know? How can we find out more? What are our strengths and areas for improvement? How can we improve?*

Anne Marie Roche joined the Brannoxtown CNS staff in September 2019, bringing considerable experience and expertise as an Associate with *Write to Read*. The *Write to Read* initiative, led by Dr. Eithne Kennedy, DCU, aims to improve literacy outcomes for children in disadvantaged schools and communities in Ireland. As an Associate, Anne Marie is a Teacher-Facilitator who provides initial professional development in the Write to Read framework and gives school staff ongoing support for its implementation, specific to their school's context.

Sarah FitzPatrick had led the development of the Primary Language Curriculum in the NCCA, before becoming principal at Brannoxtown CNS. Sarah had commissioned research on language and literacy in early childhood and primary education to underpin the new Primary Language Curriculum, on behalf of the NCCA. In leading the team developing the new Primary Language Curriculum, Sarah worked with language experts to develop Teacher Support Material for a range of literacy initiatives in primary schools including the Writing Workshop.

During Term 1 (from September 2019), staff at Brannoxtown CNS implemented several language initiatives across the school including daily writing time. In the context of developing the Whole School Plan for English and analysing the school's strengths and priorities as part of SSE meetings, the staff decided to focus on the Writing Workshop. It was agreed to implement it fully across all classes from the beginning of Term 2 (January 2020). Anne Marie Roche provided a range of templates and supports for implementing the Writing Workshop from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. The Writing Workshop was prioritised in the Whole School Plan for English at Brannoxtown CNS.

The national organisation, Professional Development Support for Teachers (PDST) offers schools advice and support across a range of initiatives including SSE. Following a request by the principal, the staff met with a PDST Facilitator on March 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss our engagement with SSE and our focus on the Writing Workshop. Following the full day-meeting with the PDST Facilitator, Ciara Gaughan, the following School Improvement Plan for 2020-2021 was prepared by the principal focusing on the Writing Workshop at Brannoxtown CNS.



### 3. School Improvement Plan 2020/2021

1.	<b>Action Plan Coordinator:</b>	Sarah FitzPatrick, principal
2.	<b>Introduction:</b>	<p>Writers are continually planning and revising as they write so researchers recommend a process approach to the teaching of writing. This approach views writing as a set of behaviours which can be taught, learned, discussed and developed. It emphasises the importance of thinking, inquiring, imagining, creating, communicating and exploring language through writing. It gives attention to both processes of writing and the written product.</p> <p>The <b>Writing Workshop</b> is an instructional framework which teachers are implementing in Brannoxtown CNS to support <i>all</i> children as writers.</p>
3.	<b>Learning Focus:</b>	<p>Children develop concepts, dispositions and skills in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engagement</b></li> <li>• <b>Writing process<sup>1</sup></b></li> </ul>
4.	<b>Targets (for improved learner outcomes):</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children <b>engage</b> well with the daily Writing Workshop and <b>enjoy</b> writing.</li> <li>2. Children recognise and <b>practise what 'good writers do'</b>.<sup>2</sup></li> </ol>
5.	<p><b>Learning Outcomes (Primary Language Curriculum)<sup>3</sup></b></p> <p><b>Engagement</b></p> <p><i>Through appropriately</i></p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b> (junior and senior infants):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend to, take part in and have fun mark-making, drawing and writing, across languages where appropriate, to communicate with others.</li> </ul> <p><b>Stage 2</b> (first and second class):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take part in and enjoy writing, across languages where appropriate, to communicate with others.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Additional outcomes in the new Primary Language Curriculum are also relevant. These include a focus on: Motivation and choice; Conventions of print and sentence structure; Spelling; Vocabulary, Purpose, genre and voice and Response and author's intent.

<sup>2</sup> Staff discussed several targets in preparing this plan. The PDST advised us to identify just one or two targets for our SIP. Additional targets which will inform our practice and the next iterations of this SIP include:

- Children write to **different audiences and for different purposes**.
- Children write in a **variety of genres**.
- Children **share their writing with others**.
- Children **engage with others' writing**, e.g., providing feedback.
- Children use a **range of tools to assess and improve their own writing**.
- Children develop as **independent, self-regulated writers**.

Children's writing portfolios show **continuity and progression** across classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

<sup>3</sup> Learning Outcomes in the new Primary Language Curriculum are supported with **Examples** of children's language learning and development, **Progression Steps** (which show the learning to achieve the outcome) and **Support Material**. Teachers will engage with all three additional facets of the curriculum to plan and support children to achieve Learning Outcomes for Engagement and the Writing Process.



	<p><i>engaging learning experiences, children should be able to...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise themselves as writers, take part in and enjoy writing, across languages where appropriate, to communicate with others.</li> </ul> <p><b>Stages 3 &amp; 4</b> (third to sixth class):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage positively and purposefully while creating text in a variety of genres, other languages where appropriate and across the curriculum.</li> <li>Use writing as a tool to clarify and structure thought and to express individuality.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Learning Outcomes (Primary Language Curriculum)</b></p> <p><b>Writing Process</b></p> <p><i>Through appropriately engaging learning experiences, children should be able to...</i></p>	<p><b>Stages 1 and 2</b> (junior infants to second class):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the writing process when creating texts collaboratively or independently.</li> </ul> <p><b>Stages 3 &amp; 4</b> (third to sixth class):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and evaluate skills and strategies associated with writing as a process and use them to create texts independently and/or collaboratively across a range of genres, in other languages where appropriate and across the curriculum for a variety of purposes and audiences.</li> <li>Use appropriate language to evaluate and discuss revisions and edits to texts created in a range of genres for a variety of purposes and audiences.</li> </ul>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Actions:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To plan a <b>whole school approach to Writing Workshop, evident in the School Plan for Language: English</b> and aligned with Learning Outcomes in the new Primary Language Curriculum.</li> <li>To plan and provide opportunities for children to <b>write through play</b>, which provides an authentic purpose for writing in the Junior Room. For example, children playing <i>The Optician</i> can prepare an open/closed sign, write a prescription for glasses and complete forms.</li> <li>To provide lots of opportunities for children in the Junior Room to experience <b>shared and interactive writing</b> and <b>shared reading</b> as a preparation for beginning Writing Workshop, through a weekly/fortnightly focus on one Big Book.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In <b>shared writing</b>, children choose what they would like to write about (the topic) and the teacher acts as the scribe.</li> <li>In <b>interactive writing</b>, the teacher and children both act as the scribe.</li> </ul> </li> <li>To provide repeated, explicit demonstrations of the processes involved in writing with plenty of opportunity for children to practise and experiment with writing during a</li> </ol>



		<p><b>daily, scheduled Writing Workshop</b> (every classroom, every teacher, every day):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Junior Classes: 30 minutes</li> <li>○ Middle and Senior Classes: 45 minutes.</li> </ul> <p>5. To plan three parts to every Writing Workshop: a <b>mini-lesson</b>, time for <b>independent writing and conferencing</b> with children and a <b>share session</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the <b>mini-lesson</b>, the teacher provides explicit instruction on one, specific craft, convention, profess or organisational technique involved in writing.</li> <li>○ During <b>sustained, independent writing time</b>, the teacher engages in conferences with individual children. Conferences are short (5 minutes) and teachers aim to conference with approximately 3 children daily.</li> <li>○ In the <b>share session</b>, each child reads his/her writing aloud while children in the class listen, ask questions and say what they like about the writing.</li> </ul> <p>6. To plan and provide <b>mini-lessons to teach the process, craft and mechanical aspects of writing</b> so that children recognise and practise what ‘good writers do’.</p> <p>7. To provide a range of topics and support children to write in to <b>different audiences and for different purposes</b>.</p> <p>8. To <b>plan the Writing Genres</b> to be taught across the school and to agree the title of each genre along with key terminology to be used consistently.</p> <p>9. To provide opportunities for social interaction including an audience and response to children’s writing through <b>daily conferences and share sessions</b>.</p> <p>10. To <b>regularly monitor and assess children’s progress with writing</b> using teacher checklists and rubrics and self and peer assessments for children, in line with the Progression Continuum for Writing in the Primary Language Curriculum.</p> <p>11. To promote a <b>school culture which sees children as real writers</b>, who experience daily, meaningful, authentic opportunities to develop as independent, self-regulated writers.</p> <p>12. To clarify expectations regarding <b>children’s Writing Portfolios</b> for each stage (two years) including the timing and number of samples collected by each class teacher for each child, each year.</p>
7.	<p><b>Monitoring Strategies:</b>  <i>For each teacher</i></p>	<p>1. To include a professional reflection on progress with the Writing Workshop in the <b>Cúntas Míósúil (Monthly Report)</b> for each month during the 2020/2021 school year.</p> <p>2. To maintain a <b>Professional Learning Log</b> to record observations implementing the Writing Workshop to</p>



		<p>include a focus on: Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT Analysis) for sharing at dedicated staff sessions to review progress with the Writing Workshop.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. To invite <b>children’s views on themselves as writers and on the writing process</b> at the beginning of the school year (similar to the template ‘My Thoughts About School’).</li> <li>4. To gather <b>baseline writing samples</b> from children at the start of the school year, before implementation of the Writing Workshop school-wide in September 2020.</li> <li>5. To schedule regular staff meetings to review progress with Writing Workshop to <b>look at children’s writing samples and across the school</b> and to revise actions to achieve targets if/as necessary.</li> <li>6. To host a <b>focus group session</b> with children if/as needed to discuss their experience with Writing Workshop.</li> <li>7. To include an update on progress with the Writing Workshop in the <b>Principal’s Report at Board of Management meetings</b>.</li> <li>8. To <b>share information and invite engagement on the Writing Workshop with parents</b> at the beginning of the new school year and to provide opportunities for parents to engage with the school’s progress during the year.</li> <li>9. To <b>celebrate and share our experience with Writing Workshop in our school communications</b>:       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BCNS Newsletters</li> <li>○ BCNS Facebook and Twitter accounts</li> <li>○ BCNS Website</li> <li>○ BCNS inputs to local media (e.g., Bridge magazine).</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
8.	<p><b>Evaluation/Criteria for Success:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Teachers’ Experiences</u>:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Children have <b>engaged</b> well with the daily Writing Workshop and <b>enjoy</b> writing.</li> <li>b. Children have <b>engaged with others’ writing</b>, e.g., providing feedback.</li> <li>c. Children have progressed in their development as <b>independent, self-regulated writers</b>.</li> <li>d. <b>Teachers feel empowered</b> to implement the Writing Workshop effectively and are excited to do so.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <u>Children’s Writing Portfolios</u>:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Children have recognised and practised <b>what ‘good writers do’</b>.</li> <li>b. Children have written to <b>different audiences and for different purposes</b>.</li> <li>c. Children have written in a <b>variety of genres</b>.</li> <li>d. Children have <b>shared their writing with others</b>.</li> <li>e. Children have used a <b>range of tools to assess and improve their own writing</b>.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>



	<p>f. Children’s writing portfolios show <b>continuity and progression</b> across classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.</p> <p>3. <u>Children’s Experiences:</u></p> <p>a. Children <b>recognise their progress and achievements with Writing Workshop</b> and speak positively about their experience.</p> <p>4. <u>Impact on Learning:</u></p> <p>a. Children’s writing has improved across <b>all curriculum areas</b>.</p> <p>b. Children’s vocabulary has improved, evident in attainment on <b>Standardised Test scores</b>.</p>
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#### 4. Next Steps

##### Planning for Implementation

A schedule of staff meetings will be agreed for the next school year (2020-2021) to facilitate time for all staff to engage in the actions, monitoring strategies and evaluation discussions outlined in this SSE School Improvement Plan.

##### Engaging with Parents and Children

An overview of the School Improvement Plan was shared with parents in the **Note for Parents: 2020/2021** attached to the June school letter. Following approval by the Board in June, this Plan was published on the school website. A print copy can be provided for parents of the school, on request. This School Support Plan will be shared and discussed with parents at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year. At this meeting with parents, staff will show what the Writing Workshop looks and sounds like for children at different stages in Brannoxtown CNS. As noted on page six of this plan, children themselves will be invited to share their experience with Writing Workshop in different ways during the 2020/2021 school year and evidence and experience from children’s engagement with Writing Workshop will, in turn, shape the implementation of this plan at our school.

##### Approval by the Board

This School Improvement Plan will be implemented from the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year. This Plan was adopted by the Board of Management of Brannoxtown CNS at their meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2020.

Signed:   
Ms. Deirdre O'Donovan  
Chairperson

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2020

Signed:   
Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick  
Principal

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2020



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## 4. References

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