



Welcome to Issue 15 of SSE Update – the SSE e-bulletin for post-primary schools. Previous editions are available on the SSE website [here](#). This has been an exceptionally challenging term for students, teachers, principals and whole school communities. **Owing to the tremendous efforts of principals, teachers and others in the school community, schools have operated safely and well, and students have reconnected with friends, settled back to school and are progressing in their learning.** The Inspectorate’s engagement with schools over the past term through advisory sessions and surveys has highlighted the collective commitment, flexibility and adaptability of schools in meeting the challenges of the 2020/21 school year. This SSE e-bulletin sets out some ideas which it is hoped schools will find useful in the next school term. As always, we welcome your ideas on SSE which you can send to [info@schoolself-evaluation.ie](mailto:info@schoolself-evaluation.ie)

## Why is SSE helpful to me now?

**At its heart, SSE is about empowering schools to take a look at how they teach and how students learn. It helps schools to make small but meaningful changes to improve outcomes for learners.**

SSE provides an opportunity to reflect, to consider, and to take stock of what has worked, what has not, and for whom. Engaging with the SSE process provides us with an opportunity to critically reflect on current provision and to celebrate successes. It facilitates us to collaboratively identify areas which could be improved to benefit student learning experiences and outcomes. It provides an opportunity to respond flexibly to challenges as they arise - something which is particularly relevant at this time.



## Practical uses of SSE in the current time

- SSE can support teachers in reviewing how homework is assigned and how they provide feedback on this work. This may include consideration of students' and teachers' existing digital skills and access to digital technologies.
- Even when students are physically distanced, collaboration can be facilitated as students listen to, react, and work with the ideas of their peers while still maintaining that physical distance. SSE can support teachers in reviewing how best to provide a broad range of active, collaborative learning experiences for students.
- SSE can also help in adapting how teachers manage ongoing communication with parents. The Department's [Supporting Collaboration with Parents](#) guidance document provides practical information to support schools in this area. In line with public health advice to reduce social contacts, the following interim options could be used to ensure that ongoing communication is provided to parents/guardians of students during COVID-19 such as: (i) additional reports; (ii) phone calls; (iii) video-conferencing. Consultation will take place at school level in relation to the option(s) most appropriate for enabling engagement with parents.



## Some practical points to bear in mind...

- **Consider the information you already have.** For example, what do we already know about how teachers have adapted their teaching and how well we are meeting students' learning needs?
- **Think about how best to capture the views of students and parents also.** Remember that a key element of SSE is talking to learners, and to their parents, to get their views on learning, on how students learn best, and on how the school can work to support them in this learning.

## Schools are very familiar with the key steps in the SSE process

1. Identify focus. Recent DE guidance will support you in reflecting on a theme relevant to your own particular context.

2. Focus on information already at hand, such as information from parents, students and staff which is relevant to your particular theme.

3. Analyse and make judgements. Prioritise the area for addressing (LAOS) and state the desired improvement.

4. Agree the planned actions, write the report and the improvement plan. Share both with your school community.

5. Put the improvement plan into action and ensure that all are clear as to their role in supporting improvement.

6. Identify people to monitor implementation and evaluate the impact against success criteria.



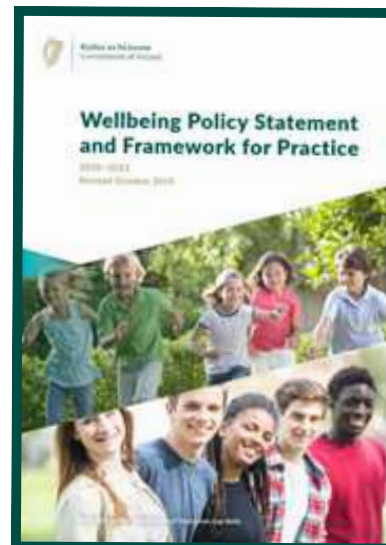
# SSE and Wellbeing

**Wellbeing education** is a priority for us all and can be progressed through the SSE process. SSE can also help a school to address the wellbeing challenges that arise for staff or learners. The adoption of a **multi-component, preventative, whole-school approach** is most beneficial in promoting wellbeing. This involves all members of the school community collaborating to change and improve specific areas of school life that impact on wellbeing.

The focus of the next SSE Newsletter will be on how to use the SSE process to develop Wellbeing. In the meantime, here are some ideas to consider:

- Begin your focus by developing the provision of the SPHE curriculum under the key area of Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) from the [Wellbeing Framework for Practice](#).
- Use the statements of effective practice in the Wellbeing Framework to review your SPHE policy, under the Policy and Planning Key area or
- Use the statements of effective practice in the Framework to reflect on other areas that fall under the Culture and Environment or Relationships and Partnerships key areas.

*Keep the initial focus on one key area so that it can be given appropriate attention.*



# SSE and DEIS

A school's DEIS action plan is its school improvement plan for the purposes of SSE; no additional or separate plan is necessary.

DEIS schools should :

- continue their DEIS action planning across the key themes of DEIS using the SSE six step process.
- on the basis of the evidence gathered, target their resources, specific interventions and supports at the students who are most at risk of educational disadvantage.
- conduct an annual review of their DEIS plan; this is critical in informing how targets and interventions may need to be adjusted.

*Schools that are at the end of a three-year cycle in DEIS planning can extend their plan for one more year but should continue to plan across all themes of DEIS. DEIS schools are not required to prepare additional action plans for the three new DEIS themes introduced in 2017: leadership, CPD and wellbeing. Schools should integrate key actions relating to these themes into their existing DEIS plans.*

# Extension of SSE period

[Circular 0041/2020](#) outlines how schools can engage in SSE in the current school year:

Schools should use SSE to:

- address challenges they are encountering on a day-to-day basis **and/or**
- complete work on the aspects of teaching and learning they had selected as the focus for their self-evaluation in the period 2016-2020.



While the focus of SSE shouldn't be on the paperwork, schools may find it useful to adjust or reframe existing targets/actions, or include additional ones, if required.

**Key decisions should be recorded in a way that is informative and meaningful for the school community.**

# Using additional supports and resources

- The dedicated Back to School page on the Department's site is regularly updated and is a one-stop-shop for advice and guidance. You can access it [here](#).
- The PDST and NEPs have compiled a suite of information and supports that continue to be very useful during the current period.
- The Employee Assistance Service '[Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile](#)' is a free and confidential support service which is available to teachers and other school staff.
- Finally, the Inspectorate continues to engage in advisory sessions with schools in relation to areas such as wellbeing, the promotion of a safe learning environment, and teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors will also be available on request to provide SSE advisory visits. If you haven't had an advisory session to date and would like to arrange one, please contact [info@schoolself-evaluation.ie](mailto:info@schoolself-evaluation.ie)

# Planning for the next phase of SSE

**The next cycle of SSE 2021-2024 is now scheduled to start in September 2021.**

Prior to that, the Department and its Inspectorate will engage in consultation with all stakeholders, including principals, school leaders and teachers.

This will provide a very valuable opportunity to consider what is working well, what the next focus of SSE should be, and what additional actions should be taken to support the use of SSE.

**The consultation will commence in January 2021.**

**Details will be available on the SSE website [here](#).**