

School Self-Evaluation Summary Report – 2024/25

Introduction:

The 2024/25 academic year was once again a very busy and successful one for St. Ailbe's School. Enrolments continued to grow, enabling us to offer an increasingly expansive curriculum at both Junior and Senior Cycle. Our increased staffing allocation allowed us to appoint two permanent AP1 and two permanent AP2 positions, further strengthening our leadership and support structures. St. Ailbe's is a DEIS school and the school fulfils its statutory reporting obligations through its DEIS reporting which includes target-setting and action-planning in relation to the pillars of the DEIS viz. attendance, retention, transitions, literacy, numeracy, examination attainment and partnership with parents and others. This SSE report (which is not intended to be exhaustive) is designed to complement the data-rich statutory reporting by giving a sense of the activities occurring in the school which go towards meeting our DEIS targets.

School Structures:

St. Ailbe's School benefits greatly from having a **Home School Community Liaison** (HSCL) teacher, a **Behaviour for Learning** (BFL) teacher and the presence and support of the **School Completion Programme** (SCP) in the school. These personnel provide invaluable support to our students, parents and staff. The school also has two middle management teams comprising of **AP1 and AP2 postholders**. These postholders provide support to the senior management team and their roles are both developmental and managerial. St. Ailbe's also benefits from having particularly active **AEN** and **Pastoral Care** teams which meet once per week. **Our guidance team** are active across all teams. There is substantial crossover between all of these teams and agencies, in terms of personnel, which results in very effective communication and ability to respond. The **Attendance team** (Senior Management, SCP and HSCL) meet once per week to monitor and address

any attendance issues. All staff members are active on at least one **Croke Park team** which meet four times a year. These teams are reviewed each year and changed to reflect the needs of the school. As well as addressing the needs of the school, these teams provide opportunities for staff to make real contributions to the development of the school and have helped to build schoolwide capacity.

Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning:

St. Ailbe's had a Whole School Evaluation in March of this year. During a WSE-MLL, the inspectors evaluate and report under the following areas of enquiry:

- Quality of school leadership and management
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Quality of support for students' wellbeing

Key Findings:

- A key strength of the school was the positive, respectful relationships between all members of the school community.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good; committed teachers engaged in professional learning opportunities and shared their expertise with their peers.
- The quality of leadership and management was very good; leadership teams ensured the smooth running of the school and strategically planned for future developments and school improvement.
- The board of management was committed to students' welfare and ensured that students were at the centre of all decisions made.
- Substantial work had been done to identify DEIS targets, explore potential actions and monitor the impact of these actions.

- The quality of support for students' wellbeing was very good; the school placed a significant focus on enhancing wellbeing protective factors and minimising wellbeing risk factors.
- There was a vast array of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to cater for all students and their varied interests.

We found the WSE process to be very positive and affirming experience and would like to commend to inspectorate on their positive approach.

Positive Behaviour Support Team

Throughout the year, several positive behaviour and student engagement strategies have been implemented with great success. The **token system** was once again very well received by our first and second years. This initiative considers class groups as a whole, encouraging collective responsibility. This year's student awards have been very well received, with highlights including a movie day, a Supermac's trip, and a mini sports day. Plans are in place to expand the range of awards next year, with student voice playing a central role in shaping these incentives. The use of **positive postcards** has also proven highly effective, generating strong positive feedback from both students and parents. Initially targeted at Junior Cycle students, the initiative has now been extended to include Senior Cycle students as well. A final batch were sent out on the last week of the school year. Additionally, the **Check and Connect programme** has made a significant impact in supporting students who benefit from regular check-ins. To date, 30 teachers have been trained, with plans to train more in the future. The response from both students and staff has been very positive, and the plan is to implement this initiative early in the academic year.

Ethos Team

A new **Mentor Programme** has been developed to support incoming first-year students by pairing them with Transition Year (TY) mentors. The programme, led by the SCP, will include training for participating TYs and operate

alongside TY Religious Education. TY students will be assigned a small group of first years to mentor and support throughout the year.

In relation to the **school journal**, a gap was identified in **the inclusion of the school's Ethos and Core Values**. As a result, a dedicated Core Values page will be added, and a student-led art competition will be launched to design a new journal cover.

The **One Book One Community** initiative was another notable success this year, with strong links made between the book's themes and the school's core values. First-year class activities focused on drawing these connections. Siobhan Landers, the TETB Ethos Coordinator, was invited to attend the final celebration event. Furthermore, St. Ailbe's were represented at the ETBI Ethos Conference in Portlaoise, continuing to strengthen our commitment to promoting the school's values.

Green Schools

The Green Schools team was actively engaged throughout the year in a variety of environmental initiatives which resulted in securing the **Green Flag**.

Notable projects included the construction of a **living seat** on the school grounds and ongoing water monitoring efforts. A **return bottle scheme**, led by Transition Year students, was successfully implemented to promote recycling and reduce waste. The school **polytunnel was used to grow crops**, supporting sustainability and hands-on learning. Students also participated in regular **litter-picking** events in collaboration with Tipperary Tidy Towns. The **Walk for Water** initiative and water conservation competitions further raised awareness about global water issues. To enhance biodiversity, a **wildflower area** was developed and informative signage was placed around the school grounds. These initiatives reflect the school's strong commitment to environmental stewardship and student-led action.

Looking ahead to the 2025/26 school year, the Green Schools team plans to begin work towards achieving the school's third Green Flag. Building on the success of the return bottle scheme, the team aims to expand this initiative further. Strengthening connections with local community groups in the area

of sustainability will also be a key focus. Ongoing work on the sensory garden will continue, they hope to create a lime stone living seat, alongside efforts to broaden recycling practices within the school. A series of awareness campaigns and guest speaker events are planned to further engage students and promote environmental responsibility across the school community.

Teaching and Learning Team

TETB Communities of Practice – Excellence in Education

This year's TETB community of practice focused on English. English subject co-ordinators and teaching and learning co-ordinators from all TETB schools came together to promote collaboration among all TETB schools and the sharing of effective teaching and learning practices.

St. Ailbe's school formed part of a focus group with Coláiste Mhuire Thurles and Scoil Ruáin Killenaule. The focus of our project was aimed at improving students' oral communication skills with particular focused placed on increasing participation levels and building students' confidence to engage in oral activities during class and when making oral presentations. English teachers from all three schools noted a reluctance among some students when presenting their CBA 1 Oral Communication Task. To combat this, we organised a 'No Pen Day' for all 1st, 2nd and 5th year students where students engaged in oral methodologies and activities in class for the duration of the day.

All 2nd year students were surveyed both before and after the initiative to measure the impact of the day on students' attitude towards oral activities and presentations.

Survey Results Prior No Pen Day:

- 44% stated that they were very uncomfortable when speaking in front of their classmates.
- 22% rarely volunteered to answer a question or participate in classroom discussions.
- 32% stated that they had the tools to improve their oral language skills.
- 66% stated that they felt it benefited their learning when teachers do oral activities during class.

Survey Results After No Pen Day:

- 48% stated they are now very confident when speaking in front of their classmates.
- 35% stated they now always volunteer to answer a question during class.
- 30% stated they now feel confident about presenting their CBA 1 English Communication Task.

The survey results indicated a notable improvement in students' attitude and confidence levels when speaking and presenting in class. The success of this initiative highlights the benefits of prioritising oral activities during class and the advantages of continuing to encourage cross- curricular collaboration to embed oral teaching strategies beyond English.

In the 2025/26 school year, the Teaching and Learning team will continue to promote a culture of collaboration and the sharing of best practice across all subject departments. A focus on teaching and learning will be incorporated into staff meetings to encourage ongoing professional dialogue. The team also plans to create a dedicated **Teaching and Learning display or notice board** to highlight strategies, successes, and initiatives. In collaboration with selected subject departments, the team will identify a specific area of focus to work on throughout the year. Additionally, they will explore the feasibility of introducing a **'teacher open door policy' for one week**, encouraging **peer**

observation and feedback. The team will also consider implementing a **monthly *Excellence in Education* award** to recognise and celebrate student achievement and engagement.

Active Schools

In 2024/2025 school year, the teams focus remained on promoting inclusive, non-competitive activities that support both the physical and mental wellbeing of our students and staff. A range of engaging initiatives were introduced and built upon to foster a more active school environment.

Student voice played a key role in shaping our Active School programme. At the beginning of the year, all year groups completed questionnaires, and many of the events and activities we introduced—such as lunchtime sports and class challenges—were based directly on their suggestions and feedback.

- **The Walk on Wednesday and Footsteps Friday initiative**, students and staff encouraged to walk our track at lunchtime. This activity helped raise awareness around healthy habits and social setting for students. Themes and events highlighted various health initiatives, Amber Flag – Mental Health Awareness, Irish Heart Foundation, Walk for Water
- We integrated physical activity into the wider curriculum through initiatives **Active School orienteering map** which included cross-curricular elements for Geography, Maths, English and Physical Education included.
- Staff activities were incorporated throughout the year with **staff steps challenge** just before Easter.
- As part of our continued commitment, we successfully completed **Stage 3 of the Active School Flag application and are now on track to receive the flag**. This final stage required us to provide evidence of our whole-school approach, submit final documentation, and reflect on the outcomes of our Active School journey.

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Other notable activities included a **table tennis takeover** for staff and senior cycle students, **tug of war competitions**, **giant Jenga** relays, **memory maze**, tennis ball bucket swap during PE classes, and **structured lunchtime activities** every Tuesday and Thursday, offering badminton, dodgeball, basketball, and soccer. These initiatives strengthened student-staff connections, promoted inclusive participation, and enhanced our positive school culture.

As part of our Active School efforts, a group of our students took the lead in organising a **basketball tournament for 70 primary school children**, showcasing leadership, teamwork, and a strong sense of community involvement.

All of these efforts directly support the wellbeing indicators of being *Active*, *Responsible*, and *Connected*, and form a key part of our whole-school approach to wellbeing. We look forward to receiving official recognition through the awarding of the Active School Flag in the coming term.

Policy Review team

This year the policy review team continued its work reviewing policies relevant to St. Ailbe's in response to recommendations from the principal. The team reviewed, revised, and updated **the Class Tutor Guidelines** document before presenting these to the AP1 team, which in turn went to the BOM meeting. The team also carried out a large body of work to develop the schools Bi Cinealta anti bullying policy. The team will continue its policy work next academic year under the direction of the Principal.

Restorative Practice Team

As planned, Restorative Practice was successfully delivered as a **four-week module to all incoming first-year students**. This was facilitated through SPHE classes by our in-house RP trainers. The programme was well received and will be repeated with next year's first-year group. In addition, there are plans to further develop and extend the programme to include the second-

year cohort. More staff members received RP training during the year, strengthening the whole school approach. The RP team is scheduled to meet in September to review progress and assess staff training needs going forward.

DEIS Planning and Review

This year marks the conclusion of our current three-year DEIS cycle. In preparation for the development of the new **DEIS Plan**, the DEIS team has already begun gathering data to inform target-setting and action-planning for the next cycle. A broad and inclusive consultation process was undertaken, involving all stakeholders through a variety of methods including workshop-style staff meetings, provision mapping, feedback from the WSE, student voice, and the Planet Youth survey. As a designated DEIS school, St. Ailbe's continues to fulfil its statutory reporting obligations through DEIS reporting. This includes the formulation of targets and actions across the DEIS pillars, which are also embedded in subject department planning and reviewed regularly to ensure alignment and impact.

Provision Mapping

St. Ailbe's began the provision mapping process in 2023 and have now completed our first 2-year cycle. We surveyed staff, students and parents and used the data to inform our provision map which will help us identify targets for our next phase of DEIS planning.

Methods/What we did

- An Inclusion Team was established to lead the initiative.

- Key developments and updates were presented at a whole staff meeting to ensure engagement.
- Provision Mapping Team members attended ETB training on Provision Mapping to build capacity and align with best practices.
- We conducted a staff survey to gather feedback on existing provision maps within subject departments.
- Surveys were also distributed to students and parents, enabling us to incorporate a wide range of perspectives. The responses were analysed.
- Finally, we collated all feedback and data to develop a comprehensive whole-school provision map that reflects the needs and strengths of our school community.

Results/ Discussion

Teacher Surveys:

84% of teachers agreed that differences amongst the school community are celebrated.

63% of staff take account of the diverse ways students learn.

99% agreed that everyone is made feel welcome.

57% of staff feel there is room for improvement in regard to classroom illumination in relation to students with sensory needs.

63% feel they need guidance assistance in supporting students with additional educational needs.

5 Key Strengths of our schools' approach to including students with additional needs;

1. Strong SEN Support and Differentiation
2. Inclusive and Supportive Environment
3. Effective Communication and Collaboration
4. Student Wellbeing and Holistic Development
5. Structured Planning and Ongoing Review

Student surveys: Link Between 3 Statements

I like school, I get involved in school activities outside of class and I feel happy at school

Insight: Students who do not get involved in activities outside of class do not like school (15%)

Students who like school (most of the time/sometimes) all participate in activities highlighting the importance of extracurricular engagement.

Almost 26% of students find it difficult to read and understand classwork without help highlighting the need to develop comprehension strategies among students.

Parent Responses:

The school provides a safe, caring, and supportive environment. Teachers are understanding, fair and approachable. Student-Teacher interactions are positive. Extra support is provided when needed. SNA support, An Cuan, SEN, SCP, and Guidance all highlighted as beneficial for students. Most parents are highly satisfied and feel school is doing a great job. More structured revision and study skills could help reinforce learning. Extra subject specific support for comprehension. Parents appreciate the positive school atmosphere and encourage the school to continue growing its ethos and supportive environment.

Future Directions

Link Provision Mapping to Target Setting for DEIS targets for Attendance, Literacy, Retention and Wellbeing.

Use data collected from surveys with a different lens for Guidance, SEN and wellbeing.

Use data collected from staff to implement CPD in Check and Connect to support students with additional educational needs.

Link with teaching and learning team to implement comprehension strategies across subject departments.

Aims 2025–2026

- Share the final draft of the whole school Provision Map with all staff to ensure awareness, consistency, and shared ownership.

- Support subject departments in updating their individual Provision Maps using Microsoft Forms to streamline data collection and promote regular review.
- Survey staff to identify continuing professional development (CPD) needs, ensuring future training is targeted, relevant, and responsive.
- Align the Provision Map with the DEIS Target Setting process to support the implementation of the new DEIS cycle (2025–2028) and strengthen inclusive, data-informed planning.