

# Clonkeen College

## School Self- Evaluation Report



*'Tada gan iarracht'*

Evaluation Period: September 2024 – May 2026

SSE Team: J. Twomey (Team leader), E. Gibson, E. O'Flaherty, S. Donovan

# Clonkeen College

## Our Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan

### 2024-2026

#### 1. Introduction

All second level schools are required to draw up a School Improvement Plan (SIP) as part of a process of self-evaluation. The Department of Education and Skills in Circular 0056/2022: SSE Next Steps 2022-2026 sets out what is required of schools during this period. The circular stipulates that during the period 2023-2026, schools have the autonomy to choose the focus of their SSE. This will enable schools to address context-specific school priorities while also reviewing the effectiveness of their current provision and its impact on students' learning and experiences in the context of national priorities and national curriculum goals.

In September 2024, Clonkeen College had a Whole School Evaluation. As part of this process, the School Self Evaluation (SSE) team presented their work thus far to the inspectors and provided all necessary documentation including the previous SIP, a concise three-year SSE plan and a Community Report. The Inspectorate commended their work in the main findings of the Inspectorate's report stating the *'process was used effectively to promote improvement in a range of priority areas'* and that *'those leading the SSE process ensured that the school's improvement planning was underpinned by a culture of high aspirations for staff and students. SSE planning and recording was robust with very effective coordination and collective whole-school approach'*.

This document records the findings of the self-evaluation and our current improvement plan, including targets and the actions implemented to meet these targets.

#### 1.1 The focus of the evaluation

The inspectorate provided the school with the results of surveys completed by students, parents and teachers as part of the WSE process. The SSE team analysed this data and presented their key findings to the Board of Management and teaching staff.

A key finding indicated that 23% of students and 35% of parents *'disagreed'*, or *'strongly disagreed'* that they received helpful advice from the school when choosing subject options. This became the focus for the SSE team. It was agreed that the work would be done in two Phases - Phase 1 would look at the needs of incoming 5th year students while Phase 2 would focus on the needs of incoming 1st year students.

In accordance with best practice, the SSE team worked in collaboration with staff and students. First, teachers worked in small groups at a staff meeting and recorded their ideas on how best to improve the advice given to students. These ideas were later collated and discussed by the SSE team. Second, given the nature of the research, the SSE team agreed that surveying students via focus groups would best extract the data needed to identify the issues and assist us in creating an effective plan of action. Work on Phase 1 took place in the 2024-2025 academic year with 20 students from the 5<sup>th</sup> year cohort participating in focus groups. Phase 2 followed suit in the 2025-2026 academic year with 27 students from the 1<sup>st</sup> year cohort participating in focus groups.

## **2. School Self-Evaluation Findings**

### **2.1 Effective practice in our school – main strengths**

- A wide range of subject options are offered to our students
- Teachers in the individual class groups, inform and discuss on an on-going informal basis how their subjects at Junior Cycle branch and map going forward into Senior Cycle options.
- Career Guidance teachers offer support and guidance to our students when choosing their subject options
- Careers are taught both at Junior Cycle and in Transition Year which helps guide students when choosing their subject options.
- Open Night allows incoming first year students, accompanied by their parents, get hands on experience of all subjects. Subject options are a huge part of this e.g. baking in the Home-Economics room, modern languages being spoken, technical graphics in action, music performances and art creations. The Open Night is an integral part of subject choice.

### **2.2. Data analysis**

#### **2.2.1 Data analysis from the 5<sup>th</sup> year focus group (phase 1)**

- 95% of students said they did not feel the school provided them with helpful information when it came to subject choice at Senior Cycle but rather relied on themselves and/or their parents
- 80% said they regretted choosing at least one of the subjects
- All agreed they would like more information and suggested various ways in which this could be achieved:
  - Invite 6<sup>th</sup> year students to share their experiences in the various subject options
  - Shadow colleagues in classes
  - Familiarise themselves with exam content
  - Display College Stands in the hall

- A ‘taster programme’ of subject options in Transition year, particularly in new subjects such as accounting, economics, computer science.
- Most 5<sup>th</sup> year students agreed that brochures were unwanted
- Students informed us that they paid little attention to College Awareness Week and that they did not connect work experience in Transition Year with careers.

### **2.2.2 Data analysis from the 1<sup>st</sup> year focus group (phase 2)**

- No information on the subject options was provided to them by the school
- Subject options were chosen based on the following factors:
  - Discussions at home
  - An interest in a particular subject
  - An aptitude for the subject
  - A desire to learn a new skill
  - A recommendation
- 47% said they would have chosen differently in hindsight
- 59% said they would have liked to have received information on the subject options
- The following suggestions were given on how to improve our practice:
  - Visit Clonkeen College while in 6<sup>th</sup> class and shadow students
  - Attend a lesson in Clonkeen College while in 6<sup>th</sup> class
  - Create a brochure
  - Share other students’ views on subject options

### **2.3 Areas prioritised for improvement**

The survey results show that our students would benefit from improved, more tailored information from the school when choosing subject options. Our overall aim was to improve the information provided by us on subject options for both incoming 1<sup>st</sup> year students and Transition year students moving into Senior Cycle. The following areas were prioritised for improvement:

- Provide presentations to Transition Year students on subject options for Senior Cycle (Phase 1)
- Create a professional video for incoming First year students on subject options for Junior Cycle (Phase 2)

One teacher representative (selected and agreed by individual departments) from every subject option at Leaving Certificate was invited to present to the students in March. The aim of the presentations was to highlight the benefits of the subject, the course work involved, exams and key differences between the subject

at Junior and Senior Cycle. Spanning over two days, a range of presentation techniques were used including PowerPoint and senior students sharing their personal experience of the subject.

With regards to the information brochure for incoming 1<sup>st</sup> years, the initial idea was to invite subject option teachers to create a PowerPoint presentation on their subject. This would be made available to incoming 1<sup>st</sup> years prior to choosing their subject options.

However, having consulted with Student Council and discussed examples of work, the students informed us that they would rather have shorter bursts of information with student voice, more images and less writing. Taking on board this information and looking at ways to achieve this, it was decided to employ a videographer who would record students' experiences in class and share their personal experience of the subject option. In advance of the videographer's arrival, the SSE team worked closely with the subject option teachers on content for the video; selecting students to interview; logistics. The students selected for the interviews, were guided through the process with the support from their parents.

To improve our practice further we:

- Shared our findings with the Transition Year and Guidance team which helped inform, develop and amend their actions
- Invited current First Years to share their experience of subject options with incoming students and parents on the First Year Information Night

A school improvement plan was drafted and presented to staff at a whole school meeting.

### 3. Our Improvement Plan

In Appendix 1 we have recorded:

- The **targets** for improvement we have set
- The **actions** we will implement to achieve these
- **Who is responsible** for implementing, monitoring and reviewing our improvement plan
- How we will measure **progress** and check **outcomes** (criteria for success)

As we implement our improvement plan, we will record:

- The **progress** made, and **adjustments** made, and **when**
- **Achievement of targets** (original and modified), and **when**

### 4. Evaluation of Our Improvement Plan

#### 4.1 Summary of findings

##### 4.1.1 Summary of findings from Phase 1: improving information provided for incoming 5<sup>th</sup> years

Having carried out the actions outlined in the SIP, the SSE team re-surveyed in November 2025. Focus groups were carried out with 16 students from the 5<sup>th</sup> year cohort, 2025-2026, to see if the agreed upon actions had brought about any measurable change. Here is a summary of findings:

- 100% of students said they felt the school had provided them with helpful information when it came to subject choice
- 31% of students changed their subject choice following the presentations
- 25% said they regretted having chosen at least one subject
- No student from the focus groups changed their subject option once term-time began

The presentations in the hall received generally positive reviews:

- They were informative
- Listening to the experiences of senior students was helpful
- Connecting the teacher and their methodologies to the subject was helpful
- Students received information on exams, differences between the Leaving Cert and Junior Cert, operation of classes on a day-to-day basis

Some further comments of note from students include:

- Teachers focused on the positive aspects of their subject with one student describing it as '*selling their subject*'.
- There was little focus by way of requirements for college courses, especially language requirements.
- Students wanted to know the exact percentage of the course that was project-based
- Some students voiced concern regarding restrictions due to subject options clashing
- Dissatisfaction was noted with regard to LCVP. Currently LCVP is timetabled as an extra subject where one of the classes is scheduled alongside other subjects. Students proffered that LCVP should be offered as a subject option in its own right.
- Content varied in the presentations

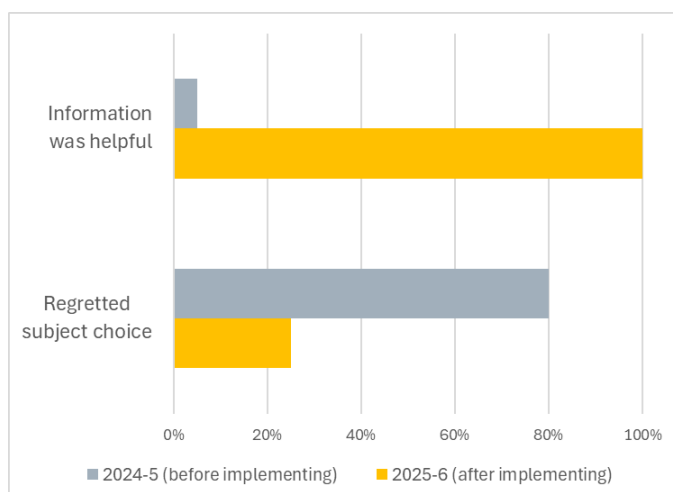
#### 4.1.2 Summary of findings from Phase 2: improving information provided for incoming 1st years

Our new cohort of 1<sup>st</sup> year students will be surveyed in September 2026 to gather data on the effectiveness of the video.

#### 4.2 Analysis of findings – Impact of School Improvement Plan

The findings (see Figure 1 below) indicate that purposeful intervention has had a positive effect.

Figure 1. Impact of presentation to Fifth Years on subject option on students' choice



- All students agreed that they were provided with helpful information when choosing subject options. 100% in comparison to 5% previous to our SIP
- There was a significant drop in the number of students who later regretted choosing at least one subject option. 80% of students by comparison to 25% previous to our SIP.
- 31% of students subsequently changed their subject option in light of information received.

## 5. Moving Forward

Our SIP can inform our teaching and learning in the following ways:

- Recommend that the School Guidance Team continues to offer presentations on subject option choice to Transition Year Students prior to choosing their options.
- Recommend the School Guidance Team continue to use the feedback gathered to develop and tailor a brief for teachers presenting on subject option choice.
- Recommend exploring how work experience in Transition Year can help inform subject option choice in 5<sup>th</sup> year.
- Recommend extending the 6<sup>th</sup> year careers night to Transition Years to inform subject choice.
- Consider time-tabling LCVP as a subject option.

**Appendix 1. Our Improvement Plan**  
**Timeframe of this improvement plan is from September 2024 - May 2026**

<b>Target</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Person/ groups responsible</b>	<b>Criteria for Success</b>	<b>Progress and Adjustments</b>	<b>Targets Achieved</b>
Improve information provided to students on subject options.	Consult with teachers	SSE team	Identify a common approach	Teachers worked in small groups during a staff meeting and noted their ideas on poster paper. SSE collated ideas	Achievable strategy identified
	Look at how other schools provide information	SSE team	Identify strategies used in other schools	Looked at school websites and gathered examples	Strategies identified: -Taster modules -Information nights -PowerPoints
	Gather student opinion via survey. 5th & 1st year students participate in focus groups.	SSE team	Identify what students find helpful	5th years requested In-person presentations by subject option teachers  1st years requested brochure style information. SSE agreed on a digital brochure in the form of a PowerPoint.	Presentations held in the hall, March 2025 and 2026
	Analyse data Consult with Student Council	J. Twomey	Discuss ideas, show examples. Agree on a strategy	Following input from Student Council, it was agreed to compile the information for 1st years in a short video as opposed PowerPoint.	In light of student feedback, the brochure idea was substituted for a video  Sourced and collaborated with a videographer.

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Improve information provided to students on subject options (cntd.)	Liase with teachers and scheduled to present to 5th years on subject options.	S. Donovan	An understanding of the requirements for the presentation	Invited some Senior students to talk	Teachers used a range of presentation techniques including PowerPoint and student voice.
	Survey 5th year students via focus group to evaluate our improvement plan	SSE Team	Analyse data and identify key findings	Made recommendations based on our findings and shared these with the relevant teams	Findings shared with the Guidance Team, Transition Year Team and the Principal. Recommendations made.
	Liase with subject option teachers participating in the video for 1st years	SSE Team	An understanding of the context of the project and content needed for the video	Subject option teachers organised displays in their classroom, identified students to interview, planned lessons to be filmed	Videographer spent 5 days in the school filming lessons and interviewing students in April 2026.
	Meet with 1st year students participating in the video	S. Donovan	Students understand the process.	Carried out mock interviews with the students	Students interviewed by videographer
	Plan logistics for the videographer's visit	S. Donovan	A schedule for filming and interviewing created	Met with the videographer to discuss the plan	Filming complete. Video is currently being edited.