



Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk

School Self-Evaluation Report '24-25

June 2025

School Self-Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The Focus of the Evaluation

During the 2024–2025 academic year, Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk engaged in a comprehensive School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, focusing on four core areas of school life: **Learning and Teaching**, **Wellbeing**, **Digital Literacy**, and **Attendance**. These domains were selected as priority areas in alignment with the school’s commitment to continuous improvement and the holistic development of every student. This SSE process was informed by consultation and collaboration with students, staff, and parents, as well as by analysis of qualitative and quantitative data gathered throughout the year.

1.2 School Context

Mercy Mounthawk is a large, co-educational voluntary secondary school located in Tralee, Co. Kerry. The school provides a broad curriculum catering to a diverse student population and is committed to the principles of inclusion, academic excellence, creativity, and wellbeing. With the recent completion of a state-of-the-art building extension, two new Autism classes have been established, further enhancing the school’s provision for students with additional needs. Mercy Mounthawk continues to foster a culture of innovation, care, and reflective practice within its community of students, staff, and parents.

2. The Findings

Learning and Teaching

The focus for 2024–2025 in this domain was on promoting **Creativity** in teaching and learning. A cross-curricular team of teachers engaged in professional learning workshops centred on the *Creative Habits of Mind* framework. The school designed and implemented the “**Wonder Wall**” poster to stimulate higher-order questioning and encourage student inquiry. A student-led Creativity Team, under the guidance of the Creative Coordinator, organised a highly successful **Mounthawk Creativity Festival**, celebrating innovation through workshops, competitions,

and performances. Planning is now underway to integrate **Critical Thinking** more explicitly into the creative learning environment in the coming year.

Inclusion also remained a central focus, with the establishment of Team Teaching practices across subject areas to support students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The newly opened Autism classes are a significant step in broadening inclusive practices within the school.

Wellbeing

Mercy Mounthawk implemented the **Bi Cineálta procedures**, culminating in the ratification of a student- and community-informed **Anti-Bullying Charter**. This was launched during **Health Promotion Week** on April 7th, symbolically marked by the raising of the **Cineáltas flag**. The Wellbeing Committee, in partnership with staff and the Student Council, coordinated events throughout the year, including **Anti-Bullying Week** and **Wellbeing Week**.

Weekly assemblies delivered by school leaders addressed themes of mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and peer recognition. **Mindfulness workshops**, facilitated by a trained member of our teaching staff, were highly valued by participants. The integration of **SPHE and Guidance** into targeted student interventions on anxiety and self-management further strengthened the school's wellbeing framework.

Digital Literacy

With a view to Senior Cycle reform and the growing importance of digital competence, Digital Literacy remained a core area for development. A whole-school consultation was conducted to assess student access to devices and inform future planning. In response, a **Chromebook purchase scheme** was introduced for Senior Cycle students on an opt-in basis, accompanied by parental engagement and guidance.

The Digital Learning Team has commenced a review of the school's **Digital Learning Plan (DLP)** to include this initiative and expand structured digital skills development. Staff also participated in continuous professional development (CPD) focusing on classroom technology integration, particularly in response to emerging **AI technologies**.

Attendance

Recognising the foundational role of attendance in student success and wellbeing, Mercy Mounthawk prioritised this area within the **School Improvement Plan**. Patterns of poor attendance were monitored by Year Teams, and interventions were introduced through supportive conversations, informal check-ins, and structured meetings with families.

A major innovation was the piloting of the **“Enlisting the Voice of the Student” Toolkit**, a student-centred intervention resource designed to promote meaningful dialogue and co-create attendance improvement plans. This toolkit will be fully rolled out to 2nd, 5th, and 6th Years from September 2025. Plans are also underway to establish a **Whole-School Attendance Team** and develop a restorative, inclusive attendance policy.

3. Summary of School Self-Evaluation Findings

3.1 Our School Has Strengths in the Following Areas

- A strong culture of **creativity and innovation** in Learning and Teaching, evidenced by successful student and staff engagement with the Creativity initiative and festival.
- A **robust Wellbeing framework** incorporating student voice, leadership, and whole-school collaboration.
- **Increased digital capacity** among staff and students, supported by the Chromebook initiative and ongoing CPD.
- **Inclusive and proactive attendance strategies**, including the piloting of an innovative student-focused toolkit.
- Positive engagement with students, staff, and parents through structured consultation and review processes.

3.2 The Following Areas Are Prioritised for Improvement

- **Embedding Critical Thinking** into the creative learning environment across all subject areas.
- Full implementation and evaluation of the **“Voice of the Student” Toolkit** in targeted year groups.
- Development of a **systemic and restorative attendance policy** in line with best practice.
- Continued expansion of **digital literacy and equitable access to devices**, especially in light of curricular reform.
- Ongoing development of **inclusive practices**, including expansion of Team Teaching and SEN supports.

3.3 The Following Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

Mercy Mounthawk is fully compliant with the following key legislative and regulatory requirements:

- **Child Protection Procedures** for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
- **Anti-Bullying Procedures** for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES, 2013).

- **Guidelines on Wellbeing** in Junior Cycle and Whole-School Guidance Framework (2018).
- **Digital Strategy for Schools 2015–2020** and the current Digital Learning Framework.
- **Education Welfare Act (2000)** with regard to attendance monitoring and reporting.
- **Equal Status Act (2000)** and the **Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004)** regarding inclusive education.



Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk

School Improvement Plan '25-26

June 2025



Creativity SIP 2025/26

School Improvement Plan 2025/26

Creativity

LAOS 2022: LM – D1, S1

(Leading Teaching and Learning: promote a culture of reflection, improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment)

Summary of Main Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a culture of innovation and creativity which is flourishing in the school through clubs such as Lego clubs, STEM Academy, BT Young Scientist Awards, School Shows, Art Competitions, Home Economics competitions, Chess, debating, creative writing, book, songwriting clubs, etc.• Staff have and set high expectations for our students.• There is culture of teaching that is engaging and challenging in the school.• Teachers are encouraged to develop their learning, teaching and assessment through carousel in-house training days.• Students are provided with a wide range of creative endeavours taking place in the school.• Teachers are empowered to embed digital technologies into their practice through regular CPD.• There is a willingness amongst staff to share good practice.
Summary of main areas prioritised for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers to focus on developing a culture of reflection and collaboration in terms of encouraging creative and critical thinking skills• Increased expectation of creative and critical thinking skills required by the Junior and Senior Cycle curriculums• Students' fear of judgement by peers a barrier to creativity• Teachers to reflect on their practice in relation to the link between inquisition and imagination.• The development of a whole school strategy to encourage higher order questioning from our students.• Students to take ownership of their own creativity at a whole school level.
Actions to support implementation of school improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion of a "WonderWall" whiteboard page in Students' journal• Teachers identified strategies which will be implemented at a whole school level to encourage critical thinking and creativity.• Make available a "Questioning Toolkit" for teachers which will include a range of questioning strategies that can be used in conjunction with the "Wonderwall" resource.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN - CREATIVITY

	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 1	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
CREATIVITY	Staff Target: Foster a greater awareness of the different aspects of The Creative Habits of Mind Wheel amongst staff (inquisitive and imagination)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Creative Core Group of teachers from a variety of subject departments explore which pedagogies could help promote Creativity in Mercy Mounthawk using the Creative Habits of Mind wheel 2. To provide in-house training to the staff on the Creative Habits of Mind wheel to the Core Group. 3. Design, print and display “Wonder Wall” posters will be designed, printed and displayed in classrooms. 	An increase in the use of both inquisitive and imaginative methodologies used by staff as measured by survey.	Creativity Co-ordinator SSE Co-ordinator Cosán Co-ordinator Creative Core Team Senior Management All teachers	November 2024 – June 2025
	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 2	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
	Staff Target: Develop a collaborative approach to sharing educreative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide in-house staff in-service on the Padlet app to encourage professional collaboration through the sharing of creative methodologies and resources 	An increase in the sharing of creative resources by the staff.	All teachers Creativity Co-ordinator	November 2024 – June 2025

	methodologies at a whole school level.	<p>within and between subject departments.</p> <p>2. Allocate set time in all subject department meetings to allow teachers the opportunity to upload creative resources/methodologies to Padlet and in doing so, share best practice.</p>		<p>SSE Co-ordinator Cosán Co-ordinator</p> <p>Creative Core Team</p> <p>Senior Management</p>	
	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 3	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
CREATIVITY	Student Target: increase students' awareness of and active engagement with the inquisitive element of creativity by encouraging them to actively engage in wondering and questioning in class.	1. Introduce students to the Creative Habits of Mind Wheel and inquisitive and imaginative methodologies.	An increase in students' willingness to engage critically with creative activities measured through surveys.	Creative Core Team	February 2025 – April 2025
		2. Design, print and display "Wonder Wall" posters will be designed, printed and incorporated into student diary.	An increase in the quality of questioning undertaken by students as measured by teacher observation.	SSE Co-ordinator Creativity Co-ordinator	January 2025 – June 2025

		3. Establish a Creative Student Group to run a Creative Week in the school.	Creative Schools Week to be run in the school to provide a range of, and increase students' awareness of and participation in, creative activities as measured by the participation rates of students.	Creativity Co-ordinator Creative Student Team	December 2024 – March 2025
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Wellbeing SIP 2025/26

School Improvement Plan 2025/26

Wellbeing

LAOS 2022: LM – D2, S1

(Managing the Organisation: Create and maintain a positive school culture and a safe, healthy and purposeful learning environment and sustain it through effective communication.)

Summary of Main Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A comprehensive consultation process was undertaken involving staff, students and parents, resulting in the co-creation and ratification of a bespoke <i>Bi Cinealta</i> Anti-Bullying Charter and Policy.• The <i>Bi Cinealta</i> Charter articulates the school's values and commitment to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment. IT serves as a proactive tool for bullying prevention and response in an age-appropriate manner.• The official launch of the Charter took place during the school's Health Promotion Week on April 7th, symbolised by the raising of the <i>Cinealtas</i> flag – an event that promoted whole-school ownership of the initiative.• The Students' Council Wellbeing Committee met weekly with the Wellbeing Co-ordinator and played a leadership role in the organisation of themed events, including Anti-Bullying Week and Wellbeing Week, both of which were well received by students.• Weekly Wednesday assemblies, led by school leadership and the Wellbeing co-ordinator, provided regular guidance on topics such as mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and peer celebration, reinforcing positive messages throughout the year.• Targeted mindfulness sessions, facilitated by a trained member of staff, were very well attended and positively reviewed by students who participated.• Guidance and SPHE programmes were linked to improved student outcomes in the area of anxiety management, emotional regulation and self-awareness, through the integration of focused interventions.
Summary of main areas prioritised for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further embedding of the <i>Bi Cineálta</i> approach across the wider curriculum and in everyday classroom practice is required.• Ongoing CPD for staff in trauma-informed practice, mental health first aid, and whole-school wellbeing strategies will be needed to support consistent implementation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of surveys/focus groups to evaluated the impact of wellbeing events which clearly are successful. • Further integration of student voice into the design and evaluation of wellbeing initiatives.
Actions to support implementation of school improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen the integration of the Bi Cinealta framework across subject departments and school policies. • Expand CPD to include trauma-informed practice and further upskilling in social-emotional learning • Establish feedback tools (e.g. surveys/interviews) to evaluate the impact of wellbeing initiatives on student outcomes.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN - WELLBEING

	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 1	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
WELLBEING	Staff Target: To further embed the Bi Cinealta Charter and anti-bullying ethos across all areas of school life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote staff CPD on restorative and kindness-focused teaching strategies. 2. Encourage all subject departments to identify where Bi Cinealta values can be integrated into teaching and learning. 3. Display student-created visual representations of Bi Cinealta values throughout the school. 4. Incorporate Bi Cinealta reflections into SPHE, CSPE, and pastoral care lessons. 	<p>Increased references to Bi Cinealta in lesson observations and planning documentation</p> <p>Positive feedback from students in annual wellbeing surveys</p> <p>Reduction in reported instances of bullying and interpersonal issues</p>	SSE Co-ordinator Wellbeing Co-ordinator SPHE Team Year Heads	September 2025 – May 2026

		<p>5. To provide in-house training to the staff on the Creative Habits of Mind wheel to the Core Group.</p> <p>6. Design, print and display “Wonder Wall” posters will be designed, printed and displayed in classrooms.</p>			
	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 2	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
	<p>Student Target: To increase student voice and engagement in wellbeing planning and evaluation</p>	<p>1. Develop and distribute a school-wide wellbeing survey to all year groups.</p> <p>2. Create a student-led “Wellbeing Focus Group” to analyse survey results and suggest initiatives.</p> <p>3. Pilot a peer-led mental health promotion campaign.</p>	<p>At least 80% participation in the Wellbeing survey across the student body</p> <p>Active student contribution to 2 new wellbeing initiatives</p> <p>Student evaluation of wellbeing events show a 10% increase in positive impact.</p>	<p>Wellbeing Coordinator</p> <p>SSE Coordinator</p> <p>Student Council</p> <p>Guidance Team</p>	<p>October 2025 – May 2026</p>

In Summary

Improvement Target	Required Actions	Persons Responsible	Timeframe
1. To further embed the Bi Cineálta Charter and anti-bullying ethos across school life	- Deliver CPD on kindness-based approaches- Integrate Bi Cineálta into subject plans- Display student materials- Use reflection in SPHE/CSPE	Wellbeing Coordinator, Year Heads, Subject Coordinators	Sept 2025 – May 2026
2. To increase student voice and engagement in wellbeing planning and evaluation	- Create and issue student wellbeing survey- Form a student Wellbeing Focus Group- Involve students in SSE- Pilot peer-led mental health initiative	SSE Team, Wellbeing Coordinator, Student Council Liaison	Oct 2025 – May 2026



Technology SIP 2025/26

School Improvement Plan 2025/26

Technology

LAOS 2022: LM – D2, S2

(Managing the Organisation: manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation)

Summary of Main Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff engagement with ongoing CPD in digital learning, including the pedagogical use of digital tools and platforms.• Awareness of emerging artificial intelligence technologies and interest in their responsible integration into classroom practice.• An existing digital infrastructure that provides baseline access for students and staff.
Summary of main areas prioritised for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The increased demand for ICT access due to the emphasis on project-based assessment at Senior Cycle has highlighted limitations in existing device availability.• A need to support student ownership of learning through access to individual devices, particularly for students engaging in ongoing research, digital portfolio work, and coursework projects.• Enhancement of student digital skills across all subject areas to endure alignment with Junior and Senior Cycle Key Skills and Digital Learning Framework.
Actions to support implementation of school improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A research process was undertaken to explore sustainable strategies for improving student access to devices.• Based on findings, the school has initiated a Chromebook purchase scheme for incoming and existing Senior Cycle students on an opt-in basis.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN - TECHNOLOGY

	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 1	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
TECHNOLOGY	Student Target: Enhance Student Access to Digital Devices	1. Establish the Chromebook purchase scheme for Senior Cycle students on an opt-in basis. 2. Explore options to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds with device access. 3. Promote parental engagement and communication regarding digital learning needs.	At least 80% Senior Cycle student participation in device scheme. Reduction in reported device access issues. Positive parental feedback on communication and support.	Digital Learning Team Deputy Principal	September 2024 – June 2025
	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 2	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
	Staff Target: Strengthen Staff Capacity in Digital Literacy and Technology Use.	1. Provide targeted CPD focused on AI literacy, digital citizenship and inclusive digital pedagogy. 2. Facilitate peer learning and sharing of best practice.	90% staff attendance at CPD sessions. Evidence of digital tools used in lesson plans and teaching practice.	All teachers Digital Learning Team	October 2025 – June 2026

		3. Integrate digital literacy goals into subject department plans.	Staff self-reports indicate increased confidence with technology integration.	CPD Coordinator Senior Management	
	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 3	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
TECHNOLOGY	Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Digital Learning Plan	1. Finalise and communicate the updated Digital Learning Plan schoolwide.	Digital Learning Plan approved and disseminated.	Digital Learning Team	September 2025 – May 2026
		2. Embed digital literacy skills development aligned with Junior and Senior Cycle frameworks.	Curriculum-aligned digital literacy outcomes integrated into at least 80% of subject areas.	Digital Learning Team	September 2025 – May 2026
		3. Use student voice tools to monitor engagement and identify barriers.	Student engagement surveys indicate increased digital confidence.	Digital Learning Team	September 2025 – May 2026

In Summary

Aspect to Monitor	Method	When	Who
Device Access and Usage	Participation records, surveys	Termly	Digital Learning Team
Staff CPD Participation	Attendance and feedback forms	After each CPD	CPD Coordinator
Digital Learning Plan Implementation	Lesson observations, curriculum reviews	Mid-year & End of Year	Year Heads / Digital Learning Team
Student Digital Confidence	Surveys, focus groups	Term 1 and 3	Digital Learning Team



Attendance SIP 2025/26

School Improvement Plan 2025/26

Attendance

LAOS 2022: LLT – D2, S3

(Learner Experiences: reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning)

Summary of Main Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective collaboration between Year Heads and Assistant Year Heads in identifying and monitoring students with attendance concerns.• Positive outcomes from early-morning check-ins and one-to-one pastoral engagement.• Stronger relationships with families fostered through structured, supportive parent-student-school meetings.• The development and initial trial of the “Enlisting the Voice of the Student” Toolkit, facilitating deeper understanding of barriers to attendance.
Summary of main areas prioritised for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school would benefit from a whole-school structure for students who demonstrate persistent absenteeism across all year groups.• Follow-up processes for persistent absenteeism could be more consistent.• Staff CPD is needed in inclusive, trauma-informed approaches to re-engaging students.• Formal evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions through data tracking or stakeholder feedback.
Actions to support implementation of school improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formation of a Whole-School Attendance Team.• School-wide rollout of the Student Voice Toolkit• CPD on attendance-sensitive and wellbeing-focused teaching strategies using trauma-informed approaches.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN - ATTENDANCE

	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 1	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
ATTENDANCE	Staff Target: Establish a Whole-School Attendance Team	<p>Appoint team members from key departments (pastoral, AEN, guidance, Year Heads).</p> <p>Develop a unified attendance intervention protocol.</p>	<p>Attendance Team operational by end of Term 1.</p> <p>Protocol implemented across all year groups</p>	<p>Senior Management</p> <p>Deputy Principal</p>	September – December 2025
	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 2	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
	Student Target: Strengthen Student Voice in Attendance Planning	<p>Roll out “Enlisting the Voice of the Student” Toolkit to 2nd, 5th, and 6th Years</p> <p>Staff training on Toolkit implementation</p>	<p>Toolkit used with 90% of targeted students</p> <p>Themes from toolkit analysed to inform interventions</p>	<p>Year Heads / Guidance Counsellors</p> <p>All teachers</p> <p>Senior Management</p>	September 2025 – May 2026

	IMPROVEMENT TARGET 3	REQUIRED ACTIONS	SUCCESS CRITERIA / MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
ATTENDANCE	Develop further Home-School Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop early-warning communication strategies. 2. Run parent workshops/resources on supporting attendance 	<p>Increase in attendance at parent meetings</p> <p>Decrease in chronic absenteeism in key target groups</p>	Attendance Team	October 2025 – March 2026

In Summary

Aspect to Monitor	Method	When	Who
Attendance Team functioning	Minutes of meetings	Monthly	Deputy Principal
Toolkit Implementation	Staff feedback & usage logs	Term 1 & 2	SSE Team / Year Heads
Parent Engagement	Participation records	Termly	Year Heads
Attendance Data	Analysis of year-on-year data	Mid-year & June	Attendance Team