



## EDUCATION SERVICES

### Policy: Quality Improvement Framework

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## **BACKGROUND**

The shared purpose of our work is to continuously raise attainment and achievement for all children and young people in West Lothian, this includes addressing the 'closing the gap' agenda, to ensure that our young people succeed in securing a positive post-school destination. All staff contribute to this shared purpose and are accountable for the work they do. The council aims to provide a high-quality education service through the strong collective engagement of a highly professional workforce which recognises the centrality of self-evaluation for achieving continuous and sustained improvement.

This policy framework reflects the national shift towards supporting, challenging and validating (agreeing or not) the establishment or service self-evaluation and the importance of planning, working and evaluating in collaboration with partners and services.

To support our work, we need to know how well we are doing and how we can improve. This necessitates the development of a continuous improvement culture in every school and Early Learning (ELC). An improvement culture must become embedded in our schools and exists to secure excellent learning and teaching in every classroom. In so doing we will at all times monitor practice at all levels to reduced paperwork and ensure that our processes are not overly complex. Everyone has a part to play in tackling bureaucracy that gets in the way of teaching and learning.

This quality improvement framework will support us to do this and is built on an approach that encourages all to look inwards, outwards and forwards to secure improvement. Looking 'inwards' recognises the importance of self-evaluation and the role it plays in driving continuous improvement. Looking 'outwards' requires schools and ELCs to collaborate and learn from effective practice elsewhere, including educational research. Looking 'forwards' aims to anticipate challenges and explore creative solutions that support our ability to continuously meet the needs of our children and young people in a rapidly changing world.

It is the responsibility of all schools to ensure that planned action to secure improvement takes place within the context of looking inwards, outwards and forwards. Improvements required are informed by this process but must result in improved outcomes for children and young people and measureable impact on our schools and ELCs.

Underpinning all of the above is an acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of high-quality professional development for staff and school improvement. The development of a continuous improvement culture that leads to sustained school improvement values the professional development of all staff. Our aim is to build a learning system in which highly professional staff support a cycle of continuous improvement.

## **CONTEXT**

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 places a statutory duty on Education Authorities to ensure the quality of provision in its schools. West Lothian Council (WLC) and within that, its schools, is accountable to stakeholders for the quality of education children and young people receive. Being accountable requires inbuilt robust monitoring and improvement activity which is aligned across schools and Education Services.

The council endorses the use of the national measures of school self evaluation as contained in Education Scotland publications (*How Good is our School? How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare? How Good is OUR School? National Improvement Framework, Education Scotland Inspection Advice Notes* and the *Curriculum for Excellence National expectations*). It also acknowledges the importance of integrated self-evaluation within local partnerships to bring about improvement in outcomes for children and young people. The focus is on improvement through self-evaluation and use of national measures is key to effective quality improvement procedures within Education Services, schools and Early Learning Centres. The direction of improvement required across West Lothian Schools is also contained within the 5 year Raising Attainment Strategy.

This Quality Improvement Framework should be read in conjunction with the council's Equalities Policies in order to ensure that all practice meets the needs of all pupils, and that supporting information can be made available to parents in a way that meets their needs. Schools should consider equity issues, such as barriers to involvement arising from additional support needs, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender identity and how these can be overcome. This will apply to social needs, as well as learning and teaching needs.

## **PURPOSE AND AIMS**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a coherent framework to guide the work of all those engaging in quality improvement related to the work of schools and Education Services. It is designed to be flexible and applied in a way which is responsive to the needs and context of individual schools and learning communities. This framework sets out expectations and guidance to enable schools, Education Services and partners to work together within a cycle of continuous improvement. This policy framework aims to build the capacity of all staff, pupils, parents and other partners to work together to undertake robust and accurate self-evaluation. The clear focus should be on evidencing impact and improved outcomes for children and young people.

## **PRINCIPLES**

School improvement is a collective responsibility which takes place within an ethos of ambition and achievement through a supportive and nurturing culture, where everyone acknowledges accountability to stakeholders. The climate should be one of questioning and reflection in striving for the best possible outcome for every learner.

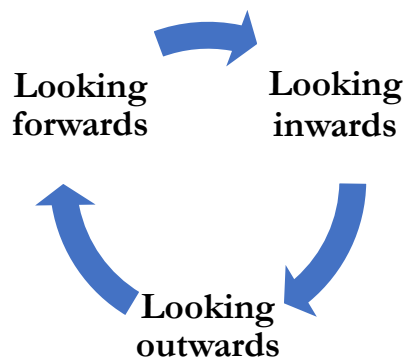
The capacity for robust self-evaluation within a school will be strengthened through the co-ordinated effort of Education Services staff working with practitioners from within and beyond the council in a range of school improvement collaborations and partnerships.

The principles underpinning effective quality improvement practices:

- place the learner at the centre of the process
- take place within a culture of systematic and transparent reflection where all involved are committed to continuous and sustained improvement
- are the responsibility of all - staff, learners, relevant partners and stakeholders
- ensure a joined up approach to improvement by the school community, including relevant partners
- require strong and effective leadership at all levels
- support participants to recognise, learn from and consistently apply existing good practice and have opportunities for learning in context
- access educational research on 'what works', ensuring knowledge and expertise are shared and applied
- make best use of a range of quantitative and qualitative information to inform and support decision making and action at all levels
- acknowledge the importance of accountability to stakeholders
- ensure career long professional learning for staff leads to an improvement in practice that impacts positively on learners
- support and challenge staff, learners, relevant partners and stakeholders
- allow for flexibility and anticipate challenges, respond to needs and seek action-orientated positive solutions.

## THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CULTURE

To secure sustained improvement, schools should inform their decision making and actions through a continuous process of looking inwards, outwards and forwards. This process supports sound decision-making, planning and effective action to secure positive change.



### Looking inwards – self-evaluation for self-improvement

For self-evaluation to be effective, it should start with those working directly with children and young people and be embedded in their day to day work. Staff teams, with partners, at a range of levels within and beyond the school, should be engaging in on-going and purposeful self-evaluation focusing on the impact on outcomes for learners. Effective self-evaluation processes triangulate information and data, people's views and observation of practice to measure impact and inform planning for improvement.

Three questions lie at the heart of self-evaluation. These are:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

### **Looking outwards - learning from others**

In an established and effective improvement culture staff are proactive in looking to others for new ideas that challenge their practice and support continuous improvement. Schools should learn from what works, and does not work, elsewhere. This includes practice in other schools, learning communities and learning from educational research. For effective school improvement to take place the council will facilitate and support collaborative working across the authority in identified school groups and clusters and outwith the council. Schools should also actively seek out and nurture effective partnerships that support their work to raise attainment and achievement for all children and young people.

### **Looking forwards - creating a vision and planning for implementation**

Through leadership at all levels, improving schools should anticipate challenges and explore creative solutions. This will help to create an aspirational vision for schools and the children and young people in them. This vision should shape action and provide a focus for the work of the school with its partners.

Schools manage the above cycle using the evidence gathered in day to day work and at focused points during the school session. Evidence gathered should be used to inform self-evaluation and identify strategies for improvement. These are contained within the School Self-Evaluation Summary (SSES), School Improvement Plan (SIP), which includes plans for addressing equity, and Report on Standards and Quality to parents (S&Q).

### **The School Self-Evaluation Summary**

The School Self-Evaluation summary (SSES) is a working document informed by the self-evaluation process, and is evaluated using the national quality indicators illustrated in *How Good is Our School?*<sup>4</sup> and *How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?* The SSES should be updated and available throughout the school session in response to ongoing quality improvement activities. The SSES is the school's high level summary self-evaluation and is central to Education Scotland Inspections and authority Validated Self-Evaluations (VSE). Schools will use the 'key areas of development' identified in the Self-Evaluation summary to inform school improvement planning.

It is the responsibility of each person working in schools with our children and young

people to engage in monitoring the impact of all that they have planned and delivered for learners. This is undertaken as individuals and with others. Time should be set aside to ensure there are regular opportunities for all staff, with learners, to reflect on the curriculum and learning and teaching. In monitoring and reviewing school improvement, schools should focus on the impact of their work to improve outcomes for all learners.

Schools should work in a strategic, planned and supportive way to allow staff from within their school to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate together. In addition, school staff and partners should engage in evaluating current practice and any new initiatives and changes which have been introduced. To support this process schools should identify important strengths and areas for improvement from a range of evidence.

### **Report on Standards and Quality to parents (S&Q)**

It is a statutory requirement that all schools produce an annual Report for parents on Standards and Quality. The report for parents should be clear and concise and may take the form of a letter or leaflet. It should provide a parent friendly summary about the successes, achievements and next steps for the school which are contained in the school's more detailed self-evaluation summary (SSES).

### **School Improvement Planning**

The School Improvement Plan (SIP), including schools' plans for addressing equity, is a working document, which may be altered in the course of the year, for example following the availability of performance data, school review or inspection. Updates and adaptations will be as a result of the ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the plan with school staff and in collaboration with others from beyond the school. Alterations to the plan may be discussed with the school's Education Officer.

It is a **statutory requirement that parents and pupils are consulted** on the SIP. All members of staff and partners within the wider community should be involved in the process. Engagement should not be a one-off event but should be part of an ongoing process of monitoring and review throughout the school year to ensure all stakeholders have ownership of the final plans.

The priority contained within each SIP is to raise attainment and achievement for all children and young people. The purpose of the SIP is to manage change and improvements which will have the greatest impact for schools to achieve this priority. Schools must take into account West Lothian's Raising Attainment Strategy, the National Improvement Plan, West Lothian Council's Corporate Plan and Education Services' Management Plan. The SIP should reflect the process of looking inwards, outwards and forwards within the school's own context

The SIP is more than a list of tasks and the ambition of the plan lies in schools clearly stating the desired outcomes for learners, i.e. the benefits that actions should bring to pupils and the school community. Desired outcomes for children and young people should be observable and measurable. This should support ongoing monitoring and review which should be focused on the extent to which each outcome has been achieved. Schools should also include summary details of additional tasks.

Each school's SIP, SQR and Collegiate Working Time Agreement for the forthcoming session must be submitted to the local authority by the agreed date before the end of

each current school session.

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY MONITORING AND REVIEW OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

Education Services is part of a coherent planning and reporting framework through which a strong 'golden thread' links service, council, local and national objectives and outcomes. Service improvement is also built on effective self-evaluation within a clear set of accountabilities to a range of stakeholders, including Elected Members, pupils and parents, the Scottish Government and funding providers.

The role of Education Services, within quality improvement, is to support and challenge schools to look inwards, outwards and forwards to ensure high quality educational provision for all children and young people. This will be undertaken in the main by the Quality Improvement Team whose key role is quality improvement through:

- working to build capacity amongst senior school leaders and their staff for robust and accurate self-evaluation and identifying the need for high quality career long professional learning which leads to effective school improvement;
- core involvement in the cycle of improvement through professional dialogue, advice, and support around SSES, S&Q, SIP Planning;
- professional dialogue with schools using robust data analysis from teacher professional judgement and senior phase qualifications;
- co-ordinating and working with groups of stakeholders taking forward Education Services' initiatives, developments and support strategies, including the production of guidance and support materials;
- facilitating school staff's access to a wider range of skills, knowledge and information within and beyond the council;
- direct engagement with schools as needed to support in-school monitoring and self-evaluation, where identified action is required and with those schools involved in Education Scotland inspections;
- bringing evidence from ongoing dialogue, in-school observations and school submissions to identify schools for strategic interventions or authority support. A programme of council supported VSE will involve the Quality Improvement Team and senior education managers working with schools, other service staff and partners;
- advising senior Education Services' managers timeously of challenges facing schools affecting their capacity for continuous improvement;
- participation in the appointment of senior school staff;
- Head Teacher professional update sign off

Such external engagement in school self-evaluation and quality improvement supports

the school's own work in facilitating innovative practice and leading change and improvement. It also aids the school in making more specific, focused and valid judgements.

Within the context of accountability and to inform review and planning for improvement, Education Services needs to know how well it is doing and to evaluate performance against expected outcomes. It seeks the views of key stakeholders, including those of school staff who participate on a wide range of groups, to deliver initiatives and monitor their impact. Education Services works closely with Education Scotland on a regular basis to reflect on the impact of strategic objectives and activity.

## **THE ROLE OF VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION**

The focus of the authority supported VSE process is to support improvement and evaluate the quality of:

- Leadership and management
- Learning provision
- Successes and achievements
- Child Protection Procedures

VSE is a process which aims to build the capacity of schools to evaluate their own performance and improve the quality of outcomes for learners and families. VSE involves collaboration between the school, its Quality Improvement Partners and Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) to support wider challenge and enhance the school's own self-evaluation processes for continuous improvement.

VSE is led by the school and is:

- Focused on outcomes
- Proportionate to need
- Flexible, with scope to recognise differences in school contexts
- Rigorous and transparent

VSE teams use How Good is Our School? 4th Edition (HGIOS4), How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC), How Good is OUR School? (learners' version), the National Care Standards, the Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Child Minding and School Age Children and the National Improvement Framework.

VSE will be structured around the three high level questions from HGIOS4:

- How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?
- How good is the quality of the care and education we offer?
- How good are we at ensuring the best possible outcomes for all our learners?

The VSE programme will be updated annually and shared with all HTs before the beginning of the new session.

## **CONCLUSION**



Strong and effective leadership is required at all levels to deliver high quality education within a culture of continuous improvement. This policy framework supports leaders to achieve this by setting out expectations and guidance to enable schools, Education Services and partners to work together. Central to this policy is the expectation that all stakeholders should work together to answer the following questions which are at the heart of self-evaluation.

These are:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

Everyone should be aware of resulting strengths and development needs and how to bring about improvement.

The clear focus should be on evidencing impact and improved outcomes for children and young people. Adhering to this policy framework will build the capacity of all staff, pupils, parents and other partners to work together to undertake robust and accurate self-evaluation.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED WITHIN THE POLICY

**Attainment** refers to the measurable progress which children and young people make as they progress through and beyond school. This progress is in relation to curriculum areas and in the development of skills for learning, life and work.

**Achievement** refers to the totality of skills and attributes embedded within the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence and developed across the curriculum in school and through learning in other contexts.

**Career-long professional learning (CLPL)** is a continuous process through which teachers take responsibility for their own learning and development, exercising increasing professional autonomy enabling them to embrace change and better meet the needs of children and young people.

**‘Closing the gap’** refers to the gap in progress, attainment and achievement between those living in Scotland’s least and most disadvantaged homes. Many children and young people from lower-income households do significantly worse at all levels of the education system than those from better-off homes. This is often referred to as the “attainment gap”.

**Cluster** refers to all associated schools and early years centres which feed in to the catchment secondary school

**Data** are facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis.

**Equity** means treating people fairly, but not necessarily treating people the same. Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential and that all our young people are well supported to secure wellbeing, skills for learning, life and work and the best possible post-school destination.

**Equality** is the removal of barriers and the widening of opportunities for those for whom access is limited. Where equality is embedded in practice, there will be no prejudice-based discrimination.

**Getting it right for every Child (GIRFEC)** is a Scottish Government strategy to ensure that learners are safe, healthy and well cared for; that they achieve to their fullest potential across a range of skills and that they are confident and responsible citizens who make active contributions to their communities.

**Learning community** means the cluster of neighbouring schools and other partners delivering learning for the children, young people and their families.

**Moderation** helps to raise standards and expectations and levels of consistency across teachers and schools. Staff meet to share and agree standards against set criteria. This helps teachers to develop their own assessment approaches and their ability to make accurate professional judgements on pupil performance. This contributes towards consistency across the school, council and at national level. Participation in moderation activities is a highly effective form of professional development.

**Partners** include all individuals or organisations that deliver learning and contribute to the life and work of the school. These may include CLD services, colleges, universities, employers, third sector, community organisations, and libraries.

**School** throughout this document, the term ‘school’ is taken to include pre-school establishments, ASN schools and provisions and primary and secondary schools.

**School community** refers to all children and young people, staff, parents/carers, families and partners who are connected to the school.

**Stakeholders** are all those who are affected by the work and life of the school.

**Staff** is used to refer to all school based staff involved in delivering the curriculum.

**Triangulation** is the process used to ensure evaluative statements about strengths and aspects for development are grounded in robust evidence base. The triangulation of evidence based information and data, people's views and observation of practice should involve all school staff, learners, partners and other stakeholders.

**Working document** is a document which is used on a regular basis and is subject to change.

### **Examples of Quality Improvement Activities - Developing a culture of improvement**

Making time for professional reflection and dialogue is central to ensuring effective learning and teaching. A range of activities can be undertaken within the context of looking inwards, outwards and forwards to support a culture of improvement. Schools should ensure that evidence gathered is triangulated to validate judgments and support planning for improvement. School leadership should ensure rigorous, systematic and transparent activities are identified and take place in a planned way, supported by a calendar of quality improvement activities.

Examples of associated activities may include the following:

- **Learner learning experiences** - learning visits from the school's extended management team should include observation of learning episodes, discussion with pupils, pupil focus groups and sampling pupils' work. Senior staff should undertake regular 'focussed walks' within their schools to help inform judgment on the S&Q and the impact of the SIP. Teachers and others working with pupils should build in feedback within lessons and at key points throughout the school year. Professional dialogue with teachers and other staff as appropriate should take place following observations. Discussions should be recorded, including strengths and areas for further development.
- **Peer observation** - all teaching staff should participate in peer observation. This could take the form of a learning round. All observations must have a clear, agreed focus and be recorded in an agreed format. Outcomes from observations should be discussed at whole school or departmental level to inform next steps. Staff keep a record of their own learning as part of their own CLPL record.
- **Planning for learning** - Senior leaders should schedule regular meetings with staff, as individuals or in teams, to review their plans and evaluation of learning. This will include discussion of individual and class attainment. Agreed outcomes which identify next steps for individuals and groups will be recorded to inform future planning to challenge and engage learners. The planning and review cycle should involve partners as appropriate and take account of the views of the learner.
- **Performance information** - The extended leadership team (ELT) with staff should analyse available data, including Curriculum for Excellence levels of achievement, Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT) and Senior Phase measures (e.g. SCQF and SQA) to identify areas of strength and inform the focus for improvement. Education Services will provide robust information to support this aspect of school improvement. Other quantitative data relating to trends in student attendance and behaviour should also be taken into account. Schools' approaches to monitoring and tracking learners' progress and achievement in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase must provide robust evidence of standards of achievement across all curriculum areas and trends over time. Attainment and the progress of students should feature as a regular item on the agenda of team meetings.
- **Moderation** - Senior leaders should ensure that there are opportunities for moderation activities which involve teachers and other appropriate staff to engage regularly in ongoing professional dialogue to share and agree standards and moderate learners' work. Schools should involve partners as appropriate. In addition schools should look outwards and facilitate staff participation in focussed moderation activities with others from outwith the school, for example within the cluster, across the council and outwith the council. This might include moderation within national networks arranged by local council collaboration or through Education Scotland, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Clusters should plan for moderation across transitions, involving partners across sectors.

- **People's views** - the views of all stakeholders should be gathered in a systematic and manageable way. This is best done through the routine work and life of the school, e.g. at Parents' Evenings, through Parent Councils, using focussed stakeholder questionnaires, by collating student feedback gathered at classroom level, through discussion at student representative groups and ongoing engagement with staff and relevant partners. The ELT should also seek staff, pupil and parental feedback on the effectiveness of leadership within the school. Pupil views can be taken by staff in all classes or selected classes at specific times and ELT members may wish to randomly select pupils to seek their views on focused topics or in general throughout the session.
- **VSE** - participation in council or school generated VSE activity can be inbuilt during the school session and involve a range of staff from within and outwith the school and relevant partners.
- **Identifying and sharing high quality practice** - Staff within and outwith the school, together with appropriate partners, should work collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of what works and impacts positively on learners' attainment and achievement. Senior managers should ensure that there are planned opportunities for successful practices to be shared effectively across the school and beyond.
- **S&Q update** - The school's self evaluation is contained within the School Self-Evaluation Summary from which the EMT should update the S&Q report to parents. Changes are made to indicate progress and areas for consideration and development at a particular point in time. The updated SSES should be developed through ongoing engagement and involvement with all staff and relevant stakeholders and inform ongoing school improvement.
- **CLPL** - Plans for professional learning activity will be informed by national, local and school priorities for improvement. Professional learning is the responsibility of each individual within the framework of the school improvement plan and individual professional learning needs identified through the Professional Review and Development Process. The national improvement framework will continue to guide key aspects of what is required of the profession and use of improvement methodology and practitioner enquiry will enable the spread of evidence based interventions to improve personal effectiveness and classroom practice.