HOW GOOD IS OUR EDUCATION AUTHORITY?

A framework for self-evaluation of local education authorities

Contents

ADES President's Foreword

I am delighted to offer a foreword to this document which represents a joint piece of work between Education Scotland and ADES. For three years now ADES and Education Scotland have worked together on Collaborative Improvement visits involving all 32 local authority education services in Scotland. The purpose of the visits has been to support improvement across the country and also to develop stronger networks of support and challenge between services. However, having completed the first round of visits, ADES took the view that we needed a more structured and consistent approach to self-evaluation. A small group then worked on refreshing a version of Quality Management In Education 2 which was published by HMIE in 2006. The document produced is based upon QMIE2 and ADES gratefully acknowledges the support of Education Scotland to use it as the basis of this refreshed self-evaluation framework.

I am very grateful to all those in ADES and Education Scotland who have led this piece of work. I hope this document and the accompanying document in this framework are used as intended to support self-evaluation for improvement across all local authorities. Our intention is to take professional responsibility in a context of mutual accountability rather than be driven by purely external accountability. One of our strengths in a relatively small education system like Scotland is our ability to work collaboratively, building networks of support and professional dialogue leading to better outcomes for our children and young people.

Sheena Devlin

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Introduction and Rationale

Improvement in the Scottish education system is rooted in robust self-evaluation, an approach which has become embedded in education over a number of years if not decades. The *How Good Is Our..?* series of publications has helped to drive forward improvement, but it has also underlined the need for establishments and services to take responsibility for their own improvement. Improvement isn't somebody else's responsibility and it isn't possible to 'inspect' improvement into a school or system. Establishments, services and local authorities need to take responsibility for improvement as well as progress towards ensuring greater consistency of standards across the establishment and local authority. There is also a need for external and objective system presence in establishments and local authorities to moderate their self-evaluation. At times the horizons of an establishment, service or local authority can become narrow and so we all benefit from external presence.

ADES has worked with Education Scotland to support system presence and externality in local authorities through Collaborative Improvement. Collaborative Improvement is an approach to mutual support and challenge of local authorities where the local authority invites an external team to work collaboratively on an area to be explored which leads to identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Collaborative Improvement is voluntary, led by the local authority itself who also choose the area of focus and publish a report at the end of the visit. The intention of Collaborative Improvement is to avoid trying to drive improvement through an accountability agenda and replace it with shared accountability as outlined by David Godfrey (2020) who states that

> *School systems should set up external evaluations in ways in which internal evaluation is optimised and vice-versa. …external evaluation can lead to game-playing and internal evaluation can be subject to 'self-delusion' (*Godfrey, 2020, p.12*).*

The chapter in Godfrey's edited work on school peer review helpfully highlights the importance of improvement being based upon a mutually reinforcing system of internal and external evaluation.

A system of peer led review of local authorities which also involves the national agency is consistent with strengthening the middle as described in the 2015 OECD report on Scottish education. Fullan and Quinn (2018) outline four components of whole system change which are: focusing direction; collaborative cultures; securing accountability; and deepening learning. Collaborative Improvement has been a key part of progressing on the journey towards creating a collaborative culture across Scotland to improve clarity around direction, secure mutually agreed professional accountability and ultimately deepen learning. However, as we progress towards the completion of all 32 local authority Collaborative Improvement visits, ADES believes that the next step is an agreed, updated framework for self-evaluation and a coherent approach to local authority self-evaluation across all 32 local authorities.

The *How Good Is Our...?* approach has stood the test of time but needs constantly updated. The publication *Quality Management in Education 2* requires to be updated to take account of legal and policy changes, however the basic EFQM structure and approach are still useful and valid. The current document is proposed as an instrument for local authorities, based on a familiar approach, to carry out robust self-evaluation. The main difference between the current approach and inspection is that self-evaluation is carried out for improvement rather than for accountability.

Denis Shirley talks of a lost decade in education where a 'prescriptive imperative' reigned.

> *Under this imperative, educators' judgement was diminished and the hierarchical and administrative control of educators was intensified. This was the opposite of a professionalisation agenda... How we move from prescription to professionalism is the third new imperative of educational change (*Shirley, 2017, p.14*).*

While Shirley was mainly referring to the approach taken in England and the United States, he underlines the view that improvement cannot be driven by external accountability in a performative system where descriptors of quality become the definition of quality (Biesta, 2015). The intention in the current proposals is for the system to take greater responsibility for improvement, leading to greater consistency across the country. A child's or young person's chances of success in education should not be dependent on where they live in Scotland. ADES believes that we are accountable to the children, young people and families we serve who deserve a consistently high standard of education wherever they live in Scotland.

Quality Indicators

The following sections contains two quality indicators, the first relating to leadership and the second relating to improving outcomes. Consistent with HGIOS?4, the QIs set out features of highly effective practice and reflective questions as a guide to self-evaluation. The questions are not exhaustive and the features are only features. As with HGIOS?4, these are not to be considered as a checklist, but a guide.

Following QI2 on outcomes is an indicative list of measures which may be considered useful as part of the self-evaluation process. Once again, these are only an indication and there may be measures relevant to a local authority's own improvement plan which are context specific. The measures are not prescriptive or exhaustive but serve as a broad guide and to ensure a degree of consistency.

Quality Indicator 1: Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement

This indicator relates to the strategic leadership of the education authority, fulfilment of statutory duties, how the authority works internally and with partners to create a shared vision, a sense of purpose and direction focused on continuous improvement. It considers the extent to which visions, values and aims are shared and developed in partnership with stakeholders. It focuses on planning for improvement and change and how well the authority builds capacity for leadership and improvement alongside the education authority's success in delivering and improving the quality of its services. The features of highly effective practice below are intended as illustrations only and not as a set criterion.

Themes:

1. Vision, values and aims.
2. Strategic deployment of resources.
3. Fulfilment of Statutory Duties
4. Leading and delivering sustained improvement and change.
5. Effective leadership at all levels.

Features of highly effective practice:	Challenge Questions
1.1 Vision, values and aims • Our vision, values and aims are ambitious and challenging and promote positive attitudes to social justice, equality and diversity. They are in line with national and local priorities and are clearly communicated and understood by our partners and stakeholders. • The empowering nature of our organisation supports staff and other stakeholders to actively contribute to and act on the vision, values and aims. Our vision, values and aims are regularly revisited and reinforced resulting in a strong sense of purpose.	• How effectively have we established a shared vision for the Education Authority that is owned and understood by all stakeholders? • How well do we understand our local context and reflect its unique needs in our strategic planning? • How well do we use our vision, values and aims when making decisions about future improvement priorities? • How effective are our processes for involving all stakeholders in the ongoing review of our vision, aims and values?
1.2 Strategic deployment of resources • Senior leaders make transparent and evidence-based decisions on the allocation of resources. We provide strong leadership in targeting resources at agreed priorities. • We have in place a very clear strategic planning framework that takes account of finances, asset management and human resources that articulate well with service planning and Community Planning cycles.	• How effective and efficient are our approaches to financial management? • What procedures do we employ to ensure transparency and equity in the use of our financial resources? • How effectively do we allocated resources to sustain improvement priorities? • How do we ensure that resources are allocated to meet local and national priorities?

• Effective systems are in place to consult with staff and stakeholders. Risks are identified through regular and thorough evaluations and risk audits.	• How well are our buildings and grounds being used to deliver learning experiences and to support learner, staff and community wellbeing? • How effectively do we monitor the use and impact of available resources on improvement priorities? • How rigorous are our auditing processes to enable us to effectively plan, monitor and manage our resources?
1.3 Fulfilment of Statutory Duties • We comply with statutory requirements. Senior leaders and elected members have high levels of understanding of key legislation and policies across the spectrum of education and learning provision. • Our children, young people and adult learners, staff, volunteers and all other stakeholders both feel and are safe whilst engaging in learning opportunities provided by us either solely, or in partnership with others. • Our elected members, staff and volunteers comply with our clear, appropriate and up-to-date child protection, safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures. • We work effectively with other services and partners to respond to any child protection, safeguarding or safety issue. • We actively promote equality and fairness and challenge all forms of discrimination. We promote social justice and seek to reduce educational disadvantage.	• To what extent does the performance and outcome data demonstrate we are effectively discharging our duty of Best Value and continuous improvement in relation to education? • How well do we ensure high levels of understanding of key legislation and policies across education services? • How effectively do we work with other services to respond to child protection and safeguarding issues? • To what extent do we ensure equality and fairness is actively promoted across the service?
1.4 Leading and delivering sustained improvement and change • Our planning for improvement and change is highly effective as is our capacity for improvement. We place the learning, care and development needs of all children, young people and adult learners at the forefront of our work. • We support all children, young people and adult learners to be safe,	• To what extent can we evidence a clear strategy for the delivery of educational services? • To what extent have we embedded support and challenge as a means of securing continuous improvement? • How effectively do we use data to plan for continuous improvement? • What strategies do we use to guide the strategic direction and pace of change? Is this carefully planned to

healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. We use appropriate frameworks and indicators as a sound basis for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. • The information from performance data and stakeholders' views are used to set appropriate priorities and targets for improvement. These targets are included in service and improvement plans and result in appropriate action.	ensure sufficient time for embedding improvements? • How effective is our guidance to EYC and schools on self-evaluation, improvement planning and standard and quality reporting? • How effective are our methods for evaluating our services and establishments
1.5 Effective leadership at all levels. • Elected members, strategic managers and senior leaders nurture, create and maintain a positive improvement culture where staff at all levels feel confident to initiate and take forward well–informed changes. • We use up-to-date data and intelligence to inform strategic decision making. We effectively guide and manage an ambitious strategic direction and set a realistic pace of change. • Strategic managers demonstrate a clear commitment to encourage leadership and empowerment of change at all levels, particularly at a middle level. • Our staff are encouraged to take on leadership roles, building on individual's skills and talents.	• To what extent do our governance arrangements promote a culture of sustained improvement? • How effectively have we developed a culture in which all staff share a collective responsibility to improve outcomes for children and young people? • How well have we ensured a strong capacity for improvement across our service? • How well do we create collaborative conditions for staff to learn with and from others through peer collaborative learning? • To what extent do leaders proactively establish strong links with establishments, stakeholders, partners and other council services to lead joint improvement activities?

Quality Indicator 2: Improving Outcomes for All

This indicator focuses on the impact of the education authority on achieving the best possible outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners, including those with additional support needs. This is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and in all settings, through the authority's ability to demonstrate children, young people and adult learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes and through progress towards meeting local targets across a range of appropriate measures. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. Factors associated with specific impact on children, young people, staff, families and communities is also a key consideration. The features of highly effective practice below are intended as illustrations only and not as a set criterion.

Themes:

1. Improvement in outcomes for children, young people and adult learners.
2. Quality of Education - Impact on children, families and communities.
3. Quality of Education – Impact of professional learning on staff
4. Use of performance data to improve outcomes for children, young people and adult learners.

Features of highly effective practice:	Challenge Questions
2.1 Improvement in outcomes for children, young people and adult learners • Across all services and establishments, we have improved attainment, achievement and positive destinations for children, young people and adult learners continuously over time. We have collaborated with partners and have maintained consistently high outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners. • These outcomes are measured across a range of indicators, including literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and positive and sustained destinations. We have raised the attainment of all our children, young people and adult learners and in particular our most disadvantaged children and young people. We have evidence that we are closing the poverty related attainment gap. We are effective in ensuring young people and adult learners maintain or move on to	• How effective are our approaches to raising attainment and achievement? • How well can we demonstrate improved attainment for groups and individuals facing barriers to learning? • To what extent are we closing the poverty related attainment gap? • To what extent have we succeeded in securing positive destinations for our leavers? • How well do we compare with other similar authorities and our virtual comparator across a range of measures? • To what extent are we achieving our targets we have set for ourselves, including stretch aims? • To what extent are our levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy improving over time? • How are we able to evidence that the health and well-being skills of our learners are improving over time?

positive destinations adding value to the local and national economy. • Our outcomes compare well against a range of appropriate benchmarks and comparators including in literacy, numeracy, the senior phase and health and wellbeing. **2.2 Quality of Education - Impact on children, families and communities.** • Overall, our children, young people and adult learners are successful, confident, exercise responsibility and contribute to the life of their community and as global citizens. • We have effective systems in place to promote equity of educational success for all our children, young people and adult learners. Our self-evaluation and external evaluations provide evidence of the extent to which we have maintained high educational standards or have improved over time. • Our staff and partners effectively use data, analysis and intelligence gathering to inform their understanding of community and individual family's needs and to ensure appropriate timely interventions. We make very effective use of national and international research and best practice to improve our children's learning and about the kind of experiences that will best prepare them for their future lives. • Our staff and partners are confident in delivering new approaches to learning and teaching that impact positively on learners. We work closely with parents, partners and other agencies to help minimise the effect of poverty on our children, young people and adult learners. We have effective school and authority systems in place to promote and monitor the success and achievement of all our children and young people.	• How well do we use tracking and monitoring information from across the authority to measure progress over time and identify areas for improvement? • How well do we recognise and value the personal achievements of all learners? • Have we successfully established an inclusive learning culture? How do we know? • How do we know that the education provision is contributing to learner's success across the 4 capacities? • How do we know that our learning, teaching and assessment is of the highest quality? • How well do we ensure that the curriculum is designed to develop and promote equality and diversity and eliminate discrimination? • What steps have we put in place to ensure that all children and young people have access to high-quality learning across all curriculum areas and through outdoor and digital learning? • How effectively have we incorporated children's rights in to our work? How well are children consulted and engaged about their learning? • How well are we capturing the impact of children and young people's achievements on our community? • How well do we engage with families and communities and how do we involve them in decision-making around education? • How effective are we in evaluating the impact of our work on families and communities? • To what extent can we state that families are satisfied with the quality of education? • How effective are our arrangements to respond to stakeholders concerns and suggestions? • How well has the LA engaged with parents/families to support

2.3 Quality of Education – Impact of professional learning on staff

- Our model of professional learning is understood and used by all staff. Our staff have ownership of their own professional learning and are empowered to engage in self-directed learning. Individually and collectively, we plan and evaluate our professional learning directly on the quality of impact on learning. We can evidence the impact our professional learning has had on our work and the progress, achievement and attainment of children, young people and adult learners over time.
- Our staff are supported through professional learning to deliver high-quality services, including learning and teaching which improve the life chances of children, young people and adult learners. They work in partnership to deliver well-targeted initiatives that improving attainment and achievement of the most disadvantaged children, young people and adult learners and enhance their health and well-being.

2.4 Use of performance data to improve outcomes for children, young people and adult learners

- We have robust systems to track and monitor the progress of children, young people and adult learners across our services and establishments. We analyse this information to determine our impact and to ensure we intervene effectively to support the continuous progress of children, young people and adult learners across our authority.
- We make appropriate progress towards meeting local targets for education (including stretch aims),

improvements in learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?

- How well do all staff understand their responsibility in ensuring sustained improvement?
- How well are our approaches to professional learning understood and used by all staff?
- To what extent do we critically engage with research, policy sources and developments in learning and teaching?
- How well do all staff know and understand the key tools to be used in self-evaluation activities including the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) Standards and other QI frameworks?
- How well do we provide opportunities for all staff to be involved in and lead aspects of service improvement?
- How effective are our approaches to collegiate learning? Are we using an appropriate range of approaches which enable us to learn with and from each other?
- Can we evidence the impact of our professional learning approaches on improved outcomes for learners?
- How effective are LA approaches to evaluate the impact of the professional learning offer in relation to improving outcomes for all learners?

- To what extent is our approach to self-evaluation rigorous and robust?
- To what extent is decision making underpinned by effective data analysis?
- How effectively do we use data to intervene effectively to ensure improved outcomes?
- How well do we know that the steps we have taken have improved outcomes for children?

health and wellbeing and Best Value within education. We use a range of appropriate tools, including professional judgement to evaluate how well our children and young people attain and to plan our next steps. • We have effective moderation and data gathering processes across our services and establishments to ensure data for improvement is robust and provides accurate information for us to evaluate.	• To what extent do elected members use performance data to support and challenge improvement? • How effectively are we building capacity and sustainability into initiatives? • How effective are our strategies and processes for evaluating our service?

Improving Outcomes for All: Core Indicators

Early Years
1. Attendance
2. Care Inspectorate and HMI inspection outcomes

Broad General Education
3. Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CfE levels in literacy
4. Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy
5. Percentage of S3 achieving third level in literacy
6. Percentage of S3 achieving third level in numeracy

Senior Phase
7. Percentage of leavers achieving Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF Level 5
8. Percentage of leavers achieving 5 or more at SCQF Level 4
9. Percentage of leavers achieving 5 or more at SCQF Level 5
10. Percentage of leavers achieving 5 or more at SCQF Level 6

Leaver Destinations
11. Percentage of leavers entering positive destinations – Initial and follow-up destinations
12. Participation rate for 16-19 year olds

Other
13. School attendance rates – Primary, Secondary and Special
14. School exclusion rates – Primary, Secondary and Special
15. Achievement – Locally based measures that reflect the purpose of Curriculum for Excellence
16. Health and Wellbeing – Locally based measures
17. Inspection results for Local Authority establishments and trends in proportion of inspection QIs rated good or better
18. Improvements arising from LA strategies and plans, reviews including Best Value and ADES Collaborative Improvement

Note - Local Authorities should consider:
- Trends – Over time, a trend being 3-5 years
- Comparison with national trends
- Comparison with relevant benchmarks, family groups or virtual comparators
- Progress in meeting local targets including stretch aims
- Data relating to performance of particular groups of learners and provide progress in raising attainment of key equity groups e.g. ASN, Poverty, Care Experienced, Ethnicity, EAL, Gender