



HOW GOOD IS OUR SCHOOL? THE JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

PART 4: PLANNING FOR EXCELLENCE





HOW GOOD IS OUR SCHOOL?

THE JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

**PART 4:
PLANNING FOR EXCELLENCE**

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THE JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

Planning for Excellence

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FOREWORD

The five parts of *How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence* have been designed as a coherent process, drawing on what we know about effective school improvement from experience in Scotland and internationally. Self-evaluation and effective planning are integral to that process. Scottish education is seen as being at the forefront in the use of self-evaluation, and the 'Scottish approach' to school improvement, combining self-evaluation and inspection, is recognised internationally. The challenge now is to build on that strength and ensure that evaluation leads to well-judged action and improvement.

The link to action is through planning and the purpose of planning is to create and implement solutions that help achieve more for all learners. That means understanding and being able to explain how what happens in classrooms relates to what learners achieve, and adapting practices and experiences to secure further improvement for learners.

Self-evaluation is a reflective, professional process through which schools and centres get to know themselves well. The most recent editions of *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre* are designed to help schools in that task. Improvement planning builds on that self knowledge by involving us in understanding and valuing the best of that which already exists, deciding how good we can really be, and identifying the best way forward.

Planning for Excellence is Part 4 of *The Journey to Excellence*. It aims to help in simplifying improvement planning, where that is necessary. It stresses the importance of involving parents, partner organisations and learners themselves. It also directs the focus towards making discernible improvements to the learning experiences and achievements of children and young people in our early education centres and schools.

Graham Donaldson
HM Senior Chief Inspector

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Introduction

Planning for Excellence, Part 4 of *How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence* (JTE), builds on previous advice about planning for improvement¹. It shows how the school community can use the dimensions of excellence in Part 1 *Aiming for Excellence* and Part 2 *Exploring Excellence*, alongside the quality indicators in Part 3 *How good are we now?*² to decide what the school is aiming for, and how it is going to get there.

This guide is for everyone who teaches, supports and works to improve the learning experiences of children and young people:

- teachers, support staff and early years practitioners
- leaders of teams at all levels within the school or centre
- local authority officers or boards of governors
- people who work in partnership with the school, such as parents³, parent councils, residential care staff, social workers, community learning and development workers, voluntary services staff, community groups, and other educational establishments and local businesses.

All these groups have meaningful, though different, roles in influencing the improvement process.

Planning for Excellence takes improvement planning to the next level. Schools are used to asking the question, 'How good is our school?' Scottish schools are now ready to ask three further questions:

- How good can we be?
- How do we get there?

and

- What have we achieved?

1 *The Role of School Development Plans in Managing School Effectiveness*, second edition, HM Inspectors of Schools, 1994 and *How good is our school? Planning for Improvement*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2003.

2 Part 3 consists of the second edition of *The Child at the Centre* and the third edition of *How good is our school?*.

3 The term 'parents' should be taken to refer to parents, foster carers, and carers who are relatives or friends.

Building on strengths in planning

Scottish early education centres, schools and authorities have well-established rhythms, or cycles, of self-evaluation and improvement planning. Pages 6-8 of *How good is our school?* and *The Child of the Centre* outline the most effective approaches to self-evaluation. Where planning is most effective, self-evaluation is directly linked to improved outcomes for young people⁴. Improvement planning enables schools and centres to bring together external expectations and the needs of their own learners. Innovation comes about naturally through staff⁵ focusing on the best ways of responding to children's needs. It can be arrived at through their own creative processes or adapted from the good practice observed in other establishments and organisations. Education authorities have a role in encouraging innovation.



4 The term 'young people' should be taken to refer to children aged 3 to 18 who are learning in early education centres, residential and day special schools, and primary and secondary schools. The terms 'learners', 'children' and 'pupils' are also used, to provide variety.

5 The term 'staff' should be taken to include all adults who contribute to children's learning, including support staff, care staff in residential schools and staff working in partner organisations.

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Where carefully-designed planning documentation is useful and is working, it helps staff to structure and manage the process of improvement. However, unnecessary bureaucracy may detract from the focus on improvement. Planning should encourage all staff to work in teams to introduce and implement changes and innovations which benefit children. Education authorities have a particular responsibility to ensure that documentation is streamlined.

Effective planning is based on professional reflection and discussion. Such discussion encourages staff learning, ownership, teamwork and leadership⁶. Focusing on improvement enables staff to see the 'big picture', and reflect on, and so learn more deeply about, their own roles in achieving positive outcomes for children.

In recent years, we have become increasingly aware that schools and early years settings belong to children and that their voices are important. Schools have a statutory duty to involve children and parents. Parent councils themselves have a duty to raise standards and secure improvements in the quality of education provided. The approach to planning outlined in *Planning for Excellence*, assumes that the whole establishment's community is involved in some way in planning for excellence: children, parents, staff and those with whom the school works in partnership⁷. It also assumes an active awareness and understanding on the part of leaders and staff of the relationship between improvement planning within the centre or school, and wider community and children's services planning. In this way, establishments contribute to the development of coherent approaches to improving the lives of children and young people.

⁶ See pages 55 and 93 of Part 2 *Exploring Excellence* on leadership and empowerment, and QI 9.4 Leadership of improvement and change. Also *Leadership for learning: The challenges of leading in a time of change*, HMIE 2007.

⁷ Refer to QI 6.2 Participation in policy and planning.

What does 'planning for excellence' involve?

Planning for excellence involves four key collegiate activities.

How good is our school?

- **Agree the vision** through exploring your values for your school or centre.

How good can we be?

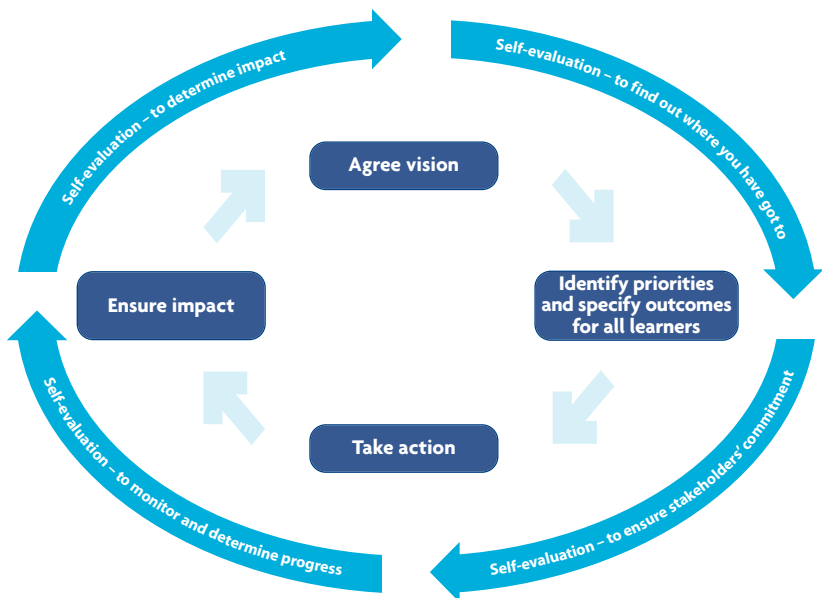
- **Identify your priorities** and specify the key outcomes which you aim to achieve for all learners.

How do we get there?

- **Take action** to implement your vision for all learners.

What have we achieved?

- **Ensure the impact** of the action you have taken.



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Improvement is not always a steady pathway. It is not unusual for individual schools to reach a plateau in their own journey to excellence, as indicated by pupils' levels of achievement. This does not mean that they are not still working towards improvement. Indeed they are likely to be continuing to learn about what really makes a difference.

In seeking continuous improvement it is important that schools focus on what we know are the levers for improvement. These levers or dimensions are outlined in detail in Part 2 *Exploring Excellence* and range across learning and teaching, vision and leadership, partnerships, involving and developing people and an ethos of high expectations. HMIE inspections show that self-evaluation is not always focused on key features of these dimensions such as classroom practice, meeting needs, and every practitioner's professional learning.

Schools and centres which already demonstrate strengths across a range of their practices now have to help staff to make that step change from good to great. They are likely to adopt approaches that **focus on delivery**. And such schools are likely to have good relationships with, and support from, parents and the education authority. Establishments which are ready to use these approaches are those which already know themselves well.



Focus on delivery

Visioning: the whole school community pictures what they want their school to be like, works out what they need to do to achieve this, and then 'goes for it'.

Use positive and creative approaches, such as **Appreciative Inquiry:**

- *Reflect on what has been, and continues to be, successful in your school.*
- *Use these findings to create a compelling and ambitious vision of what you want your school to be like in the future.*
- *Plan how you are going to achieve this vision.*
- *Implement the plan, having secured commitment to what happens next and who will do it.*

Agreeing your vision and values

The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 clearly defined the purpose of school education: ***"to encourage the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the young person to their fullest potential"***.

The Act establishes a broad vision for Scottish education to be delivered through an improvement framework that links a set of national priorities, local improvement objectives and outcomes for learners in school improvement plans. The national vision has been further refined with the aim of ensuring that children are nurtured, safe, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible.

The *Curriculum for Excellence* re-stated the overall purposes of the education system for children and young people ages 3 to 18 in terms of four key capacities. It sets out the aspiration for all children and every young person that they should become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society and at work.

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When all those to whom the school belongs explore their values and vision together, the school can achieve a shared ownership which is an essential element in the improvement process. Your school's vision has to be dynamic, and will be refined as the journey towards excellence proceeds. Our own experience tells us that vision and ownership are as much outcomes of the improvement process as qualities which precede it. Most schools and centres try to make their vision aspirational and the most inspiring are about excellence. Your inspiration may derive from a number of sources, from children themselves, from personal and professional experience, and from writers and thinkers about educating and nurturing children. Your vision will look to the future environment and the kinds of challenges which may await. It will be rooted in what your school or centre already knows about itself. The heart of your vision will always be the provision of the highest quality learning and teaching, and the need to ensure that all children achieve to their fullest potential. The box below shows an example from real practice. There are many different ways in which such statements can be expressed and presented.

Extract from one school's statement of vision and values

We aspire to becoming a learning organisation capable of continuous improvement – renowned for the excellent quality of learning and teaching, care and welfare and support that we provide to maximise student achievement.

In carrying out all aspects of our work, we:

- conduct our business with integrity, impartiality, fairness, tolerance and mutual respect;
- value diversity, promoting social inclusion – in an environment where everyone is welcome; and
- seek progress through partnership, working closely with people with whom we share a common purpose.

You will find it helpful to explore the values by which your school or centre operates. Values relate to the way all the people in the school community treat each other and what they aim to achieve for each other, for the school and for society as a whole.

The values of the Scottish Parliament

The values inscribed on the Scottish Parliament's mace are *wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity*.

Values will be about what really matters to individual schools and centres and, as such, establishments may differ in the relative emphasis they place on, or importance they ascribe to, particular aspects. Discussions of the vision and values can take place among different groupings of people and in a number of contexts, for example, through approaches for developing citizenship among young people, within the parent council, and in focus or action groups involving the school's wider partners. The local council's vision and values will play a part.

Your next step is to specify those outcomes for learners which will indicate that you are on the way to achieving this vision.



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Identifying priorities, specifying outcomes and planning delivery

Your school or centre will need to specify a manageable number of improvement priorities or outcome statements, expressed as **outcomes for learners**. The implementation of your plan will focus on the steps and actions you need to take to achieve these outcomes.

It makes sense for the outcomes to arise from your school's or centre's vision, take account of the capacities within the Curriculum for Excellence, and relate to a broad range of achievements. You can look at the dimensions in Part 2 *Exploring Excellence* and the quality indicators in *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre* for ideas. You might also choose to have a theme, for example, adjusting the curriculum, as a priority. In this case when developing your action plans, ask yourself how actions you may take relating to each of the ten dimensions can contribute, as well as what the impact will be on the outcomes for learners. So you might explore how to develop active learning approaches, how to introduce or further develop assessment for learning principles and how to harness the role of parents in encouraging their children's learning even before you consider any changes to curriculum structure or content. It is probably best if the outcomes for learners are set at a high level and are few in number. Outcomes will be observable, some will be directly measurable and all will be capable of being evaluated⁸.

By referring to a wide range of data⁹, together with the key messages from research, you should be able to be precise in your planning. This will also help when you come to evaluate the impact of your improvement activities. Robust evaluation requires reliable data and your school or centre needs to be rich in data. It should be able to demonstrate the improvements achieved – that is improvement against the baseline at the start. This will let you know how far you have travelled.

8 For advice on outcomes and impact refer to indicators 1.1 and 2.1 in Part 3 *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*.

9 Refer to QI 8.4 Managing information and Part 2 *Exploring Excellence*, page 91: Being data rich.

Constantly refreshed data also helps you to be more precise about next steps for individual learners and about the best teaching approaches to adopt.

Data can be of various kinds. Data should indicate children's current levels of achievement and be capable of demonstrating any improvements in the progress and achievements of each child and of specific cohorts and groups. Data should include analyses of people's views which can be compared with their views after initiatives have been implemented. Evaluations based on direct observation of the quality of learning in the playroom or classroom¹⁰ are crucial.



¹⁰ Part 3 *How good is our school?*, Appendix 5: Evidence for self-evaluation.

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Example of good practice in peer observation and evaluation

- The focus of observations by senior managers and peers was clearly linked to the improvement plan.
- Staff received written and oral feedback offering praise, support and challenge, followed by discussions.
- Collated evidence from observations was used for whole-school development and when monitoring progress with aspects of the improvement plan.
- Peer observations had been extended to include staff from all other schools in the cluster.

Example of good practice in involving parents

- The headteacher held an open forum on a set day each month which all parents were invited to attend.
- In a relaxed context, parents contributed to evaluations and discussed plans for improvement.

You will be thinking ahead to determine your outcomes. Challenging outcomes or priorities for children will often take more than a single year to implement. You could think in terms of two or three years as a 'rule of thumb', with milestones set at intervals within that period.

It is unwise for outcome statements to be set in 'tablets of stone'. In our changing world, planning is dynamic. The circumstances and contexts in which schools and centres operate may alter. Pupil populations may change, and hence the needs to which establishments must respond. It only makes sense for schools and centres to adjust their improvement plans in such circumstances. You do not need to produce a separate plan to deal with such developments. Simply alter your high-level improvement plan and incorporate these new or revised outcome statements in it. Sometimes

this might mean that you delay delivery on existing developments in order to address a more pressing need.

The improvement plan

Your improvement plan is a map of your school's improvement journey. This map should be high level and give the broad direction of travel. There are different ways of reaching the goal depending where you are starting from and local circumstances. Schools and centres can have flexibility in how they do this as long as they achieve their outcomes within an agreed timescale.

You may have specific approaches in place where you work in a well-defined and wider learning community.

Many establishments already have effective pro forma, developed by their authorities or themselves, for recording the outcomes of their planning discussions and their plans for improvement. If this documentation works, there may be no reason to change it. If it is too lengthy, detailed or complicated you should slim it down and limit it to the essential elements described in this guide.



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Essential elements of an improvement plan

- Clearly stated and aspirational vision and values, developed by, and shared with, children and young people, parents and those with whom the school works in partnership.
- A small number of improvement priorities, informed by facts, intelligence or research and expressed as outcomes for learners.
- Outcomes which focus on learning and achievement, are based on evidence and data, and are observable and, if possible, measurable.
- Clearly identified responsibilities for implementation linked to named individuals and/or teams.
- Clear timescales extending to more than one school session, as necessary, and with milestones and deadlines.
- Measures of success which include performance data, quality indicators and stakeholders' views.

You will probably need to develop individual action plans for specific projects and/or teams. These action or project plans will break projects into more specific actions which need to be undertaken by named individuals or groups, and will include milestones and measures of success. You may already have such plans, for example, in secondary school departments. These plans do not need to be included in your high-level improvement plan. They are working documents and are more likely to feature at stage, department or faculty level or for individual priorities. They will indicate who is responsible for specific actions and the timescales within which they should be completed. Again, the outcomes recorded will be expressed as outcomes for children, rather than the completion of documentation. Action plans too are flexible and may be revised annually, or more frequently, as appropriate to circumstances.

The planning process goes from the high strategic level – the improvement plan itself – all the way to the professional development plans for individual staff.

Taking action to implement your vision

Before you work out what you need to do, you will need to know how far along the road you already are. You could select a group of quality indicators from *How good is our school?* or *The Child at the Centre* (JTE Part 3) to help you determine your starting point. A key focus here is the relationship between the outcomes for learners you have decided on and what the school has to do to achieve these outcomes. This in turn means understanding and being able to explain how classroom or playroom practices and the wider environment for learning relate to what learners achieve. This is the crux of the matter.

Schools which have a well-established history of reflecting on their own work, often supported by the education authority, may not need to spend very long on this stage. The information may already be available¹¹.

If you identify weak practice, you will need to focus on addressing the weaknesses before going any further. The first question to ask is how to build on strengths to help address weaknesses. This gives a positive focus to the improvement process.

Part 2 *Exploring Excellence* gives examples of excellent practice observed in schools and centres across Scotland. You may find it helpful to refer to these examples when planning how you are going to achieve your outcomes. Part 5 *Journeys to Excellence*, the digital resource, includes a range of practical examples drawn from real establishments which you can use for reference and in professional learning activities. *Journeys to Excellence* also contains summaries of a range of UK and international research, linked to the dimensions, which provides further evidence to refer to when designing and implementing improvement projects.

¹¹ Refer to QI 5.9 Improvement through self-evaluation.

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When you have successfully achieved one of the outcomes on your improvement plan, or milestone in a longer-term priority you can move it onto the 'maintenance agenda'.

The 'maintenance agenda'

The 'maintenance agenda' is the normal work of the school, your school's important day-to-day business. Sustaining the improvements already made will become the job of named members of staff or teams, and be built into their remits and ongoing responsibilities. Your arrangements for staff review and your ongoing self evaluation will keep a check on whether quality is maintained. Your school may have a calender for this¹².



¹² See *How good is our school?* Appendix 6, P57.

Ensuring impact

After you have taken the action you have planned, you will need to evaluate its overall success, using the relevant quality indicators. In this way you can measure progress. Evaluation involves analysing performance data, sampling people's views and observing directly the quality of practice to determine what difference you have made.

Example of evaluation involving all staff

- Every member of each department contributed to a departmental presentation to senior managers on strengths and aspects for improvement.
- Each member of the department evaluated the performance of his or her own class as part of the review of attainment.
- Reviews of attainment focused not just on subject performance but also on the performance of individual pupils and classes.

The outcomes evaluated will be outcomes for children. They will not relate to the writing of policies or the production of teaching materials. These activities are likely to be in detailed action plans, and are means to more important ends: improvements in the learning and achievements of children.

Evaluation is a dynamic process which goes on throughout the year, not at set times. If you notice difficulties, you will need to take appropriate action, if necessary adjusting your plan.

In such circumstances, schools and centres, in discussion with their education authorities, may need to reconsider their key priorities. Some milestones and deadlines, and staff responsibilities may need to be adjusted also. What is important is that the quality of children's learning, and expectations that they all succeed and fulfil their potential, are maintained as key priorities and will always come first.

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Every so often you will need to carry out a ‘health check’ by applying the quality indicators in the overall framework across the range of your work. Such a scan should pick up any problems in maintenance activities. The resulting report should focus on outcomes for and impact on learners.

The role of the education authority or board of governors

The challenge for education authorities and boards of governors is to know their schools and centres well. They also have to provide a lead in formulating an overall vision in which local schools work. They will have to judge whether the establishment’s own vision, priorities and proposed outcomes are appropriate and challenging. They should judge when to intervene to support establishments in improving the quality of learning and supporting individual learners. Education authorities and boards of governors also have a role in supporting creativity and innovation in helping the school to achieve its priorities.

We know from experiences in Scotland and in other parts of the world that in trying to achieve sustained improvement, we can do many of the right things but still be disappointed about the impact on pupils’ achievements. Approaches that have a shared vision and commitment at class, centre, school, education authority and national levels within an overall framework for improvement are likely to be successful. To maximise such success, decisions about the approaches in every playroom and early years setting, in every classroom and every school have to be based on substantive evidence and data. Effective use of evidence enables us to build on our capacity for improvement (see Appendix 2) and our understanding of what is being taught, how it is being taught and, most importantly, how it is being learned.

In any discussion of learners’ achievements, it is essential to focus on individuals or groups of individuals. This approach gives data a human face. So you are likely to discuss why one particular pupil made well

above or well below their expected progress. Or you could focus attention on looked after children or those whose first language is not English. Data is thus focused on close tracking of individual achievements and allows for prompt intervention to keep learners on track with their expected progress. Building capacity is aided by sharing professional learning, for example, by discussing learning and teaching approaches in relation to what the evidence tells us across playrooms and classes, schools and education authorities. This means making our thinking about learning explicit and sharing it. The focus for leaders in such approaches is clearly on leadership for learning¹³.

The quality indicators relating to teaching for effective learning, meeting every learner's needs, assessment for learning and expectations are particularly powerful in providing an agenda for discussion between the education authority or board of governors and the school. The dimensions found in Part 2 *Exploring Excellence* can also help.

The role of individual quality improvement and link officers, is to make an active contribution at all stages of the improvement process in schools and centres. The key aspect of this work is to maintain a focus on classroom or playroom practice and raising achievement.

Local authorities are expected to include a set of locally devised targets for raising attainment in primary and secondary schools. Specific targets for more vulnerable groups will form a part of their targets.

Making an active contribution means encouraging schools and centres to be aspirational, and supporting staff in exploring their values and, in some cases, in taking action. Officers need to ensure that the vision of the school takes account of the authority's vision and national priorities and local improvement objectives. They can help establishments by making these priorities and objectives easily understood, accessible and practical. In discussion with the school they could, for example, help interpret them and place them firmly within the school's own context.

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Officers can carry out similar processes in relation to integrated children's services planning and community planning processes, working with the school to interpret priorities at local authority and community level within the contexts of individual schools and centres while also helping them to find room to respond to the specific needs of their own communities of learners. All stakeholders need to ensure that plans at the various levels are linked. Officers also need to achieve an appropriate balance between prescription by the education authority and the degree of freedom required by schools and centres to respond to the needs of their own communities.

Senior managers and staff in schools and centres may need support in setting out their strategic priorities, whether or not there is a need to use the pro forma devised by the authority.

At a later stage, officers and school governors will need to work with schools and centres to identify their successes in achieving the improved outcomes for learners which have been planned.



Examples of the kinds of questions which officers and school governors might ask leaders and staff

- How did you arrive at your vision and values?
- Explain why the vision and values are appropriate for your school or centre.
- How successful have we been in developing local improvement objectives which are relevant to the needs of your school or centre?
- To what extent have we helped you to interpret them in a way that is easy to understand and apply to the context of your own school or centre?
- In what ways have we allowed you space to decide on your own priorities in the context of national and education authority priorities?
- How do your priorities improve learning?
- Explain how they meet the needs of all learners in the school or centre.
- Outline how they focus on achievement and outcomes for all.
- How have children, parents, staff and partners been involved?
- How is the plan driven forward by leaders at all levels?
- How is staff learning and understanding of learning and teaching being extended?
- How can you demonstrate the improvements achieved?
- What evidence can we use to help us to decide on case studies of individual learners or small groups of learners to focus on, as well as whole school data on achievement?
- In what ways can the education authority or board of governors now help you to reduce barriers and support individual children?

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QI 6.2 Participation in policy and planning and QI 6.3 Planning for improvement can be used to evaluate arrangements for planning for improvement and their overall impact.

Leadership of change and improvement

Focusing on change and improvement is not optional. The challenge is to make change meaningful and to bring about positive differences to children's lives. This means being aware of the futures agenda and being committed to achieving educational gain at the same time¹⁴.

Guiding and managing change and innovation places very real demands on leaders, which are easier to manage when shared. Early successes in the management of change can be a powerful motivating force to engage in further change. There are challenges and satisfactions in being part of a wider team and playing a strategic role.

The strategic role of school and centre leaders extends beyond their own establishment. Leaders in senior management positions are officers of the authority. This means that they not only have responsibilities in relation to their own school or centre, but also for helping to improve the quality of education across their local area. Schools and centres are not isolated and concerned only with their own initiatives and developments. They support and contribute to improvements in other establishments, in the community and in partner organisations. School leaders, particularly headteachers and heads of establishments, are responsible for ensuring that the direction for their own school is in line with that adopted across the authority as a whole, although specific detail and emphasis may vary according to the school's own context. Authorities need to ensure that an appropriate range of opportunities and pathways is available for all young people, whatever establishments they attend.

¹⁴ See *Leadership for learning*.

School and centre leaders ensure links between wider drivers for improvement and practice and solutions on the ground, between national and local. They ensure a balance between flexibility for establishments and entitlements for children. And they ensure consistency in the quality of provision. A key skill for leaders, particularly headteachers, is to mobilise people and teams, and to identify roles. Above all, their leadership is focused on transforming lives through learning.

Conclusion

The most effective planning is proportionate in terms of principles, priorities and outcomes. It finds solutions by building on strengths. It has children at its heart, rather than innovation for its own sake. All staff adopt creative approaches and innovative practices when these are the best ways of building on learners' strengths and responding to their needs, and result in clear educational gain. The effectiveness of improvement planning, therefore, is discernible in the extent and quality of its outcomes for children and young people.



Appendix 1: Summary of the relevant sections of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act

1. Right of the child to school education

Every child has the right to a school education.

2. Duty of the education authority in providing school education

Education authorities have a duty to ensure that children's education is directed to the development of their personality, talent and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Education authorities should have due regard, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the views of children in decisions which significantly affect them, taking into account their age and maturity.

3. Raising standards

The Act establishes the duty of Scottish Ministers to secure improvement in the quality of school education across Scotland, and the duty of education authorities to secure improvement in the schools for which they are responsible.

4. National priorities in education

The Act states that Scottish Ministers will define national priorities in educational objectives for school education, and may define and publish measures of performance relating to these priorities.

The national priorities in education are:

- **Achievement and Attainment:** to raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results;
- **Framework for Learning:** to support and develop the skills of teachers and the self-discipline of pupils, and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to teaching and learning;

- **Inclusion and Equality:** to promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser-used languages;
- **Values and Citizenship:** to work with parents to teach pupils respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society;
- **Learning for Life:** to equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition.

5. Education authority's annual statement of improvement objectives

Education authorities must publish annual statements of education improvement objectives, after consulting bodies representing teachers, staff in general, the Parent Council and parents generally, and after giving children, young people and other local people with an interest the opportunity to make their views known.

These statements will indicate:

- how authorities will involve parents in promoting the education of their children;
- how they will encourage equal opportunities; and
- the ways or circumstances in which they will provide Gaelic medium education and seek to develop this provision.

Following the publication of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007, education authorities will also include strategies for ensuring that schools are health-promoting in their statements of improvement objectives.

Education improvement objectives will be set in relation to each of the national priorities and with reference to any measures of performance

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which have been set. They can also be set in relation to other matters and measures which the authority considers important. The objectives can be revised during the twelve-month period if circumstances change.

Education authorities must publish annual reports on their success in meeting the most recent objectives set, or any revised objectives.

6. School development plans (often called improvement plans)

Education authorities must ensure that schools publish annual development plans, after consulting with parents and representative parent bodies, teachers and their representatives, staff in general (whether paid or unpaid), any local groups which have an interest and pupils who attend their schools. The objectives in school plans must take account of the authority's annual improvement objectives and (since the publication of the Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act 2006) indicate the school's strategy for parental involvement. Following the publication of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007, the authority's improvement objectives will include those which it has set in relation to health promotion. Schools must produce a summary of the plan.

The development plans will include an account of the ways in which the headteacher will consult pupils who attend the school and involve them in any decisions to be made about the everyday running of the school.

The education authority will ensure that there is an annual report on progress in implementing the plan, and a summary of this report.

The education authority must ensure that parents of pupils at the school have access to the development plan and the progress report, and receive summaries of both documents, without having to pay.

Development plans can be revised versions of the plan produced in the previous year or can be completely new. However, the authority should from time to time review the implementation of the plan and if there is any relevant and significant change of circumstances ensure that there is a new or revised plan.

7. Review of school performance

From time to time education authorities will consult the views of representatives of teachers and parents about the quality of education provided, measures and standards of performance for the schools they manage, defining different measures and standards for different schools. Since the publication of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, the 'quality of education' now includes the extent to which parents are involved in the education provided to pupils.

Education authorities must review the quality of education in individual schools, with regard to the measures and standards they have defined and if the school is not performing satisfactorily, take steps to remedy the matter.

Appendix 2: Capacity to improve

This sixth of the high level questions in *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre* (JTE Part 3), What is our capacity for improvement?, requires a global judgement based on all the evaluations made using quality indicators, and the evidence on which they are based. In answering this question, schools, authorities and boards of governors should take into account contextual issues such as impending retirements of senior staff, plans to restructure, and significant changes in resources. Schools should take into account their 'track record' in making improvements and managing change. They should also consider their ability to respond quickly to changes in their context and to be creative and innovative in the pursuit of excellence.

The capacity to improve is linked to a range of factors, such as: effective self-evaluation; a richness of data and intelligence that is well used, for example, to track the progress of individual learners; an agreed and shared vision; an open, collegiate climate that makes professional thinking and learning explicit; close and supportive monitoring of initiatives; and creative thinking in reaching solutions that help improve learning experiences and achievement for all.

In judging its capacity to improve, the school should be able to express its confidence or otherwise that the evidence and evaluations to date indicate that:

- overall improvements have been made to key outcomes for, and the experiences of, learners;
- leadership and management are effective; and
- quality improvement arrangements are effective.

The levels of confidence expressed for each of the above may differ, and may include some reservations, but should lead to an overall statement of confidence in the school's capacity to improve.

For example, the school could say: “We are confident that the evidence and evaluations to date indicate that:

- overall, improvements have been made to achieve key outcomes and to meet the needs of almost all learners, but we need to improve the achievements of our looked after children;
- leadership and management are currently effective, but key posts will become vacant in the near future;
- improvement arrangements are effective in all areas except literacy; and
- overall, we have demonstrated the capacity to continue improving.”

Individual departments or stages can also use this approach to form global judgements of their capacity for improvement.

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