



Key Findings from Term 3 Quality Improvement Officer Visits

Following the completion of Term 3 QIO visits across schools, I wanted to share a summary of the **key strengths, recurring challenges and system-level priorities** identified through the feedback.

Overall picture

There is strong evidence of commitment to equity and poverty-aware practice across the authority. Relationships, nurture and inclusion are clear strengths, and in many settings this is translating into improved engagement, attendance and wellbeing. Tracking systems are more robust than in previous sessions, and staff knowledge of pupils and families remains a significant asset, particularly in rural contexts where SIMD does not fully reflect deprivation.

Key strengths

- Positive, nurturing ethos with pupils feeling known, supported and listened to.
- Improving use of tracking data (ACEL, attendance, wellbeing and wider achievement).
- Effective targeted interventions, including nurture, breakfast clubs, alternative curriculum pathways and family support.
- Growing use of PEF profiles, case studies and professional dialogue to support planning.
- Strong partnerships with families, communities and third-sector organisations to mitigate the cost of the school day.

Common areas for development

- **Attainment:** Poverty-related gaps remain, particularly in **secondary Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy**, with evidence of a ceiling at Level 4 for some FSM pupils.
- **PEF clarity and impact:** In a few schools, staff, pupils and parents are unclear about PEF allocation, decision-making and impact.

- **Participatory budgeting:** Involvement of pupils, staff and families is inconsistent and often limited.
- **Evaluation:** Strong narrative evidence is not always matched by quantitative evaluation (FSM vs non-FSM comparisons, pre- and post-intervention data).
- **Wider achievement:** Tracking of leadership opportunities, clubs, residential and meta-skills is variable, and FSM pupils are not always prioritised for high-value experiences.
- **Consistency of learning and teaching:** Variation remains

System priorities moving forward

- Re-centre equity work on **closing attainment gaps as well as supporting wellbeing**.
- Strengthen expectations around **Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy for FSM pupils**.
- Improve transparency and shared ownership of **PEF planning and impact**.
- Embed participatory budgeting as a meaningful process.
- Develop clearer, more consistent approaches to tracking **wider achievement and meta-skills**, particularly for FSM pupils.

The overall direction is positive, with many examples of high-quality, thoughtful practice. The next steps will require increased precision, consistency and evaluation to ensure that equity funding demonstrably closes gaps in outcomes for children and young people.

Thank you for the professionalism, openness and commitment shown during Term 3 visits.

Kind regards,



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