

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE
14 JANUARY 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Validated Self – Evaluation – Partnership with HMle

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

SUMMARY

This report informs members of the work to date in securing continuous improvement in the ECS Service through a pilot process of service self-evaluation in partnership with and validated by HMle. It will contribute to a large number of outcomes in ***Strengthening the Highlands*** including the following:

- We will continue to raise levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy for pupils in pre-school, primary and secondary provision and maintain high levels of achievement in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and achieve the outcomes in a Curriculum for Excellence.
- Achieve full implementation of “Getting it Right for Every Child”.
- Improve the quality of learning, teaching and leadership capacity in our schools and communities.
- Increase the number of young people leaving school and moving into education, training or employment to 87% by the end of March 2009. Working with our partners, we will review this target by 2011.
- Place primary schools at the centre of our communities and work to secure their long term future by developing community schools with a wide range of activities and services extending beyond the traditional school day.

It also relates directly to the Single Outcome Agreement 2 objectives of:

- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

1. Introduction

1.1 The validated self-evaluation (VSE) model has been developed as a replacement for the Inspection of Education Authorities. It is integrated into the Best Value process. Highland has volunteered to pilot this collaborative model with HMle to improve and validate our self-evaluation processes. The results of the VSE will be used as a central part of the Service Standards and Quality Report to members at the May 2010 ECS Committee and the improvement actions resulting from this will be integrated into the ECS Service Plan which will be updated at the same time.

1.2 Although this model of supporting and challenging education authorities is at an early stage of development, it is clear that it is designed to support our own self-evaluation and quality assurance systems. It also supports the sharing of good practice and offers independent evaluation. Its key focus is on improving outcomes for our learners - whatever their age or stage.

1.3 Validated self-evaluation aims to support and challenge the work of education authorities through HMle and the council working in partnership.

- It is not inspection.
- It is founded on existing self-evaluation work in councils.
- It is voluntary.
- It is led by the authority.
- It articulates clearly with the shared risk assessment process and Best Value 2.

1.4 It is of central importance that VSE is owned by the Service and that our partnership with HMle is based on openness and trust. The focus of our self-evaluation in this process should be the areas of major importance to young people. We will require to secure a well grounded evaluation that will enable us to both build on our strengths and improve on our weaknesses.

2. The Process

2.1 Our VSE follows the central principle that quality improvement begins with self-evaluation based on a collegiate approach of staff, service users, partners and other stakeholders working together. ECS Self evaluation is well established in many areas with the Service working to improve on areas of weaker practice. One of our needs is to be sufficiently rigorous and systematic in approach, and it is in this and other areas that the skills and expertise of HMle will be of great benefit.

2.2 Our VSE will consider all learning functions, including CLD, schools, early years, sports, culture, and integrated children's service working. It will focus attention on outcomes for children and young people in relation to progress against our agreed priorities and related to the National Performance Framework/SOA.

2.3 Following from our ongoing self-evaluation by the Service and our partners, there are 3 particular phases of VSE:

- **initial engagement** (Nov 09 – 1 Feb 10) to discuss and agree the shape of VSE for Highland, develop links with HMle Lead Facilitator. We are communicating to staff and stakeholders. In this phase we will also determine the composition of theme groups to examine aspects of our self-evaluation and would welcome member participation in such groups.
- **self-evaluation and validation** processes (1 Feb – 19 Mar). Here the theme groups, together with HMle engage in self-evaluation processes in the designated areas from 1 – 5 Feb. HMle will engage to validate resultant evaluations & undertake further evaluations as required during the week beginning 15 March 10.
- **reporting** where ECS and HMle will prepare a joint report focussing on the main findings together with a clear improvement agenda in preparation for the ECS Committee of 20 May 2010.

3. Core areas

3.1 There will be three core areas for the VSE process in all Authorities:

- improvements in performance
- impact on learners
- capacity for improvement

3.2 **Improvement in performance** will look at our performance data and measures showing our trends over time. It will also include our performance against our service aims and outcomes. This will normally include comparative data measured against benchmarks as have been regularly presented to the Committee in our annual Standards and Quality reports. Under this area we will be looking at the overall quality of education provided by our services and establishments.

3.3 **Impact on learners** refers to the extent that they are:

- included and participating.
- achieving, attaining and progressing.

It also relates to the extent that learners, parents/carers and families positively report on the educational experiences we provide for our young people.

3.4 **Capacity for improvement** is an overall judgement that we would make about ourselves. It would directly relate to our confidence in overall levels of improvement, in the effectiveness of our leadership and management and our quality improvement processes.

4. Highland Council Theme

4.1 After a process of reviewing our aims, mission and core values, the ECS cross cutting theme for VSE was agreed as **Improving outcomes for those children and young people who are vulnerable and/or underachieve**.

It was felt that this was an area central to our work, where we had significant strengths and challenges and where we were in the process of implementing major initiatives. It is also an area in which Members have continually shown a keen interest. The report on the Achievements of Looked After Children has a direct relationship to this.

4.2 This theme would refer to three of the Service Improvement Objectives:

IA5 Implement the Curriculum for Excellence plan for Highland. In this area we would focus on Literacy & Numeracy, Health & Wellbeing.

IA7 Continue to implement the More Choices More Chances agenda. Here we would evaluate our work on school leavers and skills for work.

IA12 Support children to get the help they need when they need it. This would involve aspects of Getting it Right for Every Child.

4.3 The Child Protection inspection and the inspection of Psychological services are occurring in the same broad timeframe and evidence from these inspections can be used to inform our self-evaluation of the theme and of the core areas.

5. Involvement of Members

- 5.1 Involvement of members both within theme groups and as important contribution in the provision of evidence will be necessary at various stages in the process. Overall leadership by members will feature under the Capacity for Improvement core theme. The Children's Champions will have an important role in the Highland Council Theme. Members with a particular interest will be approached for their assistance in specific aspects of the VSE process.

6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Members are invited to:

- welcome the opportunity to work jointly with HMIE through the validated self-evaluation model to improve the quality of provision and outcomes we offer to our learners.
- agree on the importance of the core areas.
- agree that the Highland Council ECS theme represents a central and important focus for our VSE.
- agree to participate in processes of self – evaluation as necessary.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 23 December 2009

Ref: TM/

Background Papers: