



# **Education, Culture & Sport Service**

## **Highland Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers**

**LNCT Agreement no. 16 -**

**School Improvement Through Self  
Evaluation**

## School Improvement through Self - Evaluation:

### Evaluating Learning and Teaching

#### 1. Introduction

Through the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000, everyone involved in Scottish education – the Scottish Executive, local Authorities and its schools are committed to seeking improvement. The long term strategic direction for that improvement is set out in the National Priorities in Education.

The Scottish Executive's *Agenda for Action* published on 1 November 2004 in *Ambitious Excellent Schools* signposts a programme of heightened expectations, stronger leadership & ambition and more freedom for teachers and schools. Within schools, the programme will incorporate greater choice and opportunity for pupils together with better support for learning.

The system of school improvement revolves around systematic self – evaluation, development planning, continuous professional development and quality assurance. This can be best achieved within an ethos of trust and co-operation demonstrated through supportive professional relationships.

The practice of learning and teaching, the central purpose of schools, is a collective responsibility involving a range of professionals and stakeholders. The Highland Council seeks to promote a collegiate approach to securing improvement in each school under the overall management, leadership and direction of the Head Teacher through appropriate consultation and involvement with staff, pupils and parents. It seeks to do so through collaborative working and an approach to staff development designed to meet the needs of teaching staff, support staff and managers.

Classroom observation and evaluation of learning and teaching must constitute part of the professional dialogue which takes place within schools. “ *Collegiality is at the heart of the National Tripartite Agreement “A Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2001)”*”<sup>1</sup>. “*Classroom observation aimed at improving teaching and learning can only be achieved in an environment which is supportive and where good professional relationships exist.*”<sup>2</sup> It is based within the context of improving teaching and learning. It must be based on a collegiate approach to school management and form part of self, school and departmental evaluation.

#### 2. Existing Policy and Practice

The process of evaluation should acknowledge good practice and reinforce the Highland position on self-evaluation as the cornerstone, based on mutual respect and trust<sup>1</sup>, of any improvement process in the service.

In particular :

- Senior Management have a responsibility to visit and support teachers and pupils at work in the classroom.
- The main purpose of any visits by Head Teachers and others should be related to support for teaching and learning. They should acknowledge good practice and reinforce the Authority's position on self-evaluation as the cornerstone in any improvement process.
- Such visits work best when they are part of an agreed whole-school approach to reviewing learning and teaching in the context of the school development plan.
- The common framework of reference should be the quality indicators under key area 3 of *How Good is Our School?* (HGIOS) and related documents such as “Child at the Centre”.
- An approach which is based on a “clipboard checklist” is inappropriate and must be avoided.
- Staff should be involved in setting any agenda for such visits through individual and/or group discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> Joint SNCT initial statement on Collegiality – June 2005

<sup>2</sup> EIS advice to members on Classroom Observation and Monitoring

- There should be feedback relayed to staff in a professional manner by Head Teachers or other observers.

Schools are encouraged to enable a systematic programme of classroom visits by Senior Management Team, Principal Teachers and other staff as appropriate to sample learning and teaching against the appropriate performance indicators and related to the school development plan.

### **3. Delivering Improvement**

#### **3.1 Effective Self - Evaluation**

The council is committed to delivering improvement through effective self evaluation and, to achieve this, there needs to be an agreed systematic approach in which all staff need to share in the process according to their various roles and responsibilities.

All school and establishment managers should review practice regularly and systematically. Class teachers should review practice in their own classrooms on an ongoing basis by constantly evaluating their work and that of the pupils.

An important element of review should consist of structured classroom observation in relation to agreed and easily understood criteria based on “*How Good is Our School?*” (HGIOS). If self-evaluation is to be the cornerstone of the process then it is essential that the teacher who is evaluating his or her work is enabled and encouraged to take the initiative in requesting and commissioning observation by a manager or colleague.

#### **3.2 Forms of observation**

Observation will focus on the quality of the learning experience of pupils.

Observation and support can be undertaken in a number of ways:

- working alongside the class teacher in a team-teaching situation
- releasing the class teacher for consultation or development work
- undertaking focussed class visits [based on identified and agreed quality indicators] to work with pupils and to observe teaching and learning
- sampling pupils’ work both in and out of class
- observation of wall displays etc
- observation of discipline within school e.g. in classes, in corridors, in lunch hall and in playground.

The observer should work with the teacher in some of the ways detailed above. It is essential, in this context, that the observer is actively involved in the conduct of the lesson. The observer should not spend any time making detailed written notes during observation sessions. Any such notes may be kept to inform feedback sessions.

It is clear that “*when properly implemented classroom observation and monitoring adds value to the teaching and learning process.*”<sup>2</sup>

#### **3.3 Focus of observation**

The focus of the observation and timing should be agreed beforehand, be extracted from HGIOS and be subject to self-evaluation by the teacher before the lesson is observed. There should be an overall evaluation of the relevant quality indicator where that is appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> EIS advice to members on Classroom Observation and Monitoring

### 3.4 Peer Observation as part of a Collegiate Approach

All peer observation should stem from the initiative of the teachers wishing to develop a collegiate approach to self evaluation. Such an approach is actively encouraged by the authority. The sharing of good practice should be the key driver for such initiatives.

The development of peer review and collegiality through the HGIOS framework should encourage staff to:

- shadow individual pupils
- follow a class
- observe lessons
- video record their own teaching.
- exchange classes
- observe each other in pairs
- work alongside other teachers

### 3.5 Feedback

The observation should result in verbal feedback to and discussion with the teacher in relation to the quality indicators and illustrations previously agreed and self - evaluated. The observer should write up comments after the lesson and provide written feedback to the teacher.

The primary audience for the feedback is the teacher with the results of the observation being included in the teacher's self evaluation record. A summary of the observation may, with the agreement of the teacher, be passed to the line manager and be available to the Head Teacher.

### 3.6 Staff Training and Development

In order to ensure effective review, observation and support within the context of collegiate working, appropriate training will be available to meet the needs of staff. The project Service Improvement through Self Evaluation (SISE) will develop training for all Head Teachers together with an obligation to deliver appropriate CPD for their staff.

Self – evaluation, review and observation will explicitly feature in the Highland Excellence in Leadership Project (HELP).

The excellent work done so far on the Learning and Teaching policy and toolkit – together with the Assessment is for Learning projects form an important background and foundation to this.

Signed on behalf of the Council

Signed on behalf of the Teachers' Side

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