

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE
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Agenda Item	6.
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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAM HANDBOOK

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Summary

This report informs members of the central work of the Quality Improvement Team in securing continuous improvement in the ECS Service and contributes to following outcomes of ***Strengthening the Highlands***:

- 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.
- 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.
- Continue to develop Gaelic Medium Education in pre-school and primary schools as well as expanding Gaelic Medium Education in the secondary sector.

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 enclosed Quality Improvement Team handbook outlines the Principles and Standards of Quality Improvement necessary for the ECS service to realise its vision of *working together to inspire learning and achievement in Highland communities*.

It deals with principles and standards, structures and functions, engagement with establishments, and professional development.

1.2 The enclosed extract from the Handbook is a summary document backed up by a set of appendices and a wealth of further support resources on www.hvlc.org.uk and on the Learning here section of the Council's website.

2. Quality Improvement

- 2.1 This section deals with the central principle that quality improvement begins with self-evaluation. For this to be effective, it needs to be based on a collegiate approach of staff, pupils and community working together. To be rigorous and systematic, it needs to draw on a shared understanding of quality standards.
- 2.2 Practitioners need to actively engage in dialogue with learners, parents, members of the community to identify their strengths and challenges and to plan for improvement. Informed decisions from self evaluation help determine what needs to be done to secure very good outcomes for pupils, clients and communities.
- 2.3 In engaging in this challenging process, the Quality Improvement Team has adopted the standards of the Association of Educational Development and Improvement Professionals in Scotland and the relevant suite of standards within the HMIE publications of the *Journey to Excellence (2005)*, *Improving Scottish Education (2009)* and *Improving Leadership (2007)*.

3. Structures and Functions

- 3.1 The role of Quality Improvement Officers and Development Officers are described in this section with an outline of some of their duties. There are present 10 Quality Improvement Officers working operationally within the areas and heavily engaged in supporting and challenging for improvement in our schools and learning communities. In addition to this central work, they take a strategic lead in a number of improvement initiatives across Highland as a whole. In the major initiatives, the Quality Improvement Team is supported by a number of Development Officers.
- 3.2 There are two Quality Improvement Officers with pan-highland responsibilities in Early Years and in Strategic Initiatives respectively. They engage with a wide range of professionals and stakeholders and have a major commitment to communication with parents and partners and to Continuing Professional Development across the service.
- 3.3 All Quality Improvement Officers support the Service commitment to improving the quality of learning and teaching and to building capacity and leadership within the Service.

4. Engagement with Establishments

- 4.1 The Quality Improvement Team provides support and challenge to head teachers, managers and staff with respect to the main issues of self-evaluation and quality improvement. The QIO is the point of contact in relation to the improvement agenda in each Associated School Group, visits each school at least once a year to engage in dialogue, and directly engages with establishment Standards and Quality Reports and Improvement Plans.
- 4.2 QIO's work proportionally with establishments giving more intense support where it is needed and with effort focussed on the particular areas to be addressed. Where there are significant concerns regarding management capacity in our establishments, the Quality Improvement Officers become involved in a sustained

way to help secure improvement.

- 4.3 The Quality Improvement Team has the main responsibility for fulfilling local authority obligations in relation to HMle and Care Commission inspection of schools and pre-school centres. It also contributes to the Service obligations in respect of learning communities. The QIO contribute to the professional dialogue with HMle and has a significant involvement in the processes of securing necessary improvement following inspection.

5. Professional Development

- 5.1 Clear procedures for the induction of Quality Improvement Officers and for their professional development and review are in the handbook and its appendices. Similar procedures apply for Development Officers.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is requested to:

Note and comment on the main areas contained in the Quality Improvement Team Handbook.

Signature:

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Background Papers Quality Improvement Team Handbook



The Highland Council
Education Culture and Sport Service
Quality Improvement Team Handbook

Working together to inspire learning and achievement in Highland communities.

A' toirt piseach còmhla air ionnsachadh is coileanadh ann an
Coimhearsnachdan na Gàidhealtachd

Section 1 – Quality Improvement

1.1 Principles

The Highland Council's vision for the Education, Culture & Sport Service is of us *working together to inspire learning and achievement in Highland communities.*

We see our mission as enabling the people of the Highlands to achieve their full potential as:

effective contributors

confident, healthy and safe individuals and communities

active and successful learners

respected and responsible citizens

Quality Improvement is a vital element in this vision and its mission. It is a set of processes focused on learners of all ages. These processes help to enable learners to attain their highest level of achievement.

Quality Improvement is informed by the following principles:

Quality Improvement begins with self-evaluation.

All stakeholders involved in the Service have a key responsibility to evaluate provision and make judgements about their personal and collective contributions to quality and improvement. The Quality Improvement Team contributes to this individual, team and establishment self-evaluation but cannot and should not replace it.

Quality improvement is informed, rigorous and systematic when based on a collegiate approach and a shared understanding of quality standards.

Judgements about quality are informed by a shared understanding of standards as recorded in national documents such as *Child at the Centre*, *How Good is our School?*, *How Good is our Community Learning and Development?* and *Quality Management in Education*. Practitioners use a range of evidence sources for their judgements including national, local and comparative performance data. They actively engage in dialogue with learners, parents, members of the community and other professionals (including the Quality Improvement Team) to seek information. They use this information to identify strengths and challenges and to plan for improvement.

Quality Improvement is about planning

Improvement through self – evaluation is central to all aspects of the service. Making informed decisions about what needs to be done to secure very good outcomes for young people, clients and communities is important. Improvement actions are themselves evaluated to find out if they are making the desired impact and achieving their objectives.

1.2 Standards

The main business of the Quality Improvement Team is quality assurance and development. Each member of the team is committed to:

- Evaluating Standards and Quality within ECS
- Contributing to the ECS Service Plan
- Promoting learning and teaching
- Developing Leadership for Learning
- Developing and sustaining partnerships
- Developing self and others

To ensure an effective and consistent approach to improving the work of each Quality Improvement Officer the team has adopted standards devised by the Association of Educational Development and Improvement Professionals in Scotland. This set of standards takes due account of the Scottish Government national priorities. It is also informed by a range of publications including A Curriculum for Excellence (2005), Improving Scottish Education (2009) and Improving Leadership (2007).

Over the coming sessions, the team will work to these standards and will self-evaluate its effectiveness against measures based on these standards. A range of stakeholders will be involved in this process.

Section 2 – Structures and Functions

2.1 Management Structures

ECS Senior Management Team Area Education, Culture and Sport Managers (x3) Quality Assurance and Development Manager		
Quality Improvement Officers Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (3)	Quality Improvement Officers Ross, Skye and Lochaber (4)	Quality Improvement Officers Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (3)
Quality Improvement Officer (Early Years)		Quality Improvement Officer (Strategic Initiatives)
Development Officers: CPD Projects		

Overall Management

The Director, the Heads of Service, the Education, Culture & Sport Managers and the Quality Assurance and Development Manager as members of the Senior Management Team, are responsible for quality development across the Service. The Quality Assurance and Development Manager has a strategic responsibility for the co-ordination of quality assurance across the Education, Culture & Sport Service. He also has responsibility for the Education, Culture & Sport contribution to quality assurance in Integrated Children’s Services.

Area based Quality Improvement Officers are operationally managed by the relevant Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager and on professional and strategic matters by the Quality Assurance and Development Manager. Dual management requires very close co-operation between Area Education, Culture & Sport Managers and the Quality Assurance and Development Manager. The Education, Culture & Sport Senior Management Team is the appropriate forum for joint planning in this respect.

Responsibility for day to day issues is devolved to the Quality Assurance and Development Manager and the Area Education, Culture & Sport Managers and related functions are carried out by Quality Improvement Officers and supported by seconded staff.

To share good practice, ensure consistency and maintain an overview of quality assurance issues across the authority, the Quality Improvement Team meets monthly. Attendance at these is a priority for members of the team.

Quality Improvement Officers

Each Quality Improvement Officer

- visits schools proportionately according to identified support needs and focusing on the performance indicators from HIGIOS 3 and The Journey to Excellence
- offers advice and challenge to the Head Teacher and staff
- informs and works with the Area Education, Culture and Sport Manager responsible for ensuring quality within schools
- works in liaison with parents and partners for each school
- works closely with a range of officers including those from the Support for Learning Team and CLD teams within Learning Communities
- meets regularly with Area Management team to support them and discuss priorities within schools and ILC's
- Leads on a number of strategic developments within Highland and nationally.

Quality Improvement Officer (Early Years)

The Quality Improvement Officer (Early Years) is responsible for quality and practice in the pre-school area. This includes the organisation of the annual early years CPD calendar.

Schools with nurseries are assigned an Early Years Education Officer. The Early Years Education Officer responsible for a school with early years provision:

- visits schools proportionately according to identified support needs and focusing on the performance indicators from 'The Child at the Centre'
- offers advice and challenge to the Head Teacher and nursery staff
- informs and works with the Area Education, Culture and Sport Manager responsible for ensuring quality within schools
- works in liaison with the Quality Improvement Officer for each school
- works closely with a range of officers including those from the Support for Learning Team and pre-school home visiting team
- meets regularly with Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers to support them and discuss priorities within clusters
- supports partner centres

The quality of provision within the partner centres managed by the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) is assured internally by the Quality Assurance and Development Manager who liaises with the Early Education Team.

Early Education is part of Integrated Children's Services and the Quality Improvement Officer (Early Years) is responsible for liaison with other key professionals in this area.

Quality Improvement Officer (Strategic Initiatives)

The Quality Improvement Officer (Strategic Initiatives) is responsible for the overall management of Continuous Professional Development of staff and for a strategic approach to Communication across the Education, Culture and Sport Service. Main areas of work are:

- Parental involvement, Student Placement, Initial Teacher Education and Probationer Teachers
- Development, delivery and evaluation of CPD for teachers
- Develop and implement a communication strategy within the Service, ensuring clear and relevant engagement with stakeholders

Development Officers

Project development officers are responsible to the Quality Assurance and Development Manager. They are supported and operationally supervised for the duration of their projects by designated members of the Quality Improvement Team who act as Lead Officers.

2.2 Functions

Quality Improvement

The Education, Culture & Sport Managers are responsible for quality assurance within their services. Area Education, Culture & Sport Managers are responsible for the management of schools and services and for quality assurance of the processes and practices in their areas. Headteachers and managers are responsible for quality assurance of provision within their establishments and teams.

The Quality Improvement Team engages with schools and services. Quality Improvement Officers provide information, offer support, judge quality and give appropriate advice. The frequency and nature of engagement are proportionate to the needs of the establishment. The Quality Improvement Team is responsible for supporting Education, Culture & Sport Managers, the Area Education, Culture & Sport Managers, Head Teachers and centre managers in these processes and in ensuring consistency across the Education, Culture & Sport.

Quality Improvement Officers have a lead role in supporting the authority's commitment to both improving Learning and Teaching and to building Capacity and Leadership.

To promote learning and teaching, Quality Improvement Officers use their understanding of learning to inform policy and practice and to identify and disseminate effective practice. They model effective practice in teaching and learning when they lead professional development activities. Core skills and knowledge include:

- promotion of strategies to encourage effective learning and teaching which impacts upon pupils' achievement and attainment
- recognition of the importance of legislation, research and development and innovation in facilitating effective learning, and
- monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching and achievement and attainment

To promote Leadership to build capacity, Quality improvement Officers work with a range of agencies, partners and school leaders to support and influence the authority's long term vision for education. They help identify trends and assess progress. They moderate and validate self-evaluation and self-improvement and help establish priorities as a basis for effective strategic planning. Core skills and knowledge include:

- an understanding of the nature of high quality educational provision at all levels
- working with establishments and their communities to provide support and challenge in a coherent and consistent way, and
- a working knowledge of the theory and practice approaches to development that build capacity

Leadership and management

The Quality Improvement Team has a key role in providing leadership in implementing strategies to improve the quality of education in Highland Council.

The Education, Culture & Sport Service is committed to a comprehensive professional development programme which will meet the needs of its entire staff. As part of this, the Quality Improvement Team is responsible for the central co-ordination of Continuing Professional Development and a range of development projects that impact on the quality of education in establishments.

The Quality Improvement Team develops and commissions relevant guidelines and resources to assist schools and services in specific aspects of improving performance. These developments are based on the team's working awareness

of local, national and global trends and initiatives in education. Resultant resources are added to the Highland Virtual Learning Community (www.hvlc.org.uk) for general use.

Quality Improvement Team members have specific roles in taking forward Curriculum for Excellence across the Authority. Those who lead development projects are responsible to the Quality Assurance and Development Manager. Development Officers may be appointed for specific tasks or projects.

Quality Improvement Team members also contribute to Authority and Area working groups. Where possible they make direct contributions to school and Area School Community Group developments through supporting Continuing Professional Development and acting as consultants to working groups.

Section 3 – Engagement with Establishments

3.1 General

The Quality Improvement Team is committed to assuring quality provision through:

- providing support and challenge to Head Teachers, managers and staff with respect to the main issues of self evaluation and quality improvement
- assisting Area Education, Culture and Sport Managers through engagement with establishments and services on issues of quality development and improving achievement
- assisting establishments and the Authority in the processes of HMIe and Care Commission inspection.

Contexts for engagement are identified and agreed with all stakeholders. These broad contexts are summarised in the authority's Service Plan. These include key priorities identified within, for example:

- an establishment's own self-evaluation (<http://www.hvlc.org.uk/dps/>)
- the authority's own self-evaluation
- the authority's service plan (<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourservices/educationcultureandsport/>)
- the authority's published annual statement of improvement objectives (<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/news/publications/dec-2008/>)
- the Programme for Administration (<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/>)
- GIRFEC (<http://www.highland.gov.uk/learninghere/supportforlearners/girfec.htm>)
- Determined to Succeed developments
- the Council's route map for A Curriculum for Excellence and other related guidance (<http://www.highland.gov.uk/learninghere/supportforschoolstaff/cfe/>)
- HMIe processes (<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/AboutUs/InspectionResources/>)

The designated Quality Improvement Officer works closely with Education Officers, Community Learning & Leisure Officers and others to support and challenge school communities. The Quality Improvement Officer:

- is the point of contact for the head of each establishment and the Associated School Group in relation to the improvement agenda
- visits each school community at least once a year to engage in dialogue about achievement, authority priorities and other identified issues
- contributes to the establishment's evidence base through engagement with the Improvement Plan(s), the Standards and Quality Profile and the Standards and Quality Summary Report for Parents and moderation of their own quality assurance processes
- participates in the senior management team appointment process (see below)
- conducts an agreed proportion of the Annual Professional Reviews of Head Teacher (see below)

- works with Community Learning & Leisure and other parts of the service in order to develop a holistic approach to support and challenge.

Proportionate engagement is supported by a range of documentation including primary attainment data, information on secondary performance in the Scottish Qualifications Agency assessments, improvement planning templates and quality assurance reports designed to promote professional reflection and planned improvements. A “Schooltrack” spreadsheet will be maintained by each Quality Improvement Officer and will be copied monthly to the authority’s performance unit and Quality Assurance and Development Manager. This will be regularly shared with Area Education, Culture & Sport Managers and Education Officers who will also contribute relevant information to this overview.

All Quality Improvement Officers will use the standard visit record which will be copied to the Quality Assurance and Development Manager and the Area Education, Culture & Sport Managers.

3.2 Proportionality

The Quality Improvement Team is deployed on a proportionate basis, targeting areas of greatest need as defined by the establishment and/or the authority. This means that engagement is individually tailored and focused on a clear improvement agenda. Whenever possible, the Quality Improvement Team responds to requests from establishments for enhanced support. The team also has a responsibility to sample the quality of provision across establishments as part of the authority’s self-evaluation processes.

The nature of the engagement and the personnel deployed depend on the particular circumstances of the establishment. It may be, for example, that visits are frequent over a particular period of time. It is the responsibility of the contact Quality Improvement Officer to coordinate and organise the team’s engagement with the establishment.

Where there are significant concerns regarding management capacity in establishments, the Quality Improvement Team becomes involved in a sustained way in order to help secure improvement. This may involve the commissioning of additional support from the Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager, Education Officers and/or the Quality Assurance and Development Manager.

3.3 School Senior Management Team Appointments

Individual Quality Improvement Officers participate in school senior management team appointments. They:

- contribute towards the drafting of job specifications, questions and presentation topics for interviews
- participate in professional interviews
- participate as advisors where required in final interviews.

3.4 Annual Professional Reviews

Quality Improvement Officers contribute to the authority’s requirement for an annual professional review for each head teacher. At the direction of the Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager, they will conduct a proportion of these reviews using nationally agreed procedures and paperwork.

3.5 Inspection of Schools

The Quality Improvement Team has the main operational responsibility for fulfilling local authority obligations with regard to HMIe and Care Commission inspections of schools. Quality Improvement Officers engage with schools to support self-evaluation and quality assurance processes on an on-going basis and an HMIe inspection is seen as an external validation of the school’s self-evaluation.

Once notification of inspection has been received the Quality Improvement Officer visits the school in order to advise and support the Headteacher (and staff if appropriate) through the process.

A similar process operates in respect of Care Commission inspections of Pre-school Centres.

The Inspection

At the close of the inspection team's visit, the Quality Improvement Officer attends the feedback session and contributes to the dialogue with HMIe and the Head Teacher, noting the main messages.

Once HMIe shares the draft report, the Quality Improvement Officer in consultation with the Headteacher, scrutinises the draft and communicates acceptance or highlights any points of contention to the Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager and /or the District Inspector.

If required, the Quality Improvement Officer offers advice to the Headteacher and/or Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager in preparing a press release following publication of the report. The Council's Public Relations Department coordinates the press release with the relevant Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager.

Improvement planning for main points for action

The Quality Improvement Officer supports and offers advice to school managers in the amendment of School Improvement Plan to address areas for improvement identified in published HMIe report.

Follow – through Processes

Follow-through is proportionate but in all cases involves substantial ongoing dialogue with schools. In cases causing concern the follow-through process involves a significant investment of time and support by the Quality Improvement Team and the relevant Education Officer.

The Quality Improvement Officer supports the school in reporting on progress. Such reports are recorded in School Profiles and in Standards and Quality Summary Reports for Parents. These are passed on to HMIe as appropriate.

Section 4 – Professional Development

4.1 The Induction Process

Induction procedures conform to the Highland Council employee induction policy which can be found in Employee Policies in the Personnel section of the HC Intranet (<http://ntintra1/tdtintra/2009-induct/2009-02-employee-induct.doc>). The relevant Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager is responsible for induction of a newly appointed Quality Improvement Officer.

The induction process is designed to support new team members to become familiar with their area and authority-wide roles and responsibilities and associated processes and paperwork. New appointees will be given the opportunity to engage with colleagues who have similar duties and, where appropriate, carry out shadowing activities.

At an appropriate time during the first week of the Quality Improvement Officer taking up appointment, the area Business Support Officer provides a tour of the appropriate Area building, an introduction to clerical and administrative staff and information about procedures in relation to office routines.

Advice on the following are included:

- clerical support
- access to ICT
- office accommodation/hot desking
- access to resources
- keys and security systems
- travel and subsistence arrangements
- catering and other domestic arrangements
- annual leave
- confidentiality

This tour of the Area office will also be conducted for staff who have contractual agreement to use their home as their base.

Additional advice and support should be sought where home working forms part of the Officer's contract of employment. This can be obtained from the Health & Safety Team which currently consists of Allen Williams, Andrew MacTaggart or Colin Livingstone.

4.2 Professional Development and Review

The Highland Council's guidance on professional review and development for teachers also applies to members of the Quality Improvement Team. Each Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager holds an annual professional review meeting for each relevant member of the Quality Improvement Team.

The annual review for the Quality Improvement Officer (Early Years) is undertaken by the Quality Assurance and Development Manager.

Reviews for Development Officers are undertaken, on behalf of the Quality Assurance and Development Manager, by the Quality Improvement Officer with Lead Officer responsibility for the relevant development.

Background to the review meeting

Professional review is one of a wide range of quality assurance strategies. It is based on reflective practice and on self-evaluation. Prior to the review both the reviewer and the Quality Improvement Officer should ensure that they are familiar with issues relating to national and local priorities. An effective review process:

- has a clear purpose to all those involved
- begins with self-evaluation
- encourages reflection on good practice
- encourages the sharing of good practice
- encourages engagement with service priorities
- is supportive and responsive to needs
- recognises good performance
- has a positive impact on morale
- contributes to a sustainable development plan for the reviewee
- is evaluated effectively.

The Professional Review Meeting

The professional review meeting takes place annually at a time when both the reviewee and reviewer are in a position to reflect on the previous year's work, future commitments and necessary development activities that will enable the reviewee to continue to contribute effectively to the authority's objectives.

This review is conducted in accordance with the guidance contained in "Professional Review and Development (2002)", page 8, from SEED. In the initial phase of identifying development objectives it is helpful for Quality Improvement Officers to reflect on their job description and the current Service Plan to provide a framework for self evaluation. Examples of self evaluation frameworks are available.

Quality Improvement Officers maintain an individual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Profile. An individual CPD Plan is outlined during the meeting and is updated throughout the year and maintained as a CPD record.

CPD consists of the wide range of experiences that contribute to professional development and is recognised as any activity that has been undertaken to progress, assist or enhance an individual's professionalism. CPD activities encompass formal, informal, course based, work-based, individual and collaborative learning. Quality Improvement Officers should take as broad a view of professional development as possible.

The CPD Profile is used to record all CPD activities including those not explicitly identified in the annual review.

During the annual professional review the reviewer and Quality Improvement Officer record agreed development objectives and appropriate CPD activities. Records of activities undertaken and their impact are maintained throughout the year. Progress with CPD is monitored by informal meetings with the relevant Area Education, Culture & Sport Manager during the year.

Following the annual professional review, the reviewer makes available reasonable resources to facilitate professional development either individually or in partnership with other Quality Improvement Team members.

4.3 End of Appointment/Secondment

At the conclusion of the appointment/secondment there will be a final interview/discussion with the line manager. Staff ensure that:

- agreed paperwork is in order and up-to-date
- transfer of electronic files (where appropriate) is agreed.

Appendices to this Handbook will be placed on the ECS intranet:

- Appendix 1 Core Team Membership
- Appendix 2 Associated School Community Group Links
- Appendix 3 Development Roles (April 2009)
- Appendix 4 Sample Self Evaluation Framework
- Appendix 5 Quality Improvement Visit Record
- Appendix 6 Schooltrack Spreadsheet
- Appendix 7 Induction Checklist