

June 2021

Ensuring high quality learning and teaching

1. Legislative framework

Standards in Scotland's Schools Act (2000) and Education (Scotland) Act 2016

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2000/6/section/2>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2000/6/section/3>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/section/1>

Under the above two key pieces of legislation, all educational establishments have a responsibility to secure improvement as part of the duty of the education authority, particularly where children and young people are experiencing disadvantage. In carrying out this duty the education authority should have due regard to the views of children and young people in decisions which significantly affect them. The views of a range of other stakeholders should also be taken into account, including staff, parents, relevant trade unions and voluntary organisations.

Each school should develop its own policy for ensuring high quality learning and teaching. Advice and guidance is available to support the development of the policy on Glasgow On-line under Quality Improvement.

Effective practice involves staff collaboratively in the development of the policy which should be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As appropriate, young people should also be involved.

2. Evaluating learning and teaching

In seeking to achieve continuous improvement in education standards, schools¹ must engage in a range of quality processes. The key ones include: planning for improvement, strategies to bring about improvement, monitoring and evaluating; and career long professional learning for staff.

All these processes must have, as the very core of their purpose, improving the quality of learning and teaching so that every child and young person is enabled to achieve their full potential.

Monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching should be considered as two separate processes. Both are critical and should be embedded in each school's quality assurance calendar. Representatives of staff, relevant trade unions and, where appropriate, children and young people should be actively involved in the development of the quality assurance calendar which should be responsive to the context and changing needs of a school. For example, the school negotiating committee would be a good forum for this discussion.

¹ Throughout this document 'school' is taken to mean anywhere that education is being delivered, e.g. nursery, school, unit, enhanced provision or service.

The monitoring of the impact of learning is an essential element of the overall management practice within all schools. It is aimed at improving learning and teaching; professional dialogue and the sharing of practice are important consequences of the process.

How Good Is Our School 4² provides very helpful guidance on improvement. Highlighting the importance of practitioners being empowered to lead learning in their own context.

'The virtuous cycle of improvement

The virtuous cycle of improvement (see Figure 1 below) illustrates the key features of evidence-based self-improvement at school and at system-wide levels. It shows how school and system leaders can empower practitioners to interpret nationally shared aims, such as the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, and apply them in their local contexts in ways which are most appropriate to them. This virtuous cycle is relevant to all sectors of education. Working with the virtuous cycle will help you to understand the importance of regular and rigorous evidence-based internal and external evaluation to inform further improvement.' HGIOS4?

Fig. 1: The virtuous cycle of improvement



² <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/hgios4/>

Quality Indicator 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

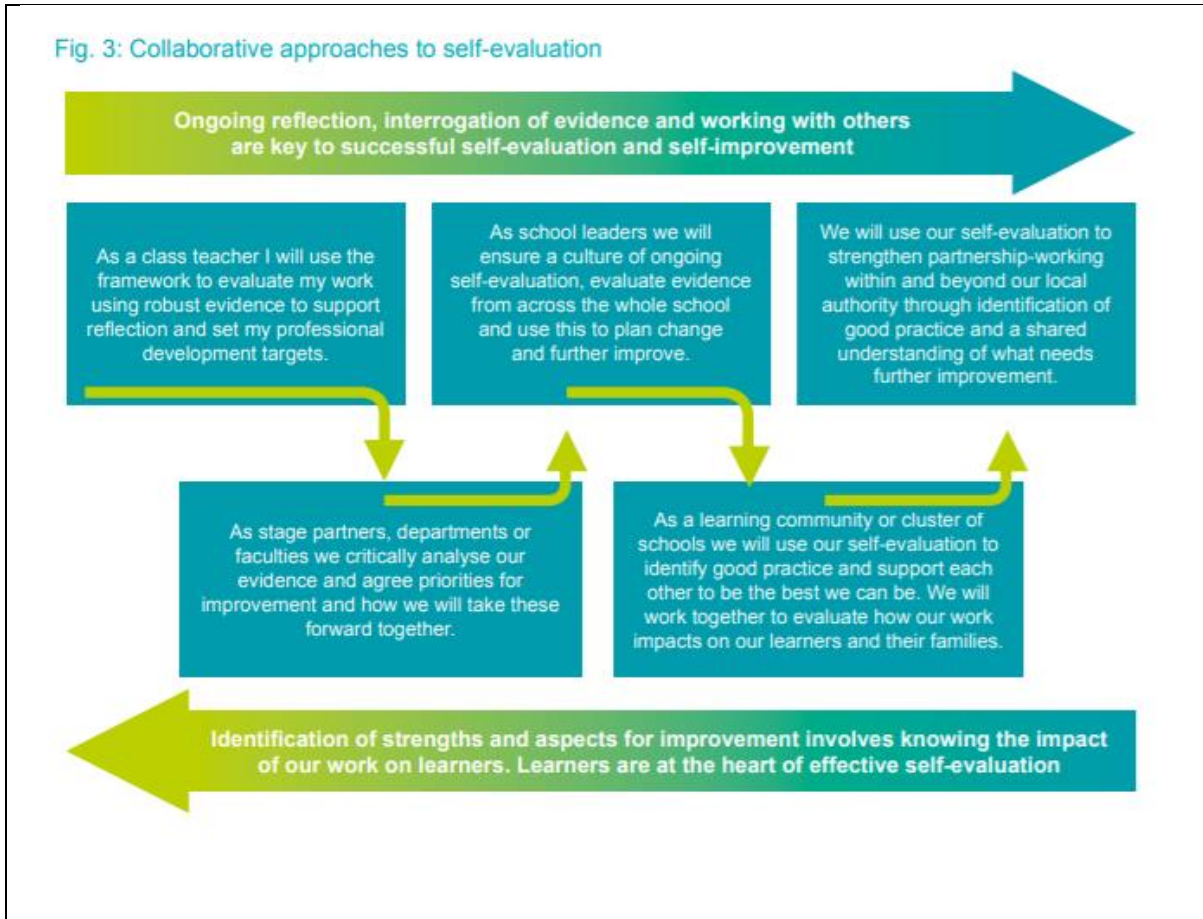
The above indicator has three themes: collaborative approaches to self-evaluation; analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data; and impact on learners' successes and achievement.

'This indicator defines rigorous self-evaluation as a responsibility of all stakeholders. It highlights the importance of partnership approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It emphasises the need for strong leadership and robust analysis of a range of intelligence and data as essential features of effective continuous self-improvement. A key factor in this indicator is demonstrating the impact of self-evaluation in relation to outcomes for all learners. Their active participation in self-evaluation is therefore essential.' HGIOS4?

There is a range of activities which could be part of a school or faculty/department's approach to securing improvement. Staff should be actively involved working together in these activities. These may include:

- Dialogue at collegiate meetings, focused on the child/young person and class progress. A particular focus should be on those children/young people experiencing disadvantage.
- The regular sampling of work to monitor the quality of child/young person response.
- Moderation of performance in assessments, in line with authority and national guidance.
- Moderation of evidence gathered to inform teachers' professional judgement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- In secondary, analysis of SQA results and subsequent professional dialogue.
- The agreeing of targets for individuals and groups and the consequent review of attainment.
- The swapping of classes to allow teachers to gauge learning and progress in similar groups.
- Groups of teachers working together as part of a Teacher Learning Community.
- Peer observation by colleagues from their school, authority and/or other local authorities. Focusing on agreed aspects of learning and teaching to inform subsequent professional dialogue.
- Learning walks or structured approaches, such as lesson study can be helpful approaches for gathering information on learning to inform professional dialogue.
- Groups of young people discussing their learning and what approaches impact effectively on them.
- Collaborating with schools or learning partners across and beyond the local authority to review learning and teaching and share best practice.
- The use of questionnaires, focus groups and other feedback measures.
- Classroom visits are an essential part of a school's quality assurance processes. These can take the form of senior and middle leaders visiting to monitor/evaluate the quality of learning and teaching/learners' experiences and/or peer visits from colleagues to observe and share practice focused on aspects of practice and the young people's learning.

Fig. 3: Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation



'The significant relationship between effective self-evaluation and school improvement can also be seen as an "inwards, outwards, forwards" approach to help you and your partners answer the questions which remain at the heart of self-evaluation:

- *How are we doing?*
- *How do we know?*
- *What are we going to do now?*

*Through this approach, you will look inwards to analyse your work, look outwards to find out more about what is working well for others locally and nationally and look forwards to gauge what continuous improvement might look like in the longer term. How good is our school? is intended to support you and your partners in **looking inwards** to evaluate performance at every level and in using the information gathered to decide on what needs to be done to improve.' HGIOS4?*



3. Teacher Empowerment and Accountability

Education Services actively promotes the empowerment of all teachers.

'An empowered system expects, and creates, the conditions for all to work within a culture of collaboration and collegiality with learners, parents, colleagues and multi-agency partners. All share a vision for education based on the values and needs of the community.

The culture should foster feelings of trust, openness, well-being and satisfaction for all, enabling teachers, practitioners and learners to be the best they can be. In this culture, the needs of all learners are understood, their voices are heard and included. Teachers and practitioners work in a culture and ethos of collaboration where learning experiences are co-created and the curriculum is right for the context and every learner.' **Empowering Teachers and Practitioners Agreed Draft, Education Scotland**

'The culture and ethos of our school is positive and focused on the needs of all staff, partners and learners. We actively promote equalities for all, so staff feel confident in the workplace. Our staff feel empowered and motivated to take decisions and lead aspects of school improvement.'

Quality Indicator 1.4 How Good Is Our School 4, Education Scotland, 2015

To enable this, the culture should be underpinned by a strong commitment to developing capacity through professional learning. Teachers and practitioners should have the time and space to engage in high quality professional learning, which can take many different forms. This can include learning with colleagues, the use of research, enquiry and reflective-based approaches that are relevant, authentic and ongoing.

The development of strong collegiate practices in every school is a key part of the process to maximise the skills and expertise of all staff. It is within this context that with increased professional autonomy comes a requirement for accountability for the quality of education being delivered.

All visits to classrooms as part of a programme linked to self-evaluation should have a clear, agreed purpose. For example,

- Assessing, monitoring and supporting the progress of probationer teachers as outlined in national guidelines.
- Identifying reasons why a particular group of children/young people are not learning in line with expectations across a school and to agree a common strategy to address potential specific problems.
- Assessing the impact of a school policy.
- Supporting a teacher who is experiencing particular difficulties.
- Sampling children/young people's learning through learning walks.
- Gaining an overview of practice in the school with a view to planning collegiate approaches.
- Teachers visiting each other to observe learning and teaching where the focus is agreed between the teachers as part of their professional learning.
- As part of an agreed programme under LNCT 11.

Monitoring of learning and teaching should be built into each school's quality assurance calendar. There should not be a 'crit lesson' approach nor should the process involve a mechanistic tick box checklist. It is essential that the process is agreed among staff and that the process should encourage staff to work in partnership within a strong culture and ethos of collaboration. Time for such approaches should be considered within the school's Working Time Agreement.

4. Monitoring Process

The monitoring process has three specific stages. Firstly an agreed understanding of what area(s) of activity is to be considered and which quality indicators are being used as a focus. Secondly, an agreed procedure as to how the desired information is to be found. Thirdly, an agreed method for recording results. It is essential that all three procedural stages are in place before formal monitoring activities commence.

4.1 Stage 1: What do we want to know?

The area or areas of activity to be monitored should be expressed in terms of *How Good Is Our School 4?* or *How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?* or the improvement strategies defined within the school's improvement plan. The indicators/themes can be used to identify specific areas of focus and the level 5 illustrations, features of highly-effective practice or challenge questions can be used to identify the standard of practice to be achieved, where appropriate. This provides a shared frame of reference for defining the areas of consideration/focus and also provides specific examples of the type of practice that are the focus of monitoring. All involved require a clear understanding of what is being monitored before the most appropriate methods for monitoring are identified. It may be helpful to focus on quality indicator 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment.

4.2 Stage 2: How can we find out?

There is a range of strategies that can be used for monitoring purposes and it is important that time is taken to identify the most appropriate strategies for the particular purposes required.

- Self-evaluation is the responsibility of each and every teacher. It is at the core of the process of school improvement promoted by *HGIOS4?* or *HGIOELC?*. Individual

teachers should be encouraged to respond to the agreed indicator or theme or illustration or challenge question/feature of effective practice and provide evidence to support their judgement. A collated response compiled with staff can provide a comprehensive view of how the school, faculty or department is performing or progressing.

- The analysis of classroom/playroom documentation and materials, such as teachers' plans, schemes of work, learning or lesson plans, child's/young person's work, homework and classroom/playroom display can be helpful but all staff should be mindful of Education Services' priority to reduce workload and bureaucracy. All such monitoring should be carried out using an agreed specification of desired standards of practice which can take account of *HGIOS4?* Or *HGIOELC?*, together with other appropriate standards and specifications devised collegiately within the school/faculty/department.
- Discussion with individual staff about learning and teaching, classroom/playroom methods and issues such as appropriateness of homework activities, promoting of positive relationships and support for staff.
- Active participation by senior and middle leaders in classroom activity in order to share with staff their experience of the learning and teaching process. The monitoring thus becomes a shared activity and promoted as a co-operative response to how well the school/faculty/department is meeting specific indicators or targets within the improvement plan.
- The use of questionnaires and surveys with children/young people and/or parents/carers and/or staff can assist in gathering information about learning and teaching. Children and young people's views on their learning should be regularly sought, listened to and acted upon, where appropriate. To gather views of children and young people, it may be helpful to focus on *How good is OUR school*³ (A resource to support learner participation in self-evaluation and school improvement), Theme 2: Our Learning and Teaching. Note that questionnaires and surveys should not identify individual teachers.
- Data analysis is an essential part of the monitoring process. There is a wide range of data which is available through tools such as Insight, FOCUS and school-based assessment. The review of child/young person performance can identify specific areas for development, and initiate monitoring procedures to measure progress. Use of data can enable good practice to be identified and used to support the development of others.
- Direct observation of learning is part of the range of monitoring procedures. In a strong culture of collaboration and collegiality where all teachers share responsibility for raising attainment and improving outcomes, direct observation of the classroom/playroom experience of children/young people is recognised as an essential professional tool which is part of the ongoing experience of teachers and children/young people. This form of monitoring will be undertaken in the context of trying to achieve the targets set out in the school/faculty/department improvement plan or to inform future priorities for development. Such activity has the potential to generate positive and supportive professional discussion. It also allows first-hand teachers' experiences in their classroom/playroom. It also enables the impact of professional learning to be evaluated.
- It is good practice to agree the focus of such direct observation in advance of visits and feedback to be provided, as appropriate.

It is essential that observations are conducted in a professional manner. Sufficient notification, that is, no less than five working days, should be given to teachers when monitoring of learning and teaching is going to take place.

³ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/HGIOURS-Part2.pdf>

Where activities, such as learning walks which involve staff from other schools or children/young people, are going to take place then teachers should be given the option to participate. It is expected that where senior leaders from the school or an appropriate officer from the Education Improvement Service are undertaking a learning walk that all teachers will welcome them into their classrooms/playrooms.

The number of observations undertaken in a school/department should be reasonable and proportionate with the time included in the WTA to facilitate preparatory discussions and feedback. The recommendation is no more than one per term.

4.3 Stage 3: How will the results be collated?

The main purpose of the monitoring activity is to collect information that will inform promote and evidence improvement. It is essential that the information is recorded in an agreed, consistent manner which will allow the results from different experiences to be collated straightforwardly. In clearly specifying what details are to be recorded and in what manner, the information from variety of sources and personnel can be collated into a coherent description of strengths and areas for improvement current practice across the school.

Where a feedback form has been completed, this should be discussed and agreed with the member of staff. Note that this should not be shared further without the consent of the teacher. Examples of feedback forms are available on Glasgow On-line under Quality Improvement.

Following the collation and analysis, an evaluation can be conducted. The evaluation will be informed by the collated responses and the staff team can then examine practice and opinions against a bigger picture. Findings can also be shared with children/young people and parents/carers in an appropriate form.

This process also allows for sharing of effective practice and can inform future priorities. Through a collegiate approach, all staff are involved positively in the process in the change which follows.

5 Arrangements for ensuring high quality learning and teaching

Each school should develop its own policy for ensuring high quality learning and teaching. Advice and guidance is available to support the development of the policy on Glasgow On-line under Quality Improvement.

Effective practice involves staff collaboratively in the development of the policy which should be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As appropriate, young people should also be involved.

Fig. 4: Triangulation

Schools collect a wide range of **quantitative data** for example about attainment, attendance, bullying and prejudice-based discrimination and option choices. Effective self-evaluation includes rigorous interrogation of this data by staff who are data-literate and use the data to recognise emerging issues and when specific interventions are necessary.

Staff, pupils, parents/carers, partners and other stakeholders such as the local authority or governing body should all have regular opportunities to share their views about the school. Examples of how **people's views** can be gathered include through surveys, focus groups, ongoing professional dialogue, learning visits and minutes of team meetings.



Direct observations of practice can take place in a range of learning contexts including during learning which takes place outdoors, in a workplace, at college and during excursions and residential experiences. Observations should be linked to agreed criteria and a shared understanding of their purpose. All stakeholders including staff, learners, parents and partners can engage in these structured observations and give feedback to support self-evaluation.

This Policy has been agreed by the Glasgow LNCT