

The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adult Services Committee – 28 August 2014

Agenda Item	18
Report No	ECAS 35/14

Update on Improving School Self-evaluation

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report picks up the priority to improve school self-evaluation and identifies progress with the identified next steps from the report in March 2013.

1. Background

- 1.1 In November 2012, members were informed of the need to improve practice in self-evaluation in schools through more focussed analysis of data and more systematic gathering of stakeholders views to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for all young people. A subsequent report in March 2013 reported on steps taken towards this and identified further steps to be taken.

2. The current context

- 2.1 In the inspection advice note of August 2013 Education Scotland significantly increased their expectations in both curriculum and self-evaluation. The most recent advice note of 2014 tasks authorities to consolidate the work and expectations that were raised the previous year.
- 2.2 In the context of a national decline in evaluations for self-evaluation because of increased expectations, average evaluations for Highland primary schools and early years centres for self-evaluation have remained static and for our secondary schools, we have shown a considerable improvement upon previous years. However, any averages need to be treated with caution because of the small sample size, especially in secondary schools. There is still a need and a desire to support schools to bring about improvements through self-evaluation and to improve the Authority performance in self-evaluation.

3. Work to date and future developments

- 3.1 Guidance on direct observation of learning and teaching was produced and agreed with trade unions. The aim of the guidance is to bring about improvements in learning and teaching through focussed classroom visits which identify clear steps for improvement, and identify any trends across the school. All schools are now expected to undertake a programme of classroom observations to bring about improvements in learning and teaching.
- 3.2 Improvement through self-evaluation has remained and will continue to remain on the agenda of primary conferences and Head Teacher seminars.
- 3.3 The paperwork for the Standards and Quality Report and the School Improvement Plan was revised in April 2014. The revision took into account key messages from inspections and aligns our own processes more coherently with that of Education

Scotland. Through consultation with practitioners, we had identified that schools were often taking on too many improvement projects to make an effective and measurable difference to practice. Schools then struggled to evidence improvement as a result of the improvement planning process.

- 3.4 Schools have been asked to prioritise improvement needs and to focus in on fewer but more detailed and achievable projects. Progress with these projects will be the focus of QIT engagement over the coming year.
- 3.5 Area training seminars have been held and every head teacher in Highland has had training on an effective improvement planning process and the Quality Improvement Team will continue to support this.
- 3.6 A considerable amount of work had been put into developing a tracking system of pupil progress that linked into E1. Schools had started to use this to record information within the school and to share across sectors and initial feedback from schools showed this was very useful. Pearson withdrew E1 and the move to SEEMIS has meant that we have to start again with a tracking system. Whilst disappointing, and inevitably putting our timescale behind schedule, a working group has been formed to revisit tracking guidance and to provide an effective tracking system.
- 3.7 With the changeover to SEEMIS, the expected support with the analysis of data from the data support officer was overtaken by the need to get the SEEMIS project in place.
- 3.8 Leadership development programmes continue to be revised and self-evaluation continues to be at the heart of this. The recently developed secondary Principal Teacher (PT) programme, saw the Quality Improvement Team work alongside experienced Head Teachers to bring on the leadership capacity of middle management. Self-evaluation was a key focus for this training and this will be rolled out to Primary PTs next session.
- 3.9 The Quality Improvement Team will continue to work alongside Education Scotland and stakeholders to provide support and challenge to schools for self-evaluation.

4. Implications

- 4.1 There are no Resource, Legal, Equalities, Climate Change/Carbon Clever, Risk, Gaelic or Rural implications arising from this report.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are asked:
 - to note the recent actions taken to improve our school self-evaluation
 - to comment on the continued developments.

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 18 August 2014

Author: Ruth Binks, Principal Officer (Education)