



Self-evaluation And Improvement Planning

Guidance

September 2014

Introduction

Self-evaluation is at the heart of continuous improvement. Its key purpose is to allow a school to make informed judgements about what is working well and not so well. This is essential in order to be clear about what needs to be done to make the necessary improvements.

Self-evaluation is not an end in itself. The prime purpose of both self-evaluation and the related improvement planning is to improve the outcomes achieved by pupils. Schools' leaders should use the intelligence gathered from self-evaluation to plan for improvements as part of a regular cycle of monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning. As part of a continuing cycle it is the key leadership tool.

Schools use a number of different frameworks to support self-evaluation. In most cases, self-evaluation is based on the Estyn Common Inspection Framework and this is the approach that we recommend within the Central South Consortium.

Estyn has produced their own guidance in the form of self-evaluation manuals for primary, special and secondary schools. These documents can be found on the Estyn website at www.estyn.gov.uk. In the section [Inspection Guidance](#). The manuals are designed to support effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning. Although not necessarily exhaustive, the manuals have a clear focus on those aspects of the process that research and best practice have shown to be particularly important. The guidance is set out in the form of searching questions for schools to help them evaluate the quality of their work. The manuals are further supported by specific supplementary guidance that provides further useful prompts and key questions such as that contained in the following publication – [Supplementary Guidance For Inspecting Additional learning Needs \(February 2011\)](#) - again available via the Estyn website.

Questions to support self-evaluation, adapted from the Estyn self-evaluation manual can be found through the relevant link in the Framework For Challenge And Support Handbook.

This short guidance document is intended to supplement the Estyn manuals by providing further supportive material as set out below:

1. Definitions of key terms to promote the use of a shared language when considering self-evaluation and improvement planning.
2. Some worked examples from schools within the region that provide examples of good practice with regard to self-evaluation.
3. Some brief case studies from particular schools describing their approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning.
4. Guidance on writing the school improvement plan.
5. Appendices containing: a checklist of the key characteristics of effective self-evaluation and improvement planning; the use of evaluative words in reports; clarification of what is meant in reports when particular proportions are referred to; a blank action planning template which schools' leaders may wish to use or adapt for their own purposes; a copy of the blank template with guidance notes.

1.0 Definitions of key terms

Vision:

The school we want to be

The school's ambitions and values, set in the context of the school's own circumstances.

Priority

So what do we need to improve?

Clearly defined objectives that the school identifies as important to achieve, usually derived from self-evaluation, local and national priorities.

Target

What specific improvements do we want to make in standards, provision, leadership?

A quantitative or qualitative outcome to improvement work that is **specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related.**

Success criteria

How we evaluate the impact of our improvement work.

Success criteria, quantitative or qualitative, always need to be identified at the time of target setting. Even when the answer to 'how will we know when we have achieved this target?' is not immediately quantifiable, it is still possible and necessary to be precise about the qualitative evidence that will show it has been achieved. In this sense, success criteria provide further detail about the impact the school is seeking to achieve as a result of its improvement work.

Together with the targets, they are essential for effective evaluation.

Action Plan

What will we do to achieve our priorities and targets?

An action plan sets out strategically how we intend to achieve a priority and its associated targets and success criteria. School, subject and departmental improvement plans are made up of a number of action plans. These identify:

- The strategy and associated tasks to be carried out
- Who is responsible for the tasks, with timescales
- The resources needed to implement the plan

- Who will check that the strategy is being implemented and tasks carried out as intended, how and when this will be done
- When and how evaluation will occur and by whom

Strategy

How could we achieve our priorities in the most effective way?

This will identify the key action or actions chosen as the best way to achieve the plan's priorities and targets

Tasks

These turn strategy into reality

These break the strategy down into the jobs which need to be done, the responsibility for which is assigned to named people. Start dates, intermediate dates and completion dates will be identified.

Monitoring

Are we on track? Are we doing what we said we would do?

How we check that tasks are being carried out in accordance with the plan

Evaluation

What impact have we made and what have we learned?

Evaluation involves:

- making professional judgements about progress towards meeting the expected outcomes stated in the plan's targets and success criteria;
- judging the impact of the improvements on standards, provision or leadership;
- considering what has contributed to achieving the outcomes;
- recognising the reasons why some aspects of the plan were less successful; and
- drawing on the lessons learned to inform future priorities and targets.

2.0 Examples of good practice in writing the self-evaluation report

(We will add to this section examples of good practice in writing the self-evaluation report from schools within the region).

3.0 Case studies: approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning

The following case studies can be found at www.estyn.gov.uk in the section *Signposts To Best Practice*.

All have a particular emphasis on self-evaluation and improvement planning to improve pupils' outcomes.

Primary Schools

[*Parents Play An Important Part In School Life: Capcoch Primary School, RCT, February 2013*](#)

[*Data Analysis: A Key Component In Improving Pupils' Performance: Glan Usk Primary School, Newport, May 2011*](#)

[*Using Data To Improve Pupils' Skills: Llangynidr Community Primary School, Powys, June 2011*](#)

Special Schools

[*Effective Planning And High Expectations: The Secret To Success: Ysgol Pen Coch Special School, Flintshire, April 2011*](#)

Secondary Schools

[*The Positive Impact Of Distributed Leadership: Flint High School, Flintshire, January 2012*](#)

[*Effective Professional Dialogue: Ysgol Bryngwyn, Llanelli, January 2012*](#)

[*In-house Self-evaluation Tool Kit Proves A Success: Connah's Quay High School, Flintshire, March 2011*](#)

4.0 Writing the school improvement plan

The school improvement plan will contain a number of action plans. However, pursuing too many priorities, including sometimes the wrong ones, dilutes the effectiveness of improvement work and wastes precious time on inappropriate strategies for change. Doing less but doing it better is a useful guideline to adopt when determining the school's improvement agenda.

The purpose of each action plan is to show clearly how the school is going to turn its expectations and intentions for improving standards, quality and leadership into practical reality.

Characteristics of an effective action plan

An action plan should identify:

- **clear targets** against which improvements can be measured;
- **success criteria** which will enable the school to evaluate the impact of its improvement work on standards, quality and leadership;
- **strategically planned tasks** to be undertaken to achieve each priority;
- **actions carried over** from previous plans;
- **who is responsible** for each task and all the people involved in carrying out the task;
- **the resource implications** relating to equipment, materials, time, staff development and the associated budget source;
- **timescales** for carrying out tasks, which include start dates, intermediate deadlines and completion dates;
- who is responsible for **monitoring** that the tasks are being carried out in accordance with the plan and when and how this will occur; and
- when **evaluation** will occur, how it will be carried out and by whom.

Above all an action plan should be a working document.

Strategy and associated tasks

It is vital that the strategy and its associated tasks are set out in sufficient detail in order to:

- guide the actions which need to be taken;
- provide a clear framework for monitoring that improvements are on track; and
- ensure that the identified targets are met.

Success criteria: how we evaluate the impact of our improvement work

Success criteria, quantitative or qualitative, always need to be identified at the time of target setting. Even when the answer to 'how will we know when we have achieved this target?' is not immediately quantifiable, it can still be possible to be precise about the qualitative evidence that will show it has been achieved.

They provide a clear statement about the improvements which the plan is designed to achieve.

The most valuable success criteria are not necessarily the easiest to measure. However, the more specific the success criteria, the more straightforward it is to evaluate the impact of the improvement work at a later stage.

It is important that success criteria measure what is important and central to the improvement being sought – not simply what it is easy or convenient to measure.

Timescales

All plans need to indicate a date for starting the improvement work, intermediate deadlines and dates for completing tasks.

This is essential for monitoring the progress being made and for maintaining impetus.

Responsibilities

Once priorities have been broken down into a series of tasks the key responsibilities for carrying them out will be allocated to individuals and /or teams. It is important to ensure that, as far as possible, all staff are involved in making a worthwhile contribution to the plan. There should be an appropriate balance in the allocation of tasks so that no one person is overburdened.

As well as allocating overall responsibility, the plan should identify:

- any other individual teachers or teams who will be involved in carrying out the tasks;
- any personnel to whom reports should be made; and
- by whom monitoring and evaluation of the progress and impact of the plan will be undertaken.

Resource implications: linking improvement priorities to budget planning

Each year a school needs to identify its allocation of funds to:

- meet fixed costs (such as staff salaries, heating and maintenance);
- sustain current initiatives during the period of more intense improvement activity and beyond this; and
- support new developments.

For a plan to have maximum impact it needs to be costed realistically and cross-referenced to sources of funding such as:

- the school budget;
- grants including the school effectiveness grant, Welsh in education grant and pupil deprivation grant.

It is important to consider all costs associated with resourcing the plan including:

- staff cover for meetings, class observation, monitoring and evaluation activities;
- planning, preparation and assessment time;
- management time for subject leaders, heads of department and senior managers
- teaching materials and equipment;
- additional new or part-time staff for short-term projects; and
- the cost of releasing staff to participate in professional development.

Having allocated the costings schools should now address the following questions:

- Does the plan show that all identified tasks have been costed?
- Are the costings realistic?
- Are the costings in line with the agreed budget allocated to this priority?

Monitoring The Implementation Of The Plan

Monitoring is concerned essentially with answering these questions:

- Are we on track?
- Are we doing what we said we would do?

The purposes of monitoring are to ensure that:

- all the tasks are carried out in accordance with the plan;
- resource requirements are being met; and
- agreed responsibilities are being carried out.

The following key principles apply to monitoring:

- A named individual should have responsibility for monitoring progress in fulfilling actions linked to particular aspects of the plan.
- The monitoring arrangements should be open, shared and known by everyone.
- The monitoring of progress on aspects of the plan should be built in as part of the agenda for planned, regular meetings and discussions during the course of the school year.
- Monitoring of the implementation of the plan should inform decisions about the need for adaptation or change to actions or other aspects of the plan.

The success with which the school's leaders monitor and follow through the implementation of the plan is a crucial part of the improvement process

Evaluation

What is evaluation?

Evaluation involves making a judgement about:

- the extent of progress towards meeting the expectations in the plan's targets and success criteria; and
- the impact of the improvements on standards, provision or leadership.

How do we evaluate?

The following principles are key to effective evaluation:

- Targets and success criteria need to be as clear and specific as possible to evaluate successfully the extent to which they are met.
- Evaluation arrangements should be agreed, open, shared and known to all relevant personnel.
- Evaluation should be carried out in an atmosphere of confidence and trust.
- Evaluation should be informed by evidence, including first-hand evidence, about the impact of improvement work on standards, provision or leadership.
- A named individual should usually have responsibility for evaluation and ideally someone who has not had the lead responsibility for implementing the action plan. However, it is often helpful for evaluation to be carried out collaboratively, for example, by teams drawn from across the school community.
- Evaluation is often more effective where it is supported by an external perspective.
- It is important to identify how evaluation will occur throughout the year in ways which will ultimately lead to a clear judgement about progress in meeting targets and success criteria and about the impact on standards, quality and leadership.
- It is useful to note down information about progress and impact routinely during the implementation of the plan and to draw on this in making a summative evaluation.
- It is also important to use the information derived from evaluation to modify plans where necessary.

A successful evaluation process:

- enables everyone to lead and manage change effectively;
- promotes a confidently self-critical school culture and climate;
- enables the school to prioritise its improvements on the basis of robust and pertinent evidence; and
- informs the setting of future, achievable targets and the identification of realistic action plans.

The effectiveness with which evaluation is carried out is a key criterion in determining the effectiveness of leadership

Appendix 1: Checklist of key characteristics

The self-evaluation report

- Is evaluative rather than descriptive, using recognised evaluative terms
- Is driven by the need to raise standards and is informed by thorough and effective interpretation of data
- Has a strong focus on impact and pupils' outcomes including the impact of provision on improving standards in skills
- Clearly identifies the school's strengths and areas for improvement
- Has judgements that are honest and based on evidence
- Involves all stakeholders who are familiar with the content
- Has a clear link to targets and intended outcomes in the school's improvement plan
- Follows the structure of the ESTYN inspection framework
- Evaluates progress against previous inspection recommendations and priorities
- Reflects embedded self-evaluation processes

The improvement plan

- Is clearly linked to the outcomes of the self-evaluation process
- Sets targets that identify expected improvement in the standards achieved by pupils.
- Contain well-thought-out success criteria that identify the characteristics of quality that improvement planning is seeking to achieve and enable the school to evaluate the impact of its improvement work on standards, quality and leadership
- Outlines the strategy and actions that are key to addressing the identified areas for improvement
- Is clear and specific about those aspects of pupils' learning that require improvement in order to raise standards
- Is a working document that develops in response to the monitoring of progress
- Involves the school community as a whole

- Relates current priorities to future planned improvements over a three-year period.
- Takes into account local and national priorities
- Identifies resource requirements and the source and includes reference to any need for professional development
- Identifies lead responsibilities and appropriate timescales
- Identifies how progress is monitored and evaluated throughout the year
- Has in place an effective evidence base to support actions undertaken

Appendix 2: The use of evaluative words in inspection reports

The notes below are taken from the Estyn Writing Guide.

Certain words are more usually associated with certain evaluations than others. The following is a list of words and phrases that may help inspectors to reflect the evaluations they have awarded. The use of any one word or phrase does not of itself make any specific evaluation inevitable, as this will depend on the balance of strengths and shortcomings overall, but they are here as a rough guide:

Excellent: outstanding, very good, innovative, exceptional, superior, exemplary, superb, very high standard, high quality, perfect, extensive, highly creative, highly imaginative, well above expectations, highly effective, sector-leading.

Good: successful, strong, skilful, worthwhile, beneficial, valuable, able, thorough, useful, powerful, comprehensive, used well, consistently good, effective.

Adequate: satisfactory, appropriate, suitable, efficient, competent, relevant, sufficient, enough, valid, solid, sound, average, consistent.

Unsatisfactory: insufficient, inefficient, none, no, inappropriate, ineffective, unsuitable, unable, weak, inconsistent, irregular, limited, poor.

What inspection judgements mean:

Excellent : Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice

Good : Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement

Adequate : Strengths outweigh areas for improvement

Unsatisfactory : Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

Appendix 3: Clarification of the use of quantities and proportions in inspection reports

It is important to be careful when writing about various proportions of learners. Terms and phrases linked to proportions may mean different things to different readers. It is important to recognise that the ideas below are indicative relationships only.

Nearly all = with very few exceptions

Most = 90% or more

Many = 70% or more

A majority = over 60%

Half = 50%

Around half = close to 50%

A minority = below 40%

Few = below 20%

Very few = less than 10%

Appendix 4: Blank action planning template

Aspect or Subject Action Plan:

Source of priority:	Evidence:
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Priority:

Target(s):

Impact/success criteria:	Evaluation Commentary:
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Monitoring: <i>Are we doing what we said we would do?</i>			Evaluation: <i>Are we making an impact?</i>		
How?	Who?	When?	How?	Who?	When?

Changes to plan arising from monitoring and evaluation:

Strategically-planned tasks	On track (tick)	Lead person and others involved	Time scale		Resources	Costings / budget source
			Start Date	End Date		

Appendix 5: Blank Aspect/ subject action planning template with guidance notes.

Source of priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ How has the priority been derived? From self-evaluation?➤ Is it a continuation of a priority from a previous plan. Is it the result of statutory or other external requirements?	Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ From self-evaluation, from other information considered by the school including from external sources
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Priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What do we need to improve?
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Target(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What specifically do we want to improve?➤ For whom. For example, all pupils, FP, KS2, boys, girls, children with additional learning needs➤ By when, and by how much?➤ Are we clear about the impact on standards, learning and teaching at classroom level?➤ Suggested wording: To improve ... for ... from ... to ... by ...
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Impact / success criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ How are we going to measure or judge the impact of our improvement work on standards, provision and leadership?➤ What criteria are we going to include that give a clear picture of the improvements we are seeking to achieve?	Final Evaluation Commentary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Are we making an impact?➤ The outcomes of monitoring and evaluation should then lead to the start of another cycle of self-evaluation.
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Monitoring: Are we doing what we said we would do?			Evaluation: Are we making an impact?		
How?	Who?	When?	How?	Who?	When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Classroom observation ➤ Scrutiny of pupils' work ➤ Scrutiny of planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Who will do this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How often? ➤ Specific dates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are we considering sources of evidence such as: the views of parents, children, other partners/ stakeholders; data and assessments; inspection judgements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Who will do this? ➤ It is important that the person responsible for implementing is not the only person responsible for evaluating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How often? ➤ Specific dates

Changes to plan arising from monitoring & evaluation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do we need to make amendments or additions to the original plan? Have we omitted anything that should have been included Do we need to take anything out?

Strategically-planned tasks	On track (tick)	Lead person & others involved	Time scale		Resources	Costings / budget source
			Start Date	End Date		
I M P A C T <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What do we need to do to bring about the identified improvement, to an agreed schedule? ➤ Do the tasks support the meeting of the targets and impact / success criteria? ➤ Are we clear about the outcomes that carrying out the tasks will bring about? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Print lead person responsible for completing the action in bold. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For example, PPA, leadership and management time ➤ Supply cover ➤ Involvement of personnel ➤ CPD ➤ Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Specified amounts ➤ School budget ➤ SEG/WEG/ ➤ PDG ➤ Other sources