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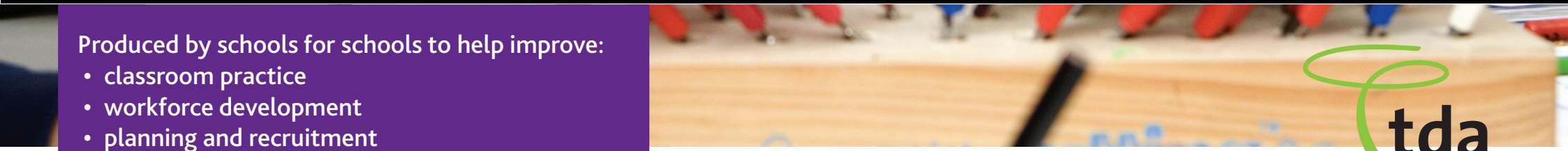

Produced by schools for schools to help improve:

- classroom practice
- workforce development
- planning and recruitment

tda

developing people, improving young lives

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Overview

Introduction

Resources in schools have increased significantly over the past decade to address a wide range of barriers to learning and ensure that every child and young person has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Pupils are supported by staff with a broader range of experiences and skills than ever before. Higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs), school business managers (SBMs), cover supervisors, extended schools coordinators, personal tutors and parent support advisers are just a few of the new roles created through workforce reform in schools. There has also been a proliferation in the number of classroom-based teaching assistants (TAs), with one in almost every primary school classroom.

Support staff are considered invaluable by colleagues, pupils and parents. However recent research indicates that more attention needs to be paid to how they are deployed to best enable them to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.

This resource kit has been developed to help you consider of the effective deployment of classroom support staff as part of the school improvement planning process. Specifically, it will enable you to:

- identify areas on which the school might focus to create maximum impact on pupil progress
- select a design for a planning session to take forward your thinking in this area, and
- select appropriate tools and resources to support your planning session or enhance your existing planning activities.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) has developed this toolkit through its work with schools, local authorities (LAs) and researchers.

How to use this resource kit

Step 1: assess where you are and where you would like to be

Use the self-assessment tool to understand where you are with regard to the effective deployment of classroom support staff and decide where you would like to be.

The diagnostic comprises three sections based on findings from the TDA's work with schools, LAs and researchers.

- **How effective is our classroom practice?** This section looks at the clarity of roles and responsibilities in the classroom and the extent to which the classroom team jointly plans and prepare
- **How effectively do we develop our existing workforce?** This section looks at the extent to which continuing professional development (CPD) is used to develop effective classroom support and how well performance review processes encourage and support effective deployment
- **How well do we plan and recruit?** This section looks at the extent to which a school plans the roles required within it and how the workforce is deployed, together with the extent to which recruitment processes match identified needs

Each section is subdivided into a number of questions. Answering the questions in terms of where you are and where you would like to be will help you to identify the biggest gaps and, therefore, possible areas for future focus. It will also help you to identify discrepancies between the views of different stakeholders which you may also want to explore further.

Step 2: choose a planning session design

You have the option to choose one of three planning session designs. Each session design will help you to explore further the focus areas identified in step 1. Your choice of session design will depend on the time available, the context in which the session will take place and the desired outcomes from that session.

Some schools will opt to designs their own planning sessions mixing and matching the tools and resources available in this resource kit.

Step 3: use appropriate tools and resources

Use the tools and resources appropriate to your planning session design or to enhance your existing planning activities. Consider whether you could also benefit from using the tools included within the Additional Tools section of this resource kit to deepen your understanding and prioritise activities.

Step 1

Self-assessment tool

How effective is our classroom practice?

Q1. How clear are classroom support staff/teacher roles and responsibilities for teaching and learning? EXAMPLE

Targeted support for pupils

Where we are / Where we'd like to be

Classroom support allocation is not reviewed or amended throughout the school year to match pupils' needs and progress.

Classroom support allocation is based on a clear understanding of pupils' needs and progress and is regularly reviewed.

Q1. How clear are classroom support staff/teacher roles and responsibilities for teaching and learning?

Targeted support for pupils

Classroom support allocation is not aligned to pupils' needs and progress and is not reviewed or amended throughout the school year.

Classroom support allocation is based on a clear understanding of pupils' needs and progress and is regularly reviewed.

Focus of lesson support

The role of support staff is restricted to performing routine tasks in a way that makes it difficult to respond to the needs of individual pupils within the lesson.

Classroom roles are flexed in order to accommodate pupils' needs in the lesson. Support within the lesson is directed to progress pupils' learning.

How effective is our classroom practice?

Team interactions within the lesson

Limited interaction takes place between the teacher and support staff during the lesson. Interaction tends to focus on task completion. Objectives for pupils' learning are not typically shared.

Continuous interaction takes place between the teacher and support staff throughout the lesson so that staff are flexible and responsive to pupil need. Support staff fully understand their role in supporting teaching and learning and know how their input can contribute to better outcomes for pupils.

Q1. Evidence and comments to support your thinking

How effective is our classroom practice?

Q2. To what extent do support staff and teachers plan as a team?

Team skills

There is limited understanding of team skills so that the skills, qualifications and experience within the team tend not to be used to their greatest potential.

There is good understanding of the skills that exist within the team. Support is used creatively to make maximum use of relevant skills, experience and qualifications.

Sharing lesson plans

Teachers prepare plans in isolation and the role of support staff is unclear or not communicated to them.

Time is set aside for teachers and support staff to plan so everyone is clear on their role in the lesson and how it is linked to pupil progress objectives.

Team review of lesson plans

The lesson review does not involve the full team so that plans do not fully reflect the team's view of pupils' needs.

Regular reviews between the teacher and support staff via a robust and inclusive process help staff identify pupils' needs so that plans can be amended to improve support for pupils and help pupils progress.

Q2. Evidence and comments to support your thinking

How effectively do we develop our workforce?

Q3. To what extent do you use professional development to ensure effective classroom support?

Professional development for classroom support staff

CPD is not consistently available for all support staff. CPD tends to be focused on general whole-school issues and the general needs of staff rather than tailored to assessed individual needs.

A rich, varied and accessible CPD programme is in place for all staff. There is a clear link between individual training and school improvement priorities. Learning is applied quickly to improve pupil progress.

Professional development for teachers in relation to effective classroom support staff deployment

The effective deployment of support staff is not seen as a priority for CPD for teachers.

CPD for teachers incorporates the management of classroom support staff to ensure they are managed and deployed to best meet pupils' needs.

Classroom support staff and teachers learning from each other

Whole-school CPD mainly consists of off-the-shelf training courses and there is limited opportunity for shared teacher and support staff CPD. Processes to cascade good practice down the school are limited.

Learning is shared through a range of meaningful and regular development activities for teachers and support staff. Processes are in place to identify good practice within the classroom and across the school. CPD coordination ensures effective practices are analysed, adapted and implemented throughout the whole school and across clusters as appropriate.

Q3. Evidence and comments to support your thinking

How effectively do we develop our workforce?

Q4. How well does our performance review process encourage and support effective deployment?

Managing support staff performance

Not all support staff have access to review and development opportunities. Where targets are set, they do not link clearly to pupil progress or CPD.

Clear and effective systems are in place for reviewing and developing the performance of support staff in relation to pupil progress. Links are made to the school improvement plan, induction, CPD and career development.

Managing teacher performance in relation to effective deployment

Performance discussions do not address how the management and development of support staff can contribute to pupil progress.

Discussions around teacher performance and development include how support staff can be managed and developed to best meet pupils' needs. Links are made to CPD plans as a result.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the input of externally employed staff

External support tends to be provided according to the provider's model of delivery, rather than a shared and agreed understanding of how their input can be delivered most effectively within the school.

A strong partnership exists with other agencies and providers to manage the delivery of support against a shared view of pupils' needs. Suggestions for improvements to ways of working are discussed and solutions developed and agreed in the context of a clear and shared vision.

Q4. Evidence and comments

How well do we plan and recruit?

Q5. To what extent do we plan the shape and deployment of our workforce?

School ethos and leadership

All staff are not aware of how they can impact and contribute to pupil progress. There is inconsistency in the adult/pupil relationship as a result.

The ethos and leadership of the school recognises the contribution of all staff to pupil progress. All staff are aware of their impact so all adult/pupil relationships are consistent and constructive.

Managing changes to roles within the school

Ownership for changes in the school's organisation structure tends to be held by senior leadership, with little involvement from the broader staff within the school. The school is responsive to, and may feel directed by, external initiatives.

The senior leadership team provides clear leadership for change and all staff are involved in decision making and understand the benefits they are seeking for the school and pupils as well as the process through which those benefits will be delivered. As a result, staff are highly enthusiastic and supportive of change.

How well do we plan and recruit?

Designing and deploying roles to meet pupil need

Roles are designed and staff are deployed according to historical patterns, with little reference to data on pupil need or the skills and experience of staff. Therefore, roles within the school do not adapt significantly in accordance to the changing needs of pupils.

Through effective use of data, the school understands changing pupil needs and adapts roles and responsibilities to reflect those needs. There is an agreed process for allocating of support staff and deployment is reviewed on a regular basis. The design and deployment of roles are powerful catalysts for improvement and change within the school.

Reflecting our practices in contractual arrangements

The school is unsure about how statutory entitlements and guidance can be applied to support change and school improvement. Contractual arrangements do not allow classroom support staff to work in a way that meets school and pupil need.

All staff understand contractual arrangements, statutory entitlements and guidance and are able to work in a way that supports change and school improvement.

Supporting documentation

Documentation provides general descriptions of the role of classroom support staff in the school.

Documentation makes use of national occupational standards and HLTA standards and articulates a clear role for support staff, providing guidance to support effective deployment and affect pupil outcomes.

Q5. Evidence and comments to support your thinking

How well do we plan and recruit?

Q6. How effectively does your recruitment process match identified needs?

Recruitment of support staff

Recruitment tends to be driven by a short-term need to fill resource gaps. Job and person specifications tend not to be adapted to reflect the specific needs of the role and about the level at which the role should be undertaken may not have been considered.

Recruitment processes do not always take into account the population from which the school recruits. As a result, possible future CPD needs are not always considered when making recruitment decisions.

A clear picture of the required role and level, together with a person specification, is created through an analysis of the role and the skills, qualifications and experience required and with reference to national occupational standards and HLTA standards.

Recruitment processes reflect an understanding of the population from which the school recruits. They are designed to ensure that both the candidate and the school are able to make informed decisions about whether the candidate will be able to contribute well to the school. Recruitment is linked to future CPD needs.

Engaging with other schools and partners

The school does not always recognise that skills gaps may be met through external providers or other schools. Needs are not fully communicated to or shared with other organisations to gauge possible alternative routes for support.

The school is clear about which roles and skills might be resourced from outside the school or across a cluster. Effective communication of needs takes place with a range of organisations to help create an appropriately skilled workforce, within the school and across the cluster.

Q6. Evidence and comments to support your thinking

Step 2

Planning session options

Planning session options

Option 1

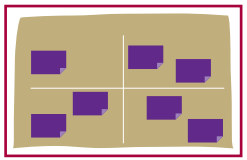
Aim: to develop an overall vision and strategic plan for effective deployment of classroom staff

Time: one-and-a-half hours

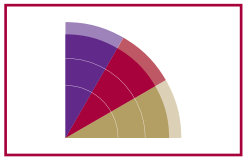
Possible session types: part of an Inset day or a workshop as part of school improvement planning activities

Recommended tools and activity flow:

Think, feel, say, do
Establish and agree a vision that will drive improvement planning



Fan plan
Identify strategies as the basis for an implementation plan



Planning session options

Option 2

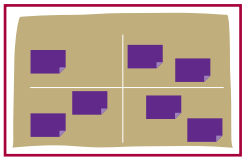
Aim: to develop an operational plan for improving effective deployment of support staff based on a deepened understanding of areas for improvement, and of the relationship between learning potential and the effective deployment of classroom support staff

Time: half a day

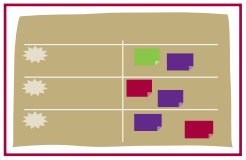
Possible session types: part of an Inset day or one or two workshops as part of school improvement planning activities

Recommended tools and activity flow:

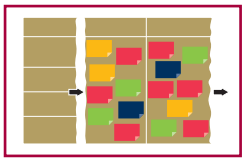
Think, feel, say, do
Establish and agree a vision that will drive improvement planning



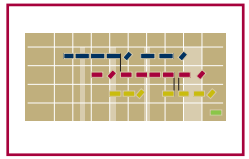
What's working?
Identify areas for improvement and celebrate what is already working well



Learning potential
Reach a common understanding of the factors that affect pupils' learning potential and identify ways that effective deployment of classroom staff will help all pupils to achieve their full potential



Swim-lane plan
Develop an updatable timeline for delivery of your plan, highlighting all milestones, interfaces, decision points and deliverables



Planning session options

Option 3

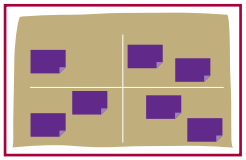
Aim: to develop a strategic and operational plan for improving the effective deployment of classroom support staff and measuring and demonstrating the impact of your activities

Time: a full day or a series of half-day sessions

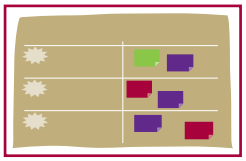
Possible session types: a full Inset day, a series of Inset sessions or a series of workshops as part of school improvement planning activities

Recommended tools and activity flow:

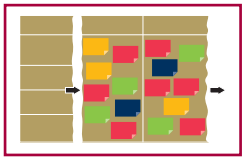
Think, feel, say, do
Establish and agree a vision that will drive improvement planning



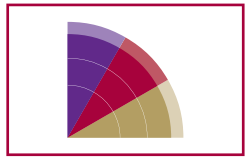
What's working?
Identify areas for improvement and celebrate what is already working well



Learning potential
Reach a common understanding of the factors that affect pupils' learning potential and identify ways that effective deployment of support staff will help all pupils to achieve their full potential

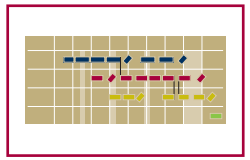


Fan plan
Identify strategies as the basis for an implementation plan



Impact evaluation model
Articulate how a project, initiative or service is expected to have an impact

Swim-lane plan
Develop an updatable timeline for delivery of your plan, highlighting all milestones, interfaces, decision points and deliverables



Step 3

Tools to support planning sessions

Think, feel, say, do

Aim: to establish and agree a vision that will drive improvement planning

Time: 10 to 60 minutes

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper or flip chart, Post-its, markers and self-assessment tool

How can this inform your SEF?

- Demonstrate how the views of the whole school workforce, learners, parents/carers, other stakeholders and the community:
  - are gathered in an inclusive and impartial way
  - inform the school vision and appropriate strategies, and
  - support community cohesion
- Identify priorities for school improvement plan

About this tool

This tool will help you gather input from a variety of stakeholders and develop a better understanding of their priorities. It offers a quick and easy way to identify a strategic vision at the start of the planning process and to engage stakeholders, including the whole school workforce, parents, pupils, governors and members of the community.

How to use this tool

Invite stakeholders to participate. Ask members of each stakeholder group to think about how they would like the school to be in three years' time if classroom staff were deployed in a way that succeeded in meeting set priorities. Using Post-it notes, ask stakeholders to write down answers to the questions: 'In three years' time, what do we want to think/feel/say/do?' The Post-its should be labelled T, F, S and D respectively and stuck on to either a large sheet of paper or a separate flip chart for each category. It may be helpful to explore the reasons for discrepancies and commonalities in different stakeholder groups' responses. The feedback should be shared with the planning team and used to inform the rest of the planning process.

Another way to do this is for the planning team (or those participating) to envisage where they think different stakeholders might like the school to be in three years' time. In this case, it is helpful to split the team into groups of at least two and assign one stakeholder category to each group. Once a group has completed the exercise for one stakeholder category, it should move on to the next and so on until each group has considered every category of stakeholder.

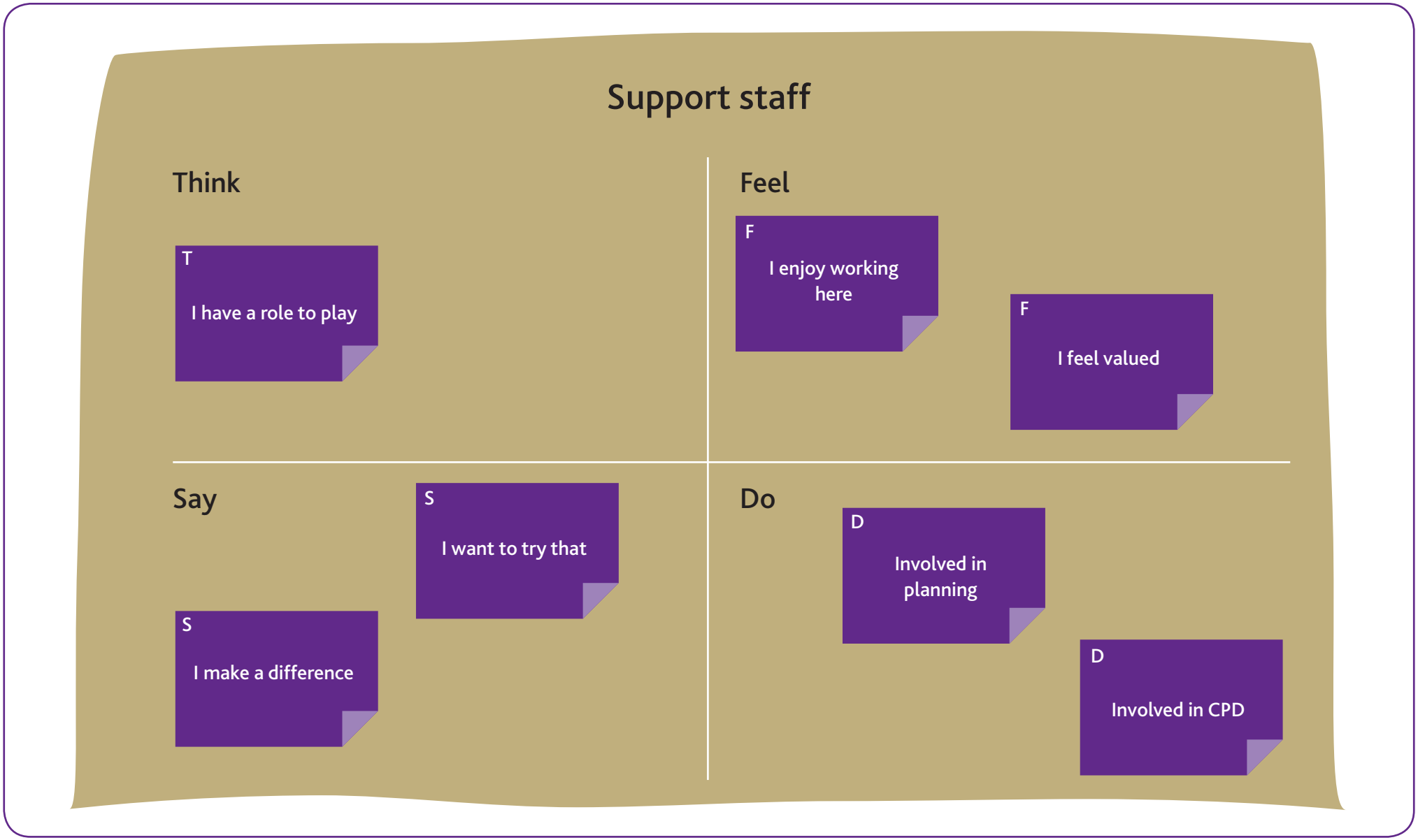
Tip

Make sure to emphasise the context of effective deployment of classroom support staff while completing this activity.

Outputs

These can help to create a vision for your improvement plan. You may wish to retain the raw outputs from this exercise to provide evidence of consultation and to inform school self-evaluation.

Think, feel, say, do



What's working?

Aim: to identify areas for improvement and celebrate what is already working well

Time: 40 to 60 minutes

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper, Post-its, markers and information from your SEF, Ofsted, primary capital programme and any consultations, including self-assessment tool

How can this inform your SEF?

- Capture the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision based on the views of the whole school workforce, learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders
- Demonstrate clear consideration of the elements that are contributing to the quality of teaching and learning, including those that contribute specifically to individual learning needs
- Provide evidence of what you do well and areas for development based on the views of learners, parents/carers, the whole school workforce and the community
- Capture evidence to support statements about the curriculum, based on the needs of all learners

About this tool

This tool is designed to help you evaluate your current activities. It is an effective way of gathering feedback from a range of stakeholders, stimulating discussion and building consensus.

How to use this tool

Participants should consider the questions in the diagram in relation to one or more areas of focus from the self-assessment tool. They should write their answers on Post-its and provide supporting evidence wherever possible.

Where there is a large number of responses, 'dot voting' can be used to identify priorities. Each participant has a set number of votes, (eg three) which they then allocate by placing dots or ticks against the items or activities they think most important. Priority items are those with the most ticks or dots. The activities that are going well should be celebrated. Those where small changes could deliver a significant impact may be 'quick wins'. Bigger challenges should be taken forward to the next stage of the planning process.

Tip

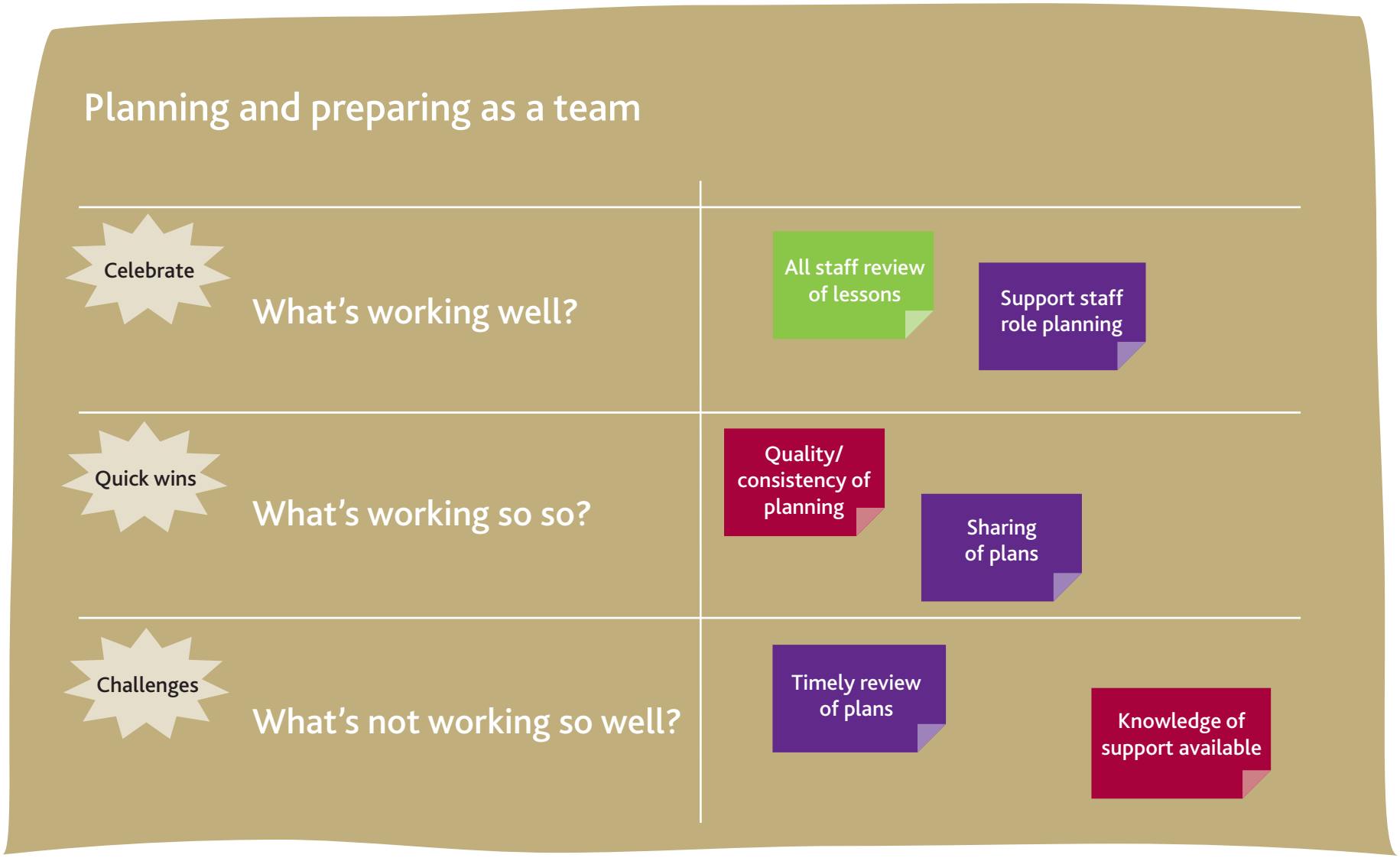
Leave a template of the tool, headlining a key issue, in the staffroom to encourage anonymous input.

Outputs

'Quick wins' and challenges can inform the objectives for your plan. The raw outputs can be used to show how the priorities were identified.

The Five Why?s tool (additional tools, page 39) can be used to explore the outcomes further and identify underlying issues.

What's working?



Learning potential

Aim: to reach a common understanding of the factors that affect pupils' learning potential and identify ways that effective deployment of classroom support staff will help all pupils achieve their full potential

Time: this section consists of one process, divided into several steps. Each step can be completed separately (and repeated with different participants) so individual timings have been given for each. Steps can also be combined into a single session (60 minutes)

Group size: five to 30 participants per individual step or five to 12 if working through the whole process in a single session

Resources needed: flip charts, Post-its and markers

How can this inform your SEF?

- Identify barriers and aids to learning
- Demonstrate the views of pupils, parents/carers, the whole school workforce and community on what helps and hinders personal development and well-being
- Demonstrate the key priorities for development of learners' personal development and well-being, based on an assessment of the needs of all learners
- Demonstrate where activities can support learning, achievement and well-being through a complete audit of provision, based on the needs of all learners
- Demonstrate capacity to improve

About this tool

Many schools have used this tool to reach a common understanding of the factors that affect pupils' learning potential and to identify areas where work is needed to improve effective deployment of classroom staff to help pupils realise that potential. The whole school staff, alongside the governing body, pupils, parents and other key stakeholders, will provide valuable input to this process.

Learning potential
Step 1: success characteristics

Step 1: success characteristics

Aim: to identify what successful learning looks like in a school/cluster by identifying the characteristics displayed by successful learners

Time: 30 to 45 minutes

Group size: five to 30 participants as an individual step; five to 12 if working through the whole module

Resources needed: flip charts, Post-its and markers

About this step

This step will help to identify the key characteristics of successful learners by drawing on input from the teams that work with them.

How to use this step

This step can be completed quickly or worked on over several sessions, depending on the number of stakeholder groups taking part. A recommended approach is to start with those who work closely with pupils before seeking input from other stakeholders, including pupils themselves.

Ask participants to think about the key characteristics of successful learners. Considering specific pupils can help bring the question to life.

What characteristics do they exhibit, for example, high motivation, resilience or good attendance?
What makes them successful learners? Discourage participants from listing causes, such as parental support or good teaching.

Participants should write down their thoughts on individual Post-its. These should then be attached to a large sheet of paper, with similar responses grouped together. There are two ways of doing this. Either all the notes are stuck to the sheet and then moved around, or one participant is asked to name a characteristic and then the rest of the group is asked if they have come up with anything similar. Either way, keep going until all the notes have been stuck to the sheet. Assign an overall characteristic to best describe each grouping. Finally, agree upon those groupings that best describe the key success characteristics of your pupils.

Tip

Keeping the total number of key characteristics down to three or four will help you manage the process of developing actions and monitoring progress.

Outputs

By the end of the process, you should have reached a consensus on the key characteristics of successful learners.

Learning potential
Step 2: blockers and enablers

Aim: to identify aspects of deployment of classroom staff that block or enable successful learning in your context

Time: 30 to 45 minutes

Group size: five to 30 participants as an individual step or five to 12 if working through the whole module

Resources needed: large sheet of paper, Post-its and markers

About this step

This activity is designed to help you explore why some pupils' learning can be helped or hindered by the extent to which support staff are deployed effectively, giving you a clearer understanding of the areas you need to address.

The tool can be used with a range of participants, including the whole school workforce, school leadership team and governors. It can also be used effectively with pupils to assess how the deployment of staff is affecting their learning and can provide secure evidence that their views have been taken on board as part of the self-evaluation and planning process.

How to use this step

Ask participants to look in turn at each of the key success characteristics identified in step 1. What aspects of support staff deployment might block each characteristic? What might enable them to flourish? Or, if doing this with pupils, ask them if there is anything about the way adults work in the classroom that gets in the way of their learning. What might improve their learning?

Group similar responses together as you go along. The step can be repeated, capturing the views of different groups of stakeholders each time.

Where the same item appears as both a blocker and an enabler, participants should be encouraged to explore the reasons for this.

Tip

Make sure you consider a broad cross-section of pupils, not just the most or least successful.

Outputs

The identified blockers and enablers can be used as the basis for determining your positive aims, provide evidence of pupil voice and help inform the school self-evaluation.

Learning potential
Step 3: positive aims

Aim: to convert blockers and enablers into positive aims for improving learning potential in your context

Time: 20 to 45 minutes

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper and markers

About this step

Steps 1 and 2 will have identified a range of blockers to be mitigated and enablers to be enhanced. Before these can be tackled, they need to be converted into positive aims. This step is critical before existing provision can be reviewed and further solutions developed. It is recommended that the leadership team completes this step.

How to use this step

Taking each of the key blockers and enablers identified in the previous steps in turn, ask participants to think about positive aims that would (a) mitigate or compensate (in the case of blockers) or (b) improve and enhance (in the case of enablers). Keep the focus on goals, not solutions, and make sure each statement starts with 'to…' So, the blocker 'plans not inclusive of support staff' (or the enabler 'plans inclusive of support staff') could become the aim 'to incorporate the effective use of support staff into planning'. Aims should be limited to what can reasonably be actioned within the period covered by your improvement plan. You can use the Prioritisation Matrix (additional tools, page 43) to prioritise issues and the Five Why?s (additional tools, page 39) to understand the root cause of an issue before finalising your aims.

Tip

Keep participants to a maximum of 12 and make sure you allow enough time for them to reach a proper consensus.

Outputs

Your agreed aims will form the basis for the next step in this process.

Learning potential
Step 4: solutions matrix

Aim: to identify how far existing and proposed activities are helping to achieve identified aims and highlight any gaps in provision

Time: 20 to 45 minutes

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper, markers and list of existing activities and practices concerned with support staff deployment

About this step

The Solutions Matrix maps existing and proposed activities and practices concerning the deployment of support staff against your aims, showing how far current provision is contributing to your objectives and highlighting any gaps.

How to use this step

List your agreed aims across the top of the matrix and all activities and practices concerning the deployment of classroom staff down the left-hand side. Activities and practices should include those inside and beyond the classroom – including any extended services – and those that affect pupils indirectly, for example, training and professional development.

Over one or more sessions, ask participants whether each activity or practice is currently meeting the identified aims and ask them to give supporting evidence. Put a tick against those that are meeting their aims, a cross against those that are not and a question mark where further investigation is needed. Some schools have found it helpful to grade the extent to which an activity meets an objective, for example, from 0 (no impact/does not meet its aim) to five (high impact/meets its aim).

Once all the listed activities and practices have been mapped, go back to those with the most crosses. Could these be adapted to meet the stated aims? If so, how? If not, should they be stopped? Finally, ask participants to suggest new activities and practices that could meet the intended aims. Add these to the matrix.

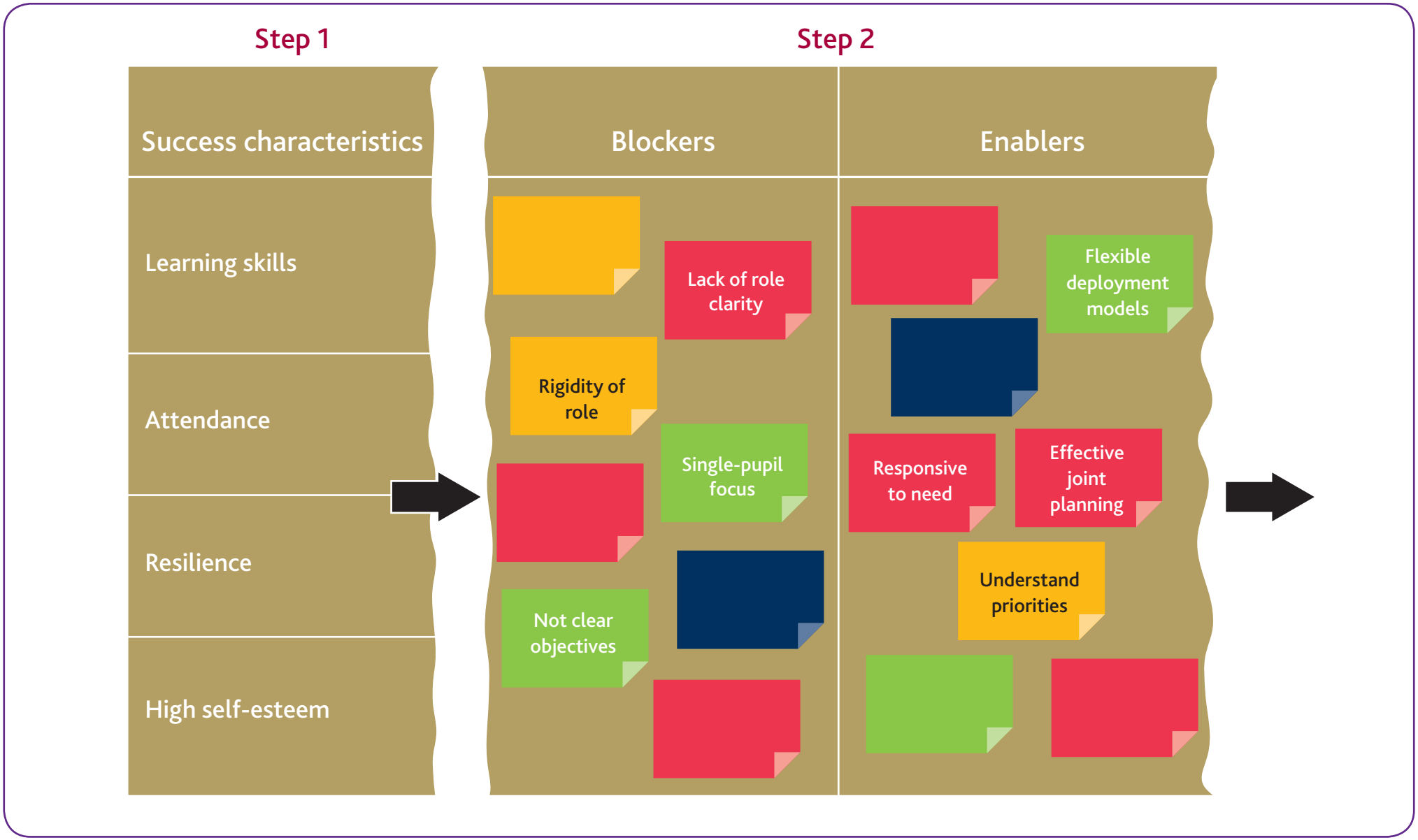
Tip

If the list of activities and practices is too long for this step to be workable, try using the Spidergram tool (additional tools, page 41) instead.

Outputs

This step will provide a useful reference source when explaining the rationale for the activities and practices that are concerned with support staff deployment and are aimed at raising standards and improving the well-being of pupils. It will also help inform school self-evaluation.

Learning potential



Learning potential

Step 3

Positive aims

- Deploy classroom staff to in response to pupil needs
- To incorporate the effective use of support staff into planning
- To integrate support staff objectives into wider school improvement priorities
- To communicate school objectives to support staff more effectively

Step 4

	Activities	Provide opportunities to experience success	Embed health and well-being in curriculum	Develop family partnerships	Extend learning beyond classroom
		Learning-potential aims			
Existing activities	Assigning support staff to department		✓		×
	Providing support staff planning time		✓		
	Pupil-needs assessment	?		✓	
	Support staff meetings	×	✓	?	
	HLTA team lead	?		?	?
	Governing body		?		✓
Potential activities	New induction programmes	✓	?	✓	
	Buddying support staff	✓		✓	✓
	School improvement Inset days	✓	✓		✓
	Etc				

Fan plan

Aim: to identify strategies as the basis for an implementation plan

Time: 30 to 60 minutes

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper, flip chart or whiteboard, Post-its and markers

How can this inform your SEF?

- Demonstrate how your improvement plan:
  - will improve the overall effectiveness of the school and meet the needs of all learners, parents/carers and the community
  - is based on a clear process of considering how to help all learners achieve their potential and contribute to their well-being.
- Demonstrate how implemented actions meet stated objectives and affect pupils' learning and well-being by planning for and collecting relevant evidence
- Demonstrate capacity to improve

About this tool

Any proposed development, such as the introduction of a new provision or a material change to a school's teaching and curriculum offer (eg a change in how support staff are deployed in the classroom), must be considered in the context of the longer-term vision of the school and its partners.

A Fan Plan is one way of enabling the team to articulate how proposals will contribute to that vision. It can be used to communicate with stakeholders and as the basis for implementation planning.

How to use this tool

Bring together everyone who has been involved in setting planning priorities with those who will be involved in driving the plan forward. Identify the key areas of your plan, for example, classroom practice, workforce development and workforce planning. Each area will become one 'slice' of your Fan Plan. Lay out the slices as shown in the diagram overleaf.

Depending on the number of slices, the plan may look more like a semi-circle or even a circle than a fan. Next, ask the participants to look at each slice in turn. They must come up with statements that encapsulate what that area is like today and how they would like it to be at the end of the period covered by the plan. Write these statements at the end of each slice. Ask the participants to describe how to make that vision a reality. These ideas should be written on Post-its and placed on the relevant slice. This will allow you to assess the school's overall priorities in the light of available resources, identify interim aims and set milestones. Focus on establishing a clear overall vision rather than getting bogged down in too much detail.

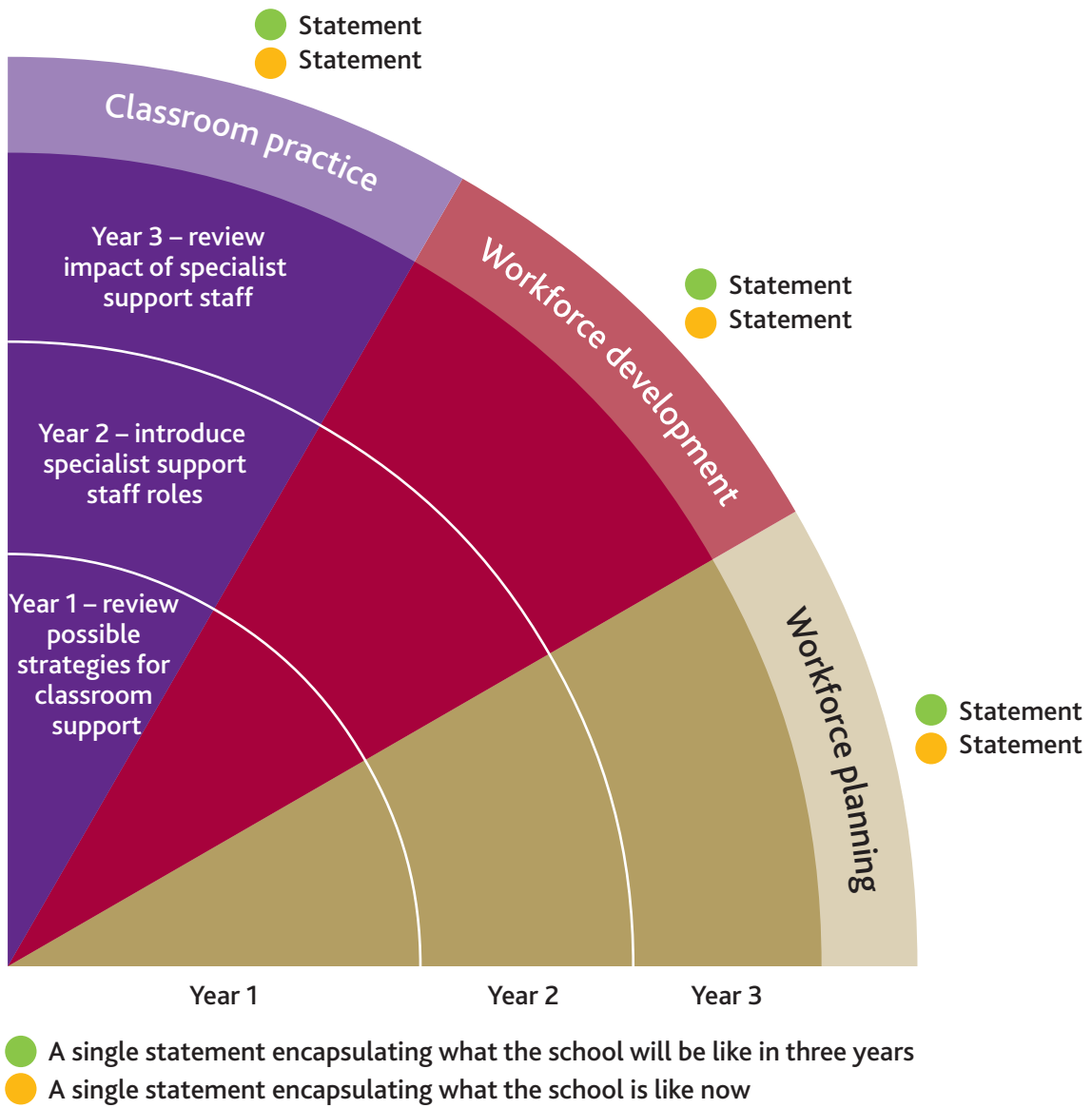
Tip

You may find that the number of immediate tasks allocated to the first year (or month, depending on your timescale) is unmanageable. If so, use the Prioritisation Matrix (additional tools, page 43) to prioritise tasks.

Outputs

Once the overall picture has emerged, you can use it to engage key stakeholders – such as the whole school team, the community and, in particular, governors – and encourage involvement in the overall strategy. The final outputs will form the basis of your implementation plan and subsequent communications of milestones to staff, governors and Ofsted.

Fan plan


Statement
Statement
Classroom practice
Year 3 – review impact of specialist support staff
Year 2 – introduce specialist support staff roles
Year 1 – review possible strategies for classroom support
Workforce development
Statement
Statement
Workforce planning
Statement
Statement
Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
A single statement encapsulating what the school will be like in three years
A single statement encapsulating what the school is like now

Impact evaluation model – measure your impact

Aim: to articulate how a project, initiative or service is expected to make an impact

Time: 60 to 90 minutes

Group size: two to 10 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper, Post-its, markers and objectives identified from previous tools

How can this inform your SEF?

- Demonstrate how your improvement plan:
  - will improve the overall effectiveness of the school and meet the needs of all learners, parents/carers and the community
  - is based on a clear process of considering how to help all learners achieve their potential and contribute to their well-being
- Demonstrate how implemented actions meet stated objectives and affect pupils' learning and well-being by planning for and collecting relevant evidence
- Demonstrate capacity to improve

About this tool

The Impact Evaluation Model will help you identify the building blocks that link a project's, initiative's or service's activities and resources to what you may want to achieve. It will provide an opportunity to focus your thinking on evaluating the impact of your activities in order to incorporate these into your detailed planning.

How to use this tool

Begin with a brainstorm about what people feel should go into the different boxes. Write these on Post-its and place them on the model where you think appropriate. At this stage, there are no right or wrong answers and no one's contribution or positioning of Post-its should be challenged.

Agree the four ideas that best represent each stage. For each intermediate outcome, identify an equivalent input or output that will help achieve it. Make sure that there is nothing in any of the boxes that does not have something that refers to it, or is relevant to it, in the boxes above and below.

Write down potential evidence sources that already exist and stick these in the right-hand boxes of the model. You should think creatively about information gathering, particularly in terms of:

- who the data is collected from – try to avoid the 'usual suspects', who are always asked for information, or those who may be biased in their response, and
- when and how the data is collected – particularly avoid jumping to paper-based surveys if there may be more natural gatherings or activities at which information could be collected.

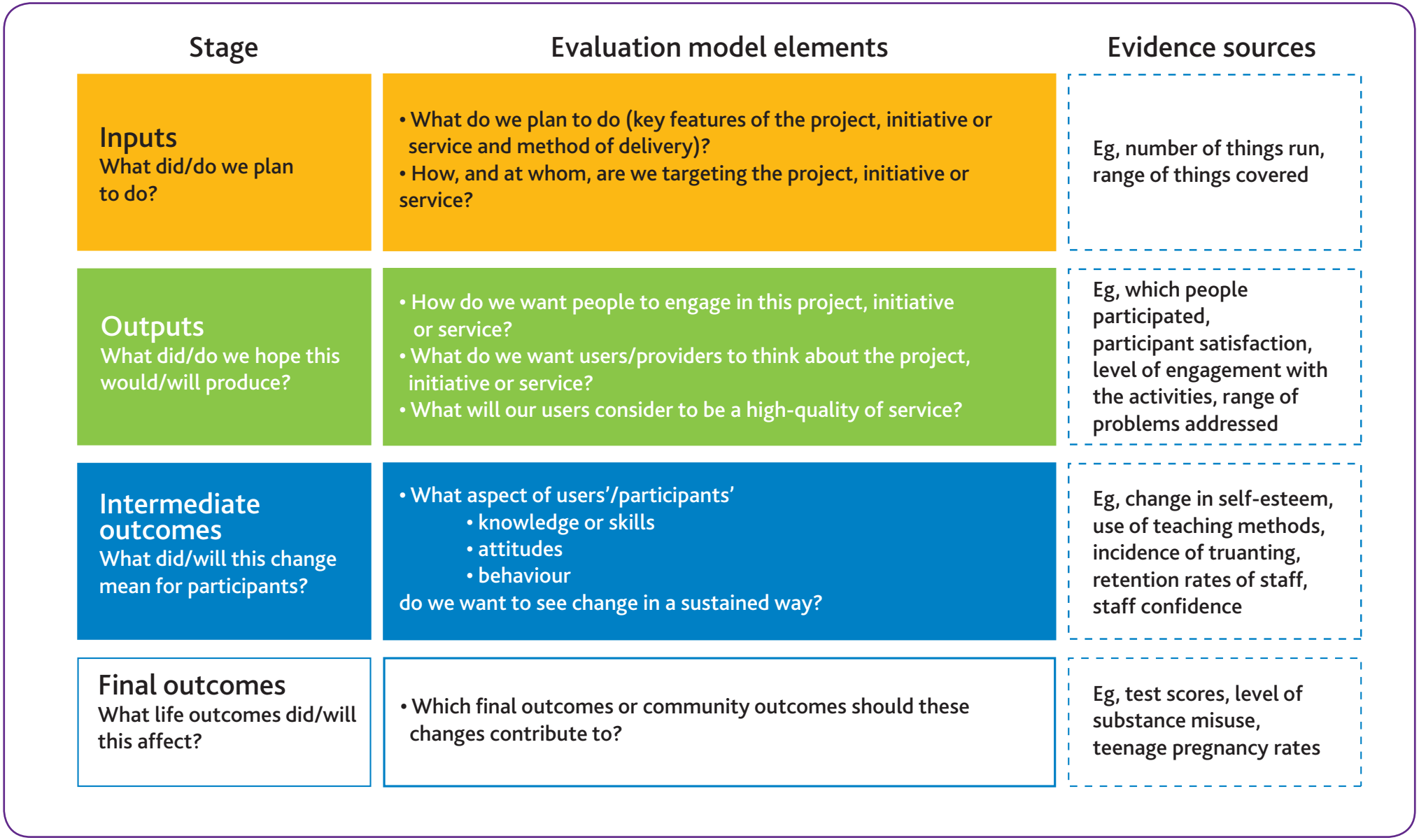
Tip

Keep it simple. Focus on evaluating the key aims of a project, initiative or service and do not spend so long on evaluation that it gets in the way of service delivery.

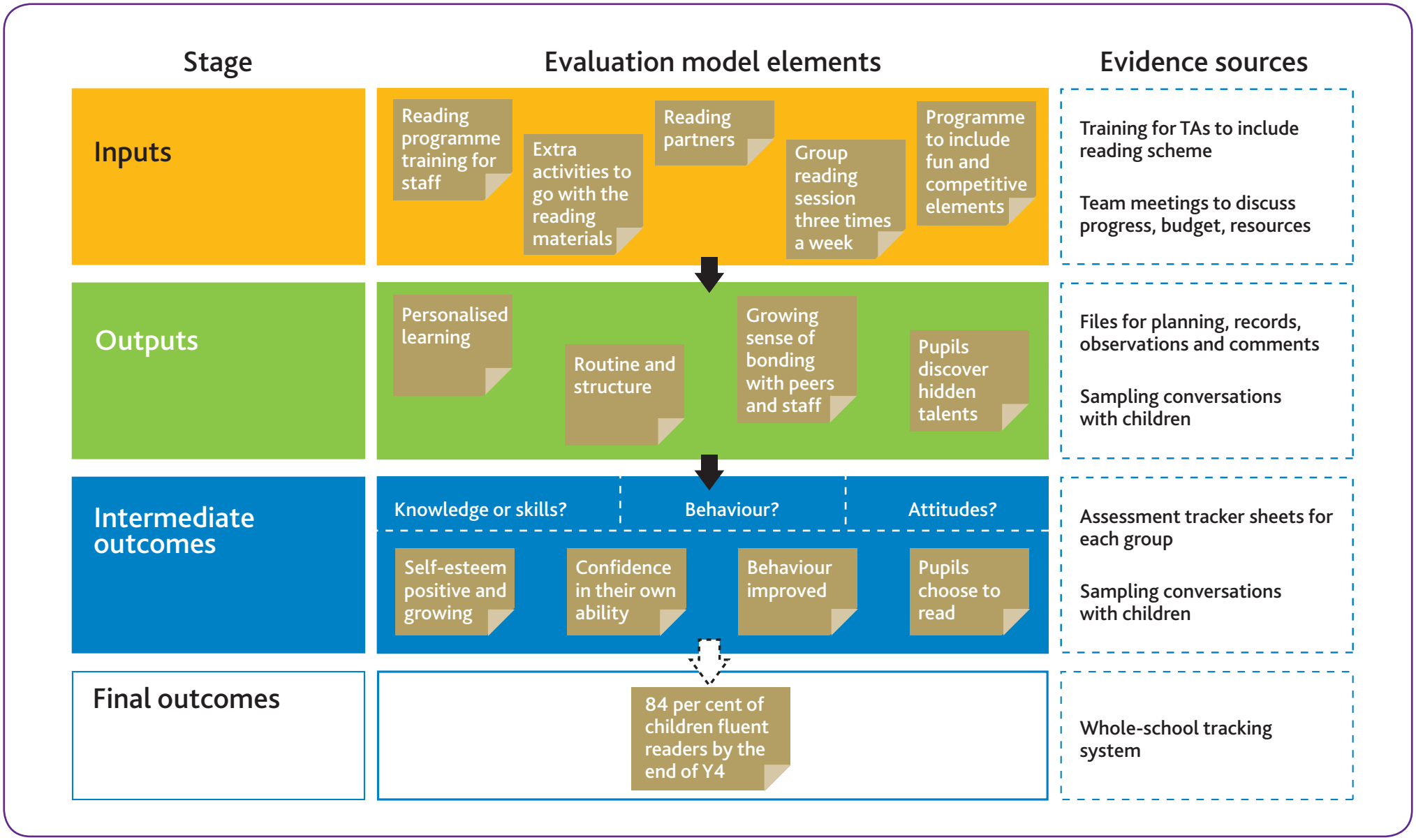
Outputs

The model should give you a clear, shared, visual understanding of how your activities lead to outcomes and a list of sources of evidence with which to monitor your progress. By undertaking the Impact Evaluation Model process, you will develop a clear model to enable you to measure the impact of your project.

Impact evaluation model



Evaluating impact of a reading programme



Swim-lane plan

Aim: to develop an updatable timeline for delivery of your plan, highlighting all milestones, interfaces, decision points and deliverables

Time: 30 minutes to two hours

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper, different coloured Post-its and markers, outputs from previous tools and the Impact Evaluation Model

How can this inform your SEF?

- Demonstrate how your improvement plan:
  - will improve the overall effectiveness of the school and meet needs of all learners, parents/carers and the community
  - is based on a clear process of considering how to help all learners achieve their potential and contribute to their well-being.
- Demonstrate how implemented actions meet stated objectives and affect pupils' learning and well-being by planning for and collecting relevant evidence
- Demonstrate capacity to improve

About this tool

This tool will help you identify the activities needed to deliver key areas of your plan, their interdependencies, the resource requirements and how these will affect timescales for delivery.

It will provide a visual and easily updatable timeline. Involving stakeholders in planning a range of 'work streams' will help to create a more robust plan and encourage a sense of ownership.

How to use this tool

First, identify your work streams – the areas of your implementation plan. Work streams may reflect stakeholder responsibilities or key functions. For example, you could choose to have a work stream for each activity or group of activities relating to classroom practice, workforce development or workforce planning.

The tool consists of a grid: 'swim-lanes' representing each work stream run horizontally and a timeline, reflecting the duration of the project, runs across the top. The timeline should be divided into equal columns representing appropriate blocks of time, such as weeks, months or school terms.

Populate the grid by identifying key milestones – the events, deliverables or decision points that need to occur at specific points along the timeline. These will include possible inputs and evidence collection needs identified by the Impact Evaluation Model (page 33). The milestones should be written on square Post-its, rotated to make a diamond shape and placed on the grid.

Next, write on rectangular Post-its the activities that must be carried out to meet the planned milestones. By placing these in the appropriate position along the horizontal work stream, you can show when each activity needs to start and finish. If the start or finish of one activity is dependent on another, draw a line between them.

Tip

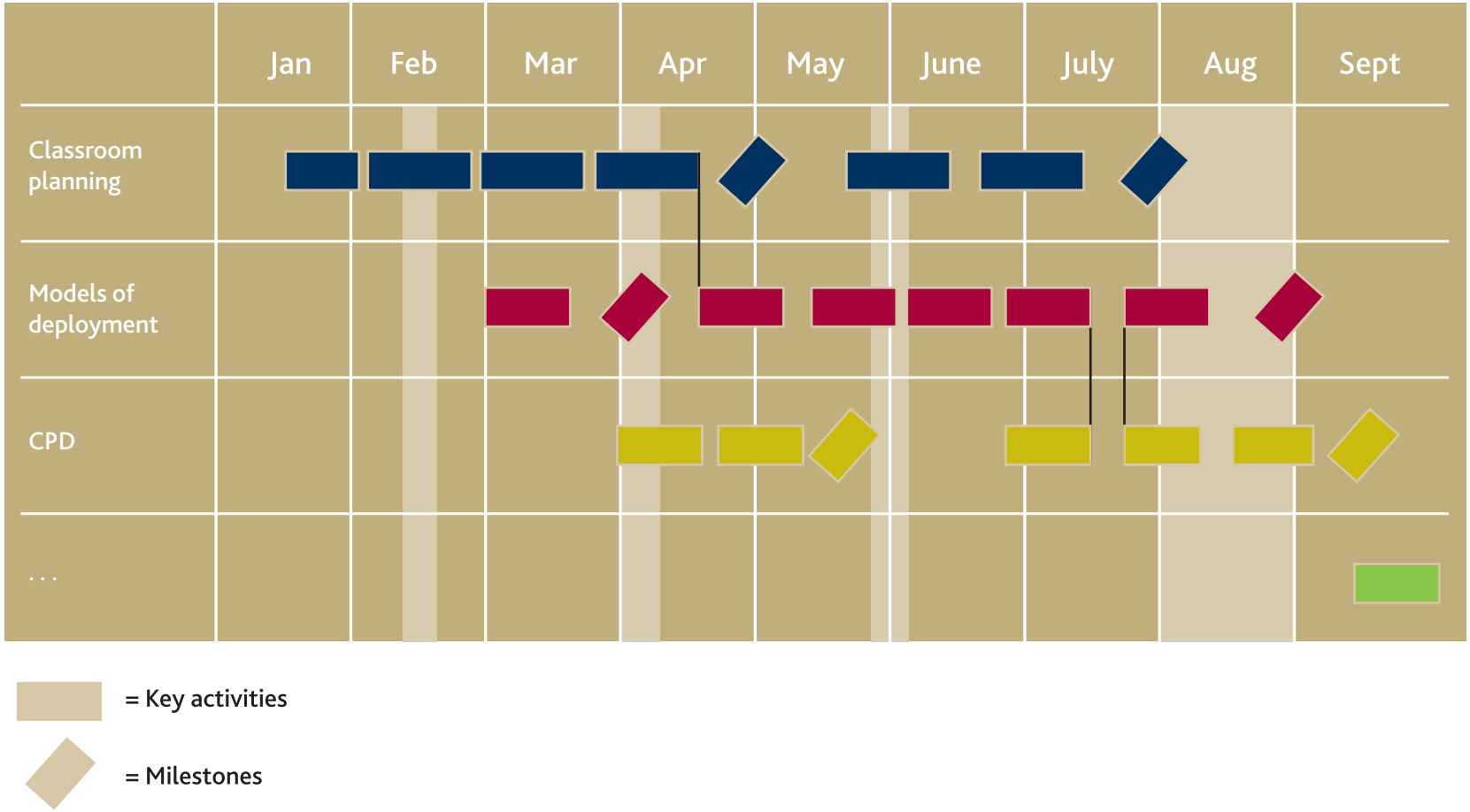
Use a different colour of Post-it for each work stream so that, as these are moved around, individual work streams remain clearly defined.

Update the plan as needed by moving Post-its around or altering the timeline.

Outputs

At the end of the process, you will have a visual plan that can be used to communicate key activities to stakeholders and other interested parties.

Swim-lane plan



Additional tools

Five why?s

Aim: to identify the underlying reasons why activities are working well or less well

Time: around 30 minutes

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper or whiteboard and markers

About this tool

The tool is designed to help you identify the root causes of what is working well and what is working less well. This is a vital first step towards generating solutions and a good way to stimulate discussion and build consensus.

It is also useful for bringing challenging people on board by giving them an opportunity to voice their concerns, come to a common understanding of the root cause of issues and help to identify a solution. The tool is useful at any stage of the improvement planning process.

How to use this tool

Strong facilitation is needed for this tool. The facilitator's role will include capturing the group's responses – ideally in succinct statements of five words or fewer – and ensuring the group reaches a consensus at each stage. The first time you use this tool, you will find it particularly helpful to have a facilitator with some experience who can guide you through the process. Your LA may be of help in this.

First, the issue to be tackled should be defined and written on the left-hand side of a large piece of paper. It is absolutely vital to ensure this issue is articulated clearly and in a way that creates sufficient scope for enquiry. The statement must be specific enough for participants to understand and provide answers that are real and not simply based on conjecture. At the same time, it must be wide enough that initial responses do not close down exploration automatically.

The group should then work through the exercise from left to right, asking themselves 'why?' at each stage until they are happy that they have identified the root cause of each issue.

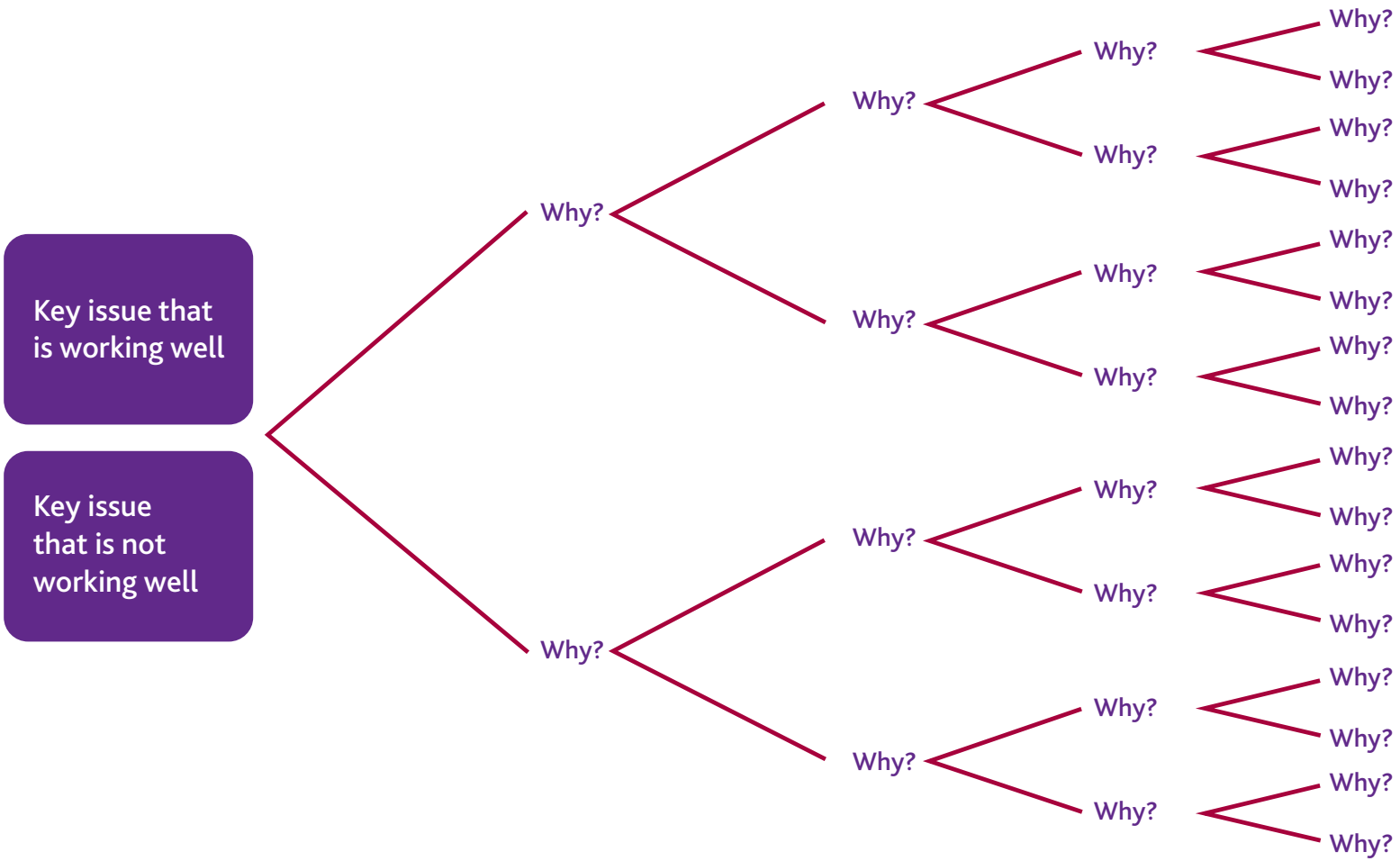
Tip

Keep the group size small to ensure you reach a consensus.

Outputs

The underlying issues identified by this tool will form a sound foundation for developing solutions.

Five why?s


Key issue that is working well
Key issue that is not working well
Why?
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Spidergram

Aim: to generate solutions to meet identified objectives

Time: 30 to 120 minutes

Group size: any

Resources needed: large sheet of paper or flip chart, Post-its and markers

About this tool

This tool is a good starting point for generating solutions that meet your objectives. You can use it to gather input from a range of different stakeholders and to help create a sense of ownership among those who will ultimately be involved in implementing solutions.

How to use this tool

You can either invite all the stakeholder groups to a single session or run separate sessions for individual groups.

Write each objective in the centre of a flip chart or large sheet of paper. Draw a line across the middle of the page.

Ask participants to write down on individual Post-its any existing solutions that support the objective. Place these on the piece of paper above the line. Similarly, they should then write down any new activities that could be developed and stick these on the paper below the line. Ask participants to state how they could support any activities they suggest, for example, by providing funding, people or meeting space.

The aim is to involve a wide range of people and generate a large number of ideas. Do not worry about prioritisation at this stage but do look for duplication of ideas or activities on offer. Ask participants to think about how these could be rationalised or maximised.

Tip

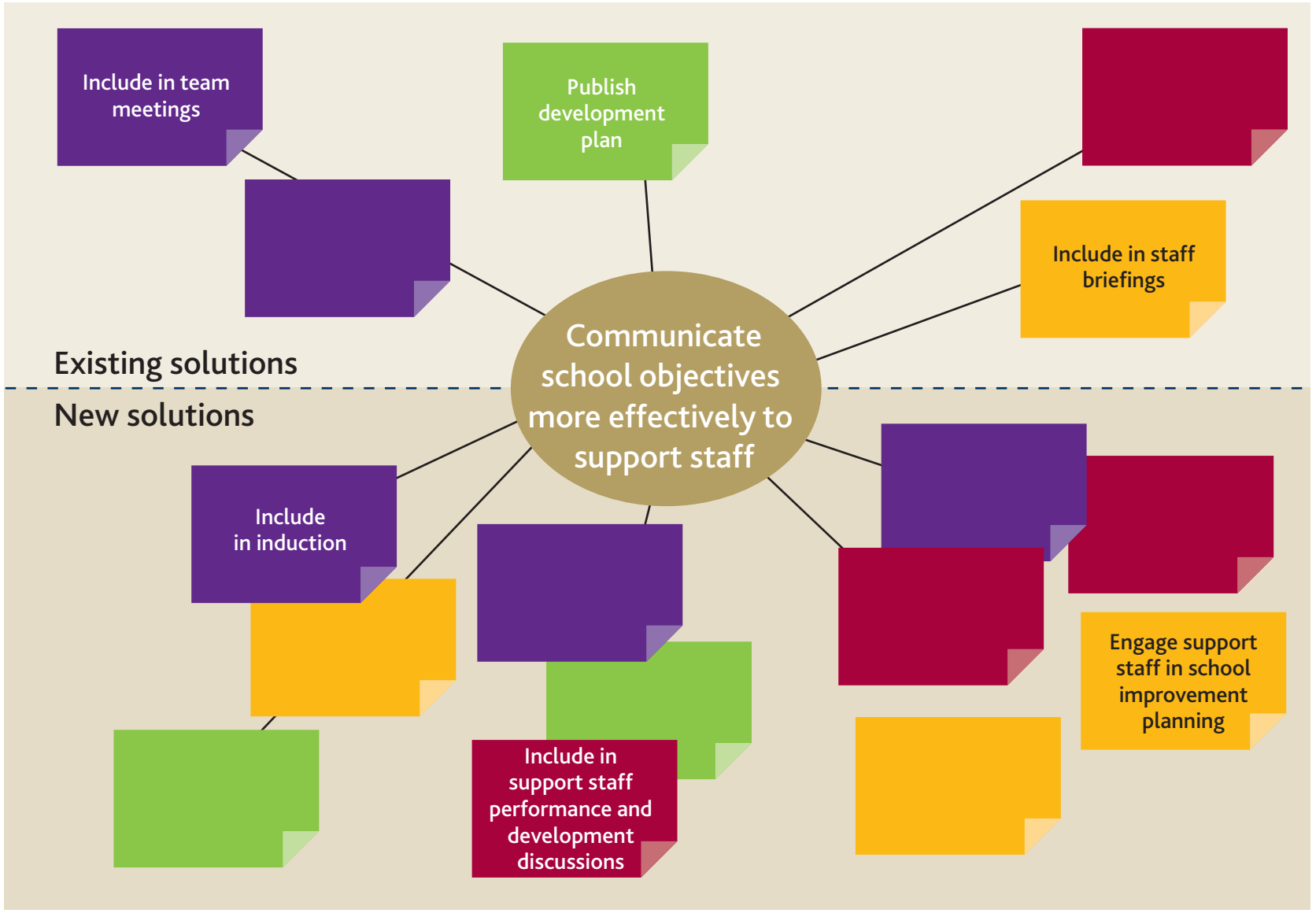
Leave the outputs pinned up in a common area for a few days to give people the chance to add further solutions before reviewing your results.

To simplify the process, you could remove the line in the middle of your Spidergram and get participants to brainstorm any possible solutions.

Outputs

This tool should generate a large number of ideas. You will need to prioritise these and agree upon those that warrant further development.

Spidergram


Include in team meetings
Publish development plan
Include in staff briefings
Existing solutions
New solutions
Communicate school objectives more effectively to support staff
Include in induction
Include in support staff performance and development discussions
Engage support staff in school improvement planning

Prioritisation matrix

Aim: to prioritise solutions for implementation

Time: 30 to 60 minutes

Group size: five to 12 participants

Resources needed: large sheet of paper or flip chart, Post-its and markers

About this tool

This tool provides a framework for prioritising options according to how easy they are to implement and their potential impact on your objectives. Involving those who will be implementing the proposed solutions in this process will ensure buy-in and encourage a sense of ownership.

How to use this tool

Write all the possible solutions on individual Post-its. Draw a grid, as shown in the example overleaf. You can make a grid for each of your objectives or one for an overall objective.

Sort the possible solutions to each objective according to how easy they will be to implement and their potential impact. Challenge the position of each solution so there is consensus at each stage. If two options are simple to implement and will deliver a high impact, how should they be positioned in relation to one another? When considering the ease of implementation, remember to take into account time and other resource requirements.

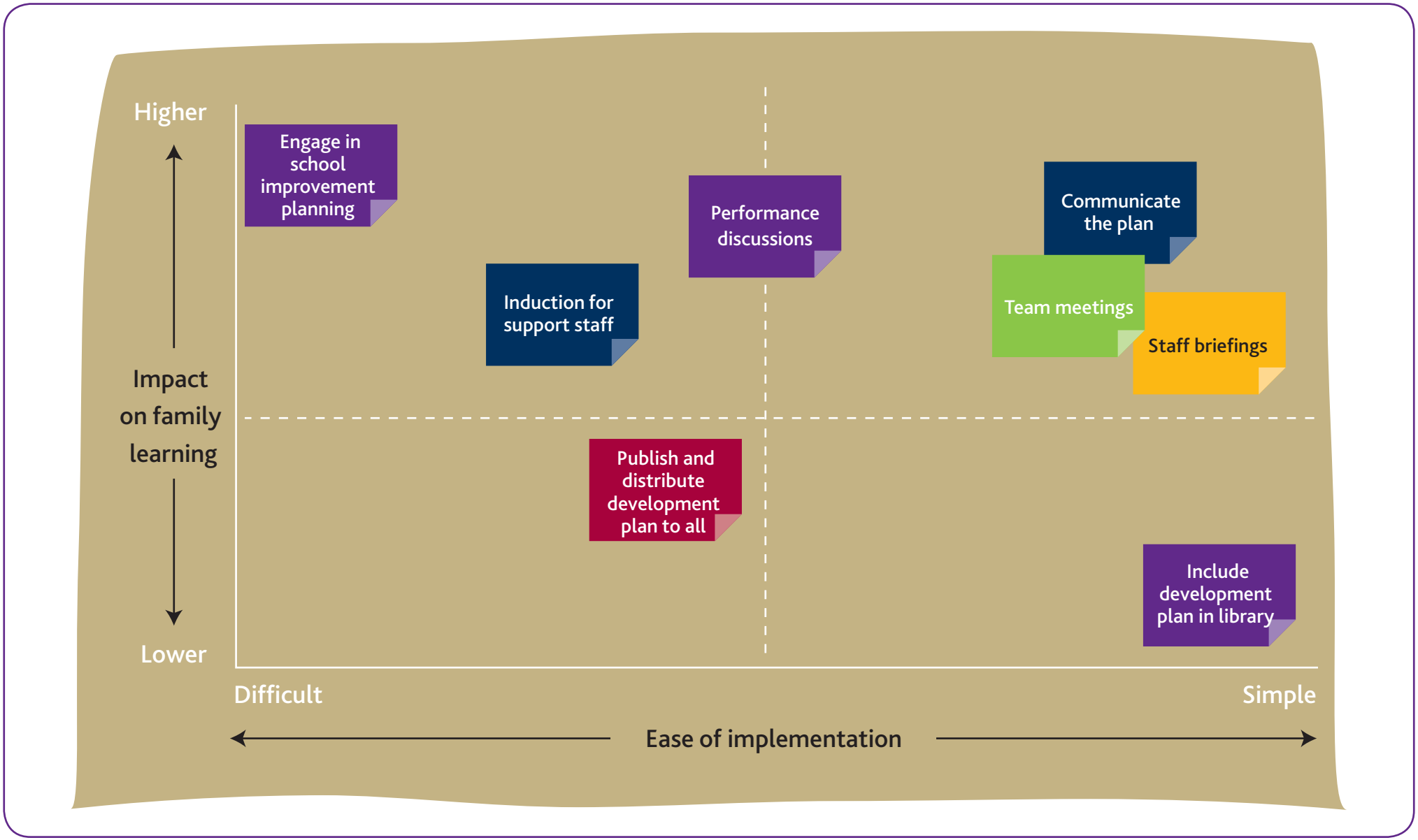
The solutions in the top right-hand quadrant will be 'quick wins'. Those in the top left-hand quadrant will need longer-term planning and implementation. Some items may need to be dropped from the plan altogether because they are not achievable and/or will not have sufficient impact.

If you end up with too many items in one quadrant, you may have to prioritise these again using the same process.

Outputs

By enabling an open yet structured discussion, where participants must provide reasons for their views, this tool eliminates the risk of individuals pursuing their own 'hobby horses'. It gives you an agreed, prioritised list of solutions that can be used as the basis for an implementation plan.

Prioritisation matrix



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