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**School Self-evaluation: A Reflection
and Planning Guide for School Leaders**

Self-evaluation

It's okay to ask the **questions**,
but what do you do with the **answers** ?

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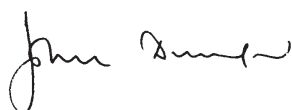
Introduction

Good schools have long carried out self-evaluation of every aspect of their work, but it has not always been performed objectively and systematically to the extent that is now expected.

The New Relationship with Schools, announced by David Miliband in January 2004, has brought self-evaluation to the forefront of planning in all schools. Self-evaluation is one of the main components of the new relationship; its links to Ofsted inspection and the 'single conversation' with a school improvement partner are at the core of the new system.

The increased emphasis on self-evaluation places greater responsibility on school leaders to develop good quality assurance systems, but this is the type of responsibility that schools should be given, replacing many of the strands of accountability that have in recent years made school leadership so bureaucratic.

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and the Secondary Heads Association (SHA) have been at the forefront of national discussions on moving from over-accountability to professional reliance on school leaders. This booklet enables school leaders to consider the issues underpinning self-evaluation, and to develop systems that are both objective and systematic without being over-bureaucratic. The development of an evaluative climate in the school, where quality assurance is built into all aspects of work on the front-line, is surely the aim of all good schools. This booklet aids school leaders in achieving this aim.



Dr John Dunford
General Secretary, SHA



Steve Munby
Chief Executive, NCSL

The guide

The heightened attention on school self-evaluation as an integral part of the New Relationship with Schools has both prompted and informed this publication, which builds on a recent NCSL Leading Practice seminar. It presents school leaders with a practice-oriented guide which:

- explores school self-evaluation in the light of the New Relationship with Schools and the new Ofsted framework
- invites school leaders to consider the existing basis for self-evaluation in their school
- invites school leaders to reflect on their school's existing processes and consider future processes

It blends theory, practice and reader activities to aid school leaders in evaluating the following questions.



- What do we do already?
- Why do we do it?
- What might we do to develop our practice in this area to improve pupils' learning and school experience?

It makes use of contributions at the Leading Practice seminar from Dr John Dunford, Professor John MacBeath and seminar participants.

It can be used for personal reflection, and as a planning tool that can be employed in collaboration with, for example, the school's leadership team and governors.

School self-evaluation and the New Relationship with Schools

In the introduction to the joint DfES and Ofsted document, *A New Relationship with Schools: Improving performance through school self-evaluation* (DfES and Ofsted, 2004), the expectation is clearly established that schools will make self-evaluation a central feature of their practice, and that Ofsted inspectors will use outcomes from this process as the starting point for their inspection.

The document makes the following three points.

1. In presenting the remit for self-evaluation, it advises schools to focus on the questions **How well are we doing?** – and – **How can we do better?** and to keep in mind the:
 - simplicity of process
 - integration of self-evaluation with routine management systems
 - need to ‘listen to and do something about the views of their stakeholders’
2. Rigorous self-review is not for inspection alone, a theme developed within this guide, which explores self-evaluation as a key lever for school improvement.
3. Completing the self-evaluation form (SEF) ‘is not, in itself, self-evaluation’ but ‘a robust and professional SEF will virtually amount to the school’s own inspection report on itself’.

The implication, therefore, is that a truly representative SEF will be achieved through open and honest self-evaluation as an integral part of the school’s processes.

The capacity for improvement in a school, and its knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses, have long been seen as marks of good leadership. This is thrown into even sharper focus in the light of the new framework.

DfES and Ofsted suggest that schools should take note of these six questions when evaluating the quality of their provision:



- 1 Does the self-evaluation identify how well our school serves its learners?
- 2 How does our school compare with the best schools, and the best comparable schools?
- 3 Is the self-evaluation integral to our key management systems?
- 4 Is our school’s self-evaluation based on a good range of telling evidence?
- 5 Do our self-evaluation and planning involve key people in the school and seek the views of parents, learners and external advisers and agencies?
- 6 Does our self-evaluation lead to action to achieve the school’s longer term goals for development?

The benefit to parents and pupils from ‘schools taking more account of the views of parents and pupils in terms of the way they judge their own performance’ is recognised by DfES and Ofsted, as is the fact that this is currently an area of under-developed practice.

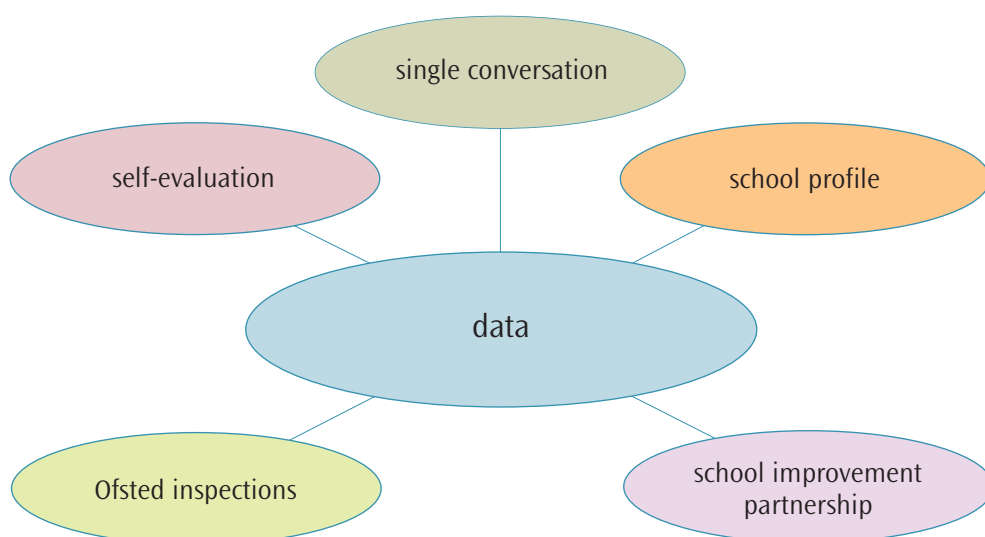
This guide draws together thinking relating to this area in particular, as well as the broader issues of school self-evaluation, and looks at how it has been achieved by some schools.

Intelligent self-evaluation: accountability vs development

If intelligent accountability is the central theme underpinning new arrangements that include school improvement partners, a single conversation and a school profile as the school's communication of its achievements to its parents and community, then intelligent self-evaluation should be part of this process.

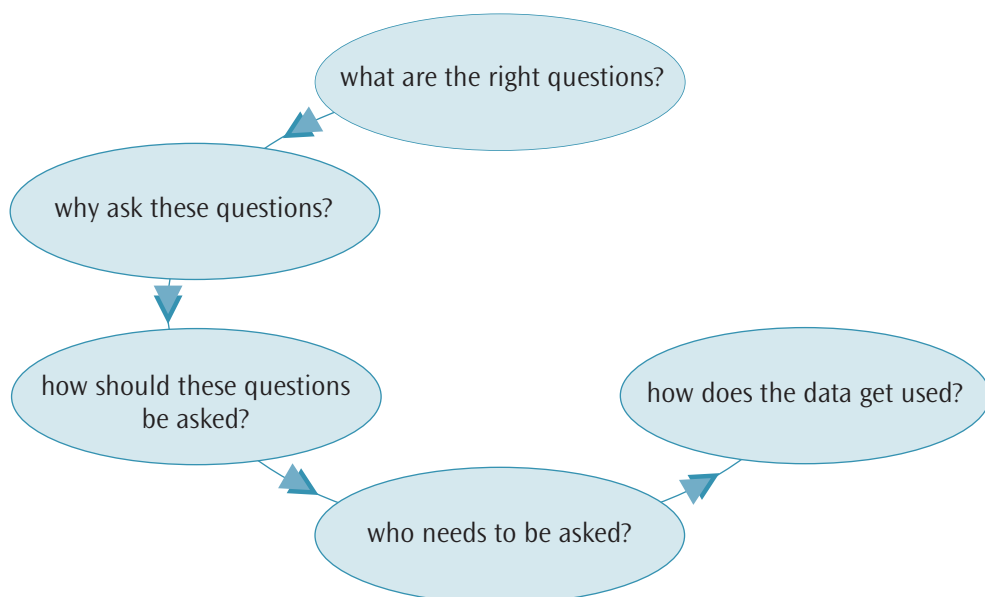
John Dunford places data at the centre of the diagram below, which outlines the processes and events that comprise the New Relationship with Schools. Such data is not simply the 'hard' data of pupil performance, but the 'soft' data, such as opinion surveys, which can provide a rich source of information on which to base future improvement.

New Relationship with Schools



He identifies five questions, set out below, which he believes schools should ask of themselves in developing an evaluative culture based on intelligent measurement.

Developing an evaluative culture



However, like John MacBeath, he believes this approach is not solely about meeting new Ofsted inspection requirements. A school that has embedded intelligent, rigorous self-evaluation in its day-to-day practices will, as a matter of course, meet external inspection requirements as they relate to the SEF.

But what are the features of intelligent, embedded self-review?

John MacBeath draws a distinction between self-evaluation that is engineered to meet external requirements but is not embedded within the school's ongoing review procedures, and that which is embedded and within the life of the school.



The former can be described as:

- **accountability-led**
- **limited in scope**
- **bolted on to the school's practices and processes**

In contrast, self-evaluation that is embedded will be:

- **development-led**
- **wide in scope, encompassing all areas of school life, and crucially**
- **built into the school's practices and processes**

Clearly, in its embedded form, self-evaluation is part and parcel of what a school does. This is because its worth is recognised in terms of its contribution to pupils' achievements, opportunities, experiences and well-being. It is because of this acknowledged contribution that a school wants to own the process and has it built into its procedures – the internal mandate outweighs the external, yet external accountability can be met.

Processes adopted by Allanson Street Primary School, St Helens, working in conjunction with Creative Partnerships¹, reflect the ways in which self-evaluation is inbuilt. For example, pupils voice their perspective on the impact of the creative learning approaches being developed. The school's plan of its self-evaluation programme highlights how responsibility for evaluation is distributed, largely across staff and governors, to foster ownership.

Similarly, processes employed at Babington Community College, Leicester, highlight how these seek the internal as well as the external voice. The principal, believes:

“Our judgements of the College alone are not enough. We do have to consider the opinions of our customers, or clients. We need to continually ask parents and the students about performance and how they feel we can make education better.”

¹ Creative Partnerships is a government-funded body based at Arts Council, England. It works with schools in designated areas with a mission to provide school children with the 'opportunity to develop creativity in learning and take part in cultural activities of the highest quality' [www.creative-partnerships.com/aboutcp/ accessed 11 May 2005]

**An issue:
Developing the
climate for self-
evaluation**

Improvement is not secured through external accountability though it exerts influence: it is the self-evaluation process founded on strong internal accountability that generates and enables this. External accountability becomes a measure of the robustness and impact of the self-evaluation process on improvement, including the achievement of high standards: its outcomes and actions.

If a school has self-evaluation embedded into its improvement planning process, then this will serve not only to inform how effective existing school improvement measures have been, but also what the next improvement measures should be. This addresses the questions, How well are we doing? – and – How can we do better? that DfES and Ofsted highlight.

Developing the appropriate climate is essential in terms of securing and embedding genuine self-evaluation. John Dunford highlights for example the need to include staff, especially middle leaders, in data interpretation and progress tracking to inform aspects such as raising expectations, curriculum reform and the personalisation of learning. Engaging others in the self-evaluation process helps develop:



- a shared and distributed understanding of how it informs improvement
- the role of individuals and groups in contributing to data collection, interpretation and action planning
- a shared understanding of the school's responsibilities and accountability and the links between self-evaluation and inspection

Culturally, this develops a collegiate response in which all contributors become part of the evaluative process.

Whilst developing a climate for external stakeholder contribution is, in some contexts, viewed by school leaders as by no means easy, fundamental is the matter of responding to views sought – communicating actions and outcomes to all contributors.

The very fact that genuine effort is being made to canvass stakeholder opinion as a means of moving the school forward, is in itself climate- and culture-building. It sends out the message:

'We want to know what you think, because we value what you have to say.'

Crucial however is the follow-on statement:

'We have listened, taken note of what you have said, and, based on this information we have, this is what we intend to do.'

Establishing a genuine communication loop will engender trust and help move the self-evaluation culture forward.

Some school leaders consider that in developing stakeholder involvement in self-evaluation practices, starting with small-scale, focused initiatives with clear potential for positive action is important. This aids stakeholder confidence in the process and promotes buy-in to more substantial, integrated and ongoing self-evaluation. Recognisable and widely communicated success, on the back of manageable, consultative self-evaluation, is seen to be the route into developing climate and culture.

Evaluating school ethos and culture

The phrase, **measuring what you value and not just valuing what you measure** reflects the focus beyond yet inclusive of, academic standards. As John MacBeath states: 'Start with what matters'.

Asking the right questions is something that John Dunford highlights as an important consideration for school leaders. But what are the right questions? If the self-evaluation diet is restricted to a focus on academic standards, then how representative is it of those broader aims listed in the school's prospectus, or encapsulated in its mission statement?

Additionally, in view of *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003), the profile for self-evaluation within the school will necessarily want to reflect the five stated outcomes, as does the SEF. Schools will want to adopt an inclusive approach to gathering data around these outcomes as part of their self-evaluation processes.



Activity

Look at one of the school aims in your prospectus, or your mission statement:

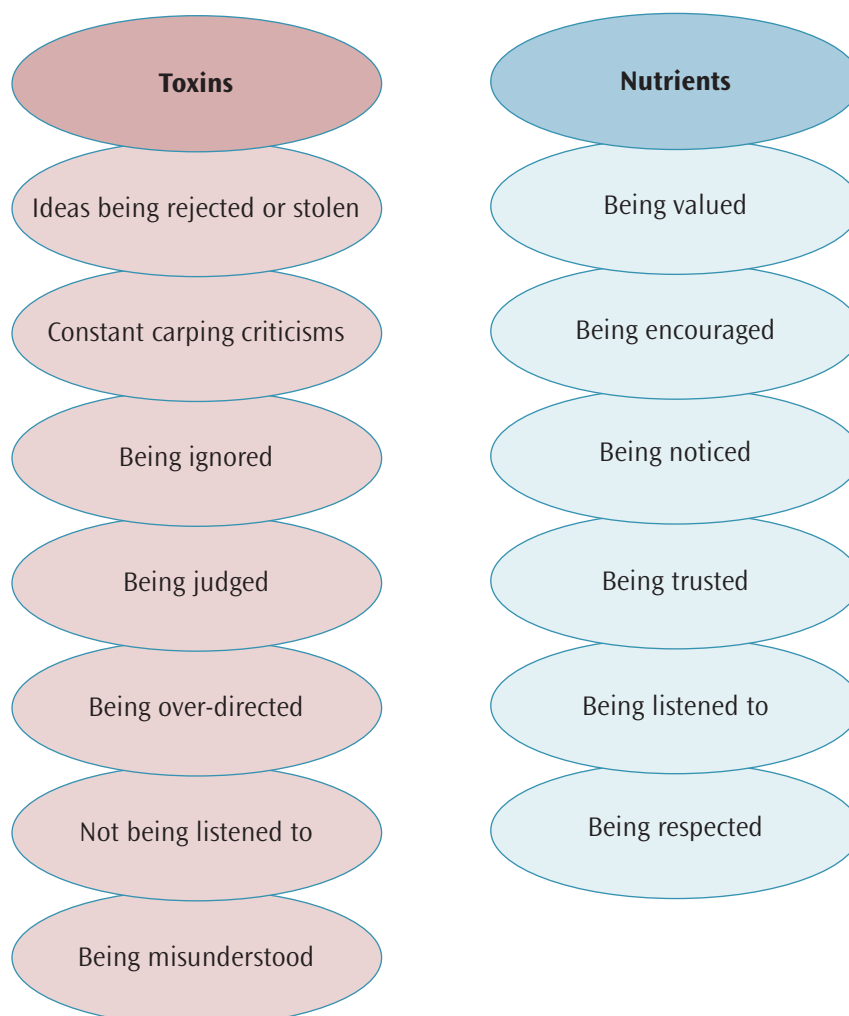
- How do you measure and evaluate this?
- What day-to-day actions provide data relating to its achievement?
- How is this data captured?
- What use is made of the data to inform how well the school is achieving its aims and what it needs to do next?
- How do the school's aims or mission statement link to the five outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, economic well-being?
- What data does the school currently collect and make use of with regard to these five outcomes?
- Are the five outcomes well represented in the school's self-evaluation processes, or should the scope be widened?

Clearly, self-evaluation that focuses on pupil academic achievement is crucial in generating future improvement priorities and measures. Indeed, NCSL's focus on helping schools identify within-school variation is reflective of this. NCSL's Leadership Network has undertaken this work aimed at 'closing the gap and raising the bar', supported by Professor David Reynolds of Exeter University (for further information on this project, see the reports available within the Leadership Network pages at www.ncsl.org.uk/research)

School aims, however, frequently signify the values underpinning the breadth of its practice. This is of paramount importance to parents, for whom academic performance is but one measure of a school's provision.

Measuring ethos and culture, however, is not commonly viewed to be as straightforward as gathering and interpreting performance data. What questions should be asked, of whom, and how? Most importantly, what should be done with the answers? John MacBeath refers to cultural features in terms of toxins and nutrients. These might be hard to capture, but are related to self-evaluation for three reasons.

- 1 Self-evaluation might highlight the extent to which these exist within a school.
- 2 Toxins within an organisation will be blockers to honest self-evaluation, whilst nutrients will facilitate it.
- 3 Developing a culture of open, honest self-evaluation might help to reduce toxins and increase nutrients.



These contrasting statements would appear to work on different levels, ie within different relationships, for example staff: staff, staff: pupil, staff: parents. This potentially has implications for honest self-evaluation, for if parents do not feel confident that they will be listened to either generally (“the school never listens...”) or selectively (eg “most teachers listen, but...”), then this will impact on how self-evaluation requests are received. Trust has to be developed.



Questions for reflection

Which of these cultural behaviours – toxins and nutrients – would you recognise as existing within your own school?

- When and where do they occur?
- How do you know?
- What might others say?
- What might you and others do to reduce toxins and increase nutrients? Who are the ‘others’?

What school leaders suggested: measuring ethos and climate

Principles:

- developing a shared understanding of aims or ethos statements, and acknowledging that different groups will have different interpretations
- encouraging dialogue relating to the broad aims rooted in practice
- acknowledging the need to move away from a fortress mentality (“we are doing well despite the community”) to one of greater interaction



Activity

Practice:

In the left-hand column opposite, examples of practice drawn from school leaders are listed. In the right-hand column you might wish to comment on the following questions.

- Is this something we do already?
- Is this something that we could do to improve our existing practice. Is it right for us now, or might it be right in the future?
- How might we adapt these approaches to suit our context?
- Which of these would we prioritise?

What school leaders said

Keeping informal evidence such as feedback from visitors, eg comments, thank-yous (John MacBeath provides a format for collecting this in <i>The Self-evaluation File</i> (MacBeath, 2004))	
Using police liaison feedback on pupils' behaviour in the community at pastoral team meetings	
Using stakeholder surveys on the climate for inclusion, eg using those within the <i>Index for Inclusion</i> (Ainscow and Booth, 2002)	
Holding regular discussions at leadership team and governors' meetings on quantitative data, eg exclusions, attendance	
Inviting small groups of parents to meet with the headteacher on an informal basis to provide feedback opportunities	
Conducting environment audits through surveys of stakeholders, or walks around the school with a representative group to collect data on what the environment says about the school's ethos and climate	
Using pupil attitude surveys (software is now widely available for this)	
Using bullying surveys	
Asking students where they feel safe and why, using students as photographers in this process	
Building in regular reviews of ethos and basing this around a common understanding (refer to Models, Tools and Examples of Practice in NCSL's <i>Self-evaluation: Guide for School Leaders</i> for practical examples of tools)	

Self-evaluation vs self-inspection

The new Ofsted framework has been welcomed by a number of school leaders as it raises the profile of self-evaluation: there has to be a school culture of accountability for improvement. However, self-evaluation should not just become self-inspection with an emphasis on the summative, but developmental, with an emphasis on the formative also.

John Dunford's list of reasons why schools should carry out self-evaluation is based on the premise that it is not just for Ofsted but for school improvement. Self-evaluation provides a platform for development and can be used to:

- improve school performance, to include benchmarking
- improve teacher performance, related to performance management and professional growth
- improve pupil performance
- celebrate achievement



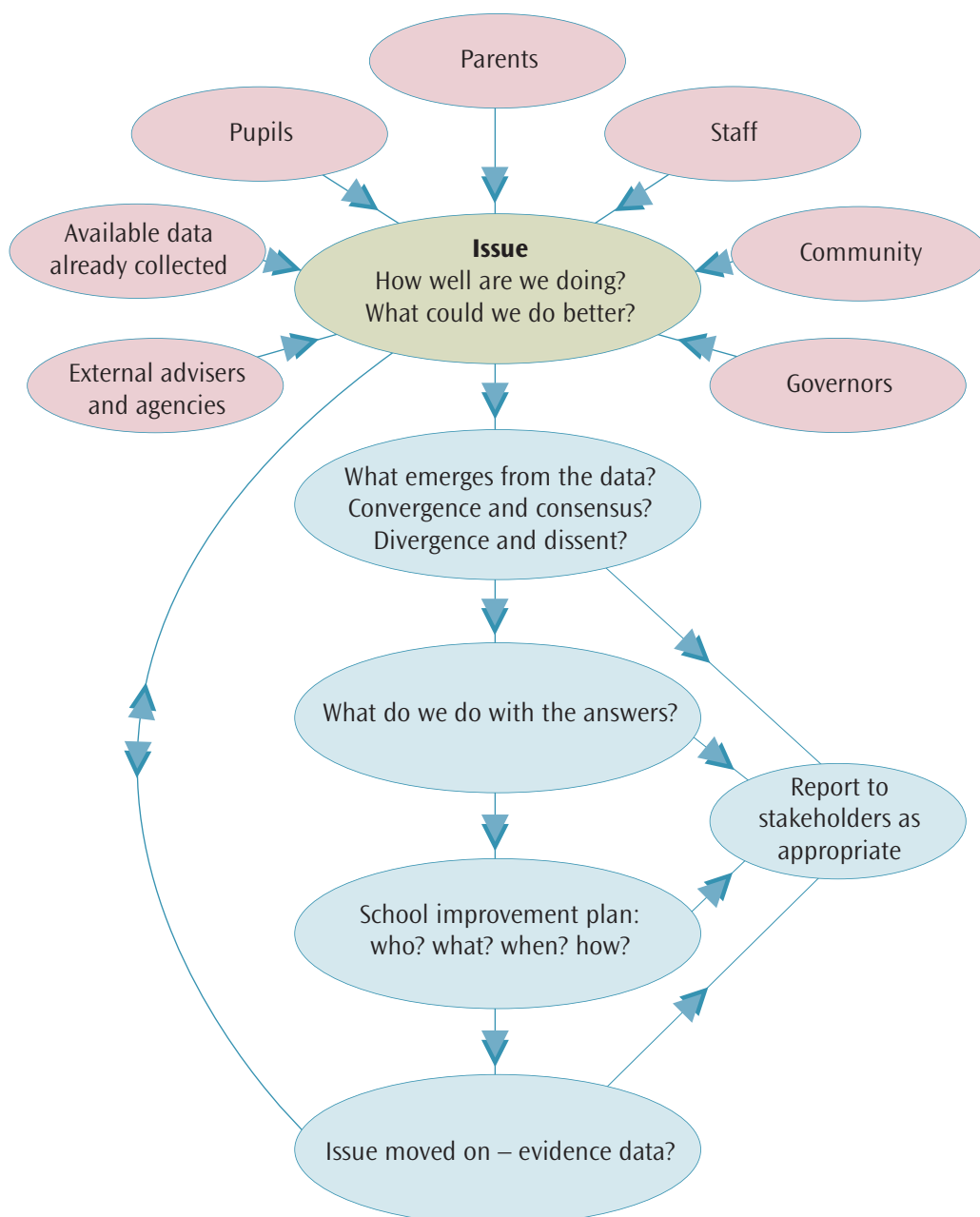
Question for reflection

- If self-evaluation, in the light of the new framework, is not to become a series of self-administered mini-inspections, what practical approaches can be taken to achieve more creative, developmental self-evaluation?

Who tells the story?

John MacBeath uses this phrase to highlight the exploration of multiple perspectives to enrich the self-evaluation dialogue. Within this section, the views that parents and pupils contribute to this story is explored further. Each of the contributors to the evaluation process has a voice that contributes a valid and valuable perspective based on experience. Through seeking and comparing these perspectives on a particular issue or set of issues, so the dialogue becomes enriched and, as a consequence, the actions for improvement arising from this dialogue become more informed.

In the light of *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003) and particularly extended and full-service schools, consideration will need to be given not just to the views that stakeholders such as parents and pupils provide, but to those representing other agencies. The figure below illustrates how multiple perspectives can be brought to an issue.



Using a tool such as the *Index for Inclusion* (Ainscow and Booth, 2002, see <http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk>) is one way in which schools have sought and used multiple perspectives. This was the approach used at Birley Spa Community Primary School, the first of two case studies, one primary, one secondary, exemplifying multiple perspective approaches to self-evaluation.

Primary case study

Birley Spa Community Primary School is situated within a housing estate undergoing regeneration in Hackenthorpe, Sheffield. The school's latest Ofsted report placed the school in the outstanding category and stated that it 'profoundly enriches the lives of its pupils.'

Widespread consultation of the school's community, including pupils, parents and staff, enabled the school's inclusive philosophy to be developed. Geoff Mawson, the school's headteacher, sees this process as essential to developing the culture within which the children can achieve. He firmly believes that the school's focus on providing a supportive environment for its children, allied to positive parental involvement, is crucial to the achievement of high standards.

The approach is one that has been developed over a number of years and the case study describes some of the main steps on the journey.

"It's okay to ask the questions, but what do you do with the answers?"

This was the question posed by Geoff Mawson and Ian Read, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, of Birley Spa Community Primary School, Sheffield and the central theme of the presentation they gave at the Leading Practice seminar. The DVD they have produced in association with their family of schools within the Hackenthorpe district of the city illustrates how they have used the *Index for Inclusion* (Ainscow and Booth, 2002) as their self-evaluation tool.

Practical steps to self-evaluation

- The school trialled a pilot survey using the specific indicator questionnaires with 20 random pupils, 20 random parents and the teaching staff.
- An inclusion team was developed as a result of this survey, which comprised Geoff, his special educational needs co-ordinator and the school's outreach worker.
- The inclusion team produced a preliminary action plan based on the initial findings.
- A survey of all parents, pupils, staff and governors was carried out, taken from the three areas from the *Index for Inclusion*: creating inclusive cultures, producing inclusive policies, evolving inclusive practices.
- Raffle prizes were offered to increase the return rate, which was 60 per cent.
- The survey process – data collection, analysis and the production of a more comprehensive action plan - took almost a year. However, actions based on initial evaluation were put in place throughout this period.
- Where 60 per cent of respondents 'strongly agreed', these were seen to be strengths; where nine per cent of respondents disagreed, these were seen to be areas for development. These figures were recommended in the *Index for Inclusion*.
- Survey outcomes were communicated through a school publication *Inclusive News*, itself a product borne of self-evaluation reflecting the need to provide improved home-school communication. This publication is still in operation.
- Satellite groups were set up to deal with the issues raised by the evaluation. These comprised different stakeholders dependent on the issue, but included staff, parents and pupils. They ranged in size from six to 16 participants. Geoff Mawson stated: "I never said no – where do leaders of the future come from unless you put them in a leadership situation?".
- Group ideas were proposed to the senior management team as the stage leading to implementation and further evaluation.

"We have reached a stage where staff at all levels, parents and pupils are engaged in the process of evaluation and improvement. It has become part of our school and continues to develop almost organically. The five year strategic plan has been put together in consultation with the whole school community."

The DVD shows evidence of how measures to improve pupil ownership and individual and shared responsibility in relation to areas such as personal conduct, have evolved from such an approach and of the effect this has upon them, as well as the school.

Secondary case study

Sweyne Park Comprehensive School in Essex is an amalgamation of two previous schools. It is now a science specialist school with Leading Edge status, as well as a training school. The amalgamation caused the schools to seek pupil voice contributions so as to inform the change process. The extension of this culture can be seen across the school's processes now.

Kate Spiller, the school's headteacher, is committed to developing an ongoing, evaluative culture focused on improvement. The provision for self-evaluation comprises:

- leadership team co-ordinated processes that include teachers, support staff, pupils, parents, governors and assessors and consultants
- a range of methods: questionnaires, interviews, lesson and task observation, work scrutiny, pupil panels, evaluative reporting and attainment data analysis
- school development planning arising through a consultative process involving attainment data analysis, questionnaires to staff, pupils, families and governors. This sits alongside annual departmental self-evaluation and leadership team interactive evaluation at a designated residential conference. The joint leadership team and governors' self-evaluation form conference also feeds improvement planning

Departmental reviews

Three of these occur each year on a termly basis so that each department is reviewed in this way every three years (yearly self-review occurs as a matter of course but does not include all these elements). It comprises:

- lesson observations
- pupil questionnaires and interviews (interviews are conducted with a selection of pupils following a lesson observation to establish their view of the teaching and of the curriculum on offer in this session)
- preparatory data research and analysis, including parent review meetings
- staff interviews
- work scrutiny
- pupil panels
- the use of relevant experts

The use of pupil panels has developed from the school's emphasis on promoting a culture of pupil voice since amalgamation in 1997. The panels will typically comprise:

- school's council members
- year group school's council members (selected from the 20 pupils that represent each year group)
- other pupil attendees as appropriate to ensure breadth of representation

A major role for the panel is to contribute to the termly departmental reviews. This will see the pupils, chaired by the deputy head, engage in dialogue about the subject area in question with the head of department as listener.

The dialogue centres initially on two key areas:

- 1 What the pupils enjoy about their learning in this subject.
- 2 What they feel the department could do more of, or do differently, in order to meet pupil learning needs more effectively.

The direction of the discussion is then guided by the pupils' observations and contributions.

The deputy head in his chairing capacity probes the pupils' dialogue and encourages contributions without using loaded or closed questions, so that pupils feel comfortable in adding to the discussion.

Essential however to this process is careful and sensitive handling of the session and briefing of its participants, as the process is not about the department being on trial, or similarly pupils being afraid to voice their thoughts because the head of department is listening. It is carefully managed so that it is a constructive, developmental process as opposed to an accountability exercise.

The deputy head therefore meets with the pupils an hour in advance to brief them in an informal setting with refreshments. The briefing is aimed at putting pupils at their ease as well as preparing them with some initial starting points for discussion to warm them up. It also serves to inform them as to how the session will be conducted and their role in this.

The deputy head also discusses the session in advance with the head of department.

The outcomes have informed school improvement and the process has been well received by pupils and heads of department. Sometimes outcomes relate to clarification and communication as pupil perceptions of the department's work could be better informed. Sometimes there are areas of the department to be resolved which have been brought to light, in a constructive manner, through the unique medium that pupil voice offers.

It is made clear that developments arising from departmental reviews will be supported financially, eg to pay for physical resources or staff development opportunities. This again sends the clear message that this is about self-evaluation for development rather than accountability.

The question posed by Geoff Mawson – “It’s okay to ask the questions, but what do you do with the answers?” – is one that is important for all schools to consider as the richness and extensiveness of data that could be gathered might prove overwhelming: ‘So what?’ is the important thing.



Questions for reflection

- What steps have you taken to consult the community in a meaningful way?
- What changes has it led to?
- Has consultation become an embedded practice, or is it an occasional bolt-on?

In the next two sections, the focus turns to how some school leaders seek the voice of parents and pupils, the two stakeholders mentioned by DfES as needing more account taking of their views. In exemplifying practice, linked practical activities will allow school leaders to reflect on their own school’s practice.

The parents' views

The New Relationship with Schools clearly places parents as not only key recipients of information about school achievements through, for example, the school profile, but also key contributors to its evaluation. Establishing a positive partnership in which parental voice is valued is fundamental in this process.



Activity

Practice:

In the left-hand column overleaf, examples of practice drawn from school leaders are listed. In the right-hand column you might wish to comment on the following questions.

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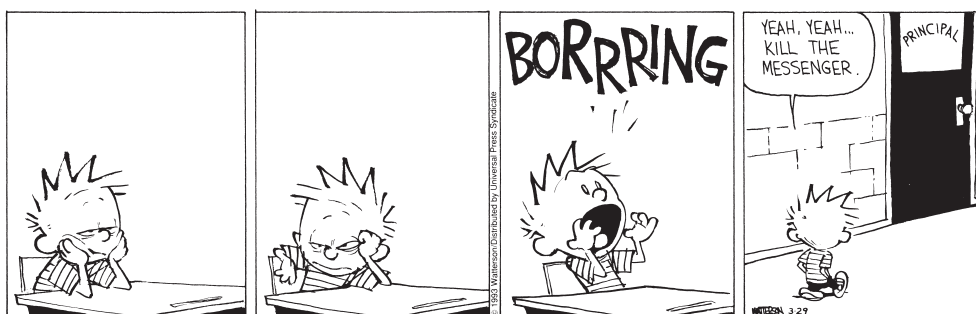
What school leaders said

Involvement in development groups, eg in relation to a new building project or internal redevelopment.	
Engage in informal evaluation at school-based learning-oriented events, eg curriculum awareness evenings, family learning sessions.	
Establish a parents' forum: invite randomly selected groups of parents from each year group to discuss a range of issues with the head or other school leader.	
Use a working party of parents to seek the views of other parents on particular issues, eg website development or educational visit provision.	
Use Investors in People or other kitemark schemes to seek wider self-evaluation, including parents in these.	
Use parents' evenings as an opportunity to gather parents', as well as pupils', views, eg a questionnaire focusing on homework (but consider who this includes/excludes because of attendance patterns and how this might affect data).	
Carry out telephone interviews with a random sample of parents on an aspect of practice such as the effectiveness of home-school communication.	

Practical tips

- Keep surveys jargon-free.
- Encourage participation through incentives, eg raffle tickets.

The pupils' views



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John MacBeath uses the cartoon above to draw attention to the power of pupil voice. He cites alongside this the following quote from an article by Soo Hoo (1993):

Somehow educators have forgotten the important connection between teachers and students. We listen to outside experts to inform us, and, consequently, overlook the treasure in our very own backyards – the students. Soo Hoo, 1993 pp 386-93

Much has been written about gathering pupil voice to inform improvement, and many schools have developed strategies to ensure that this voice is heard in an authentic and democratic manner. There are of course numerous strategies that can be used, from school council members seeking the views of their peers on issues to using pupil evaluations to inform teaching and learning practices. However, if pupil voice is genuinely going to be used to inform the improvement agenda, whether this relates to academic achievement or other issues, then key to this process is that the voice is not just heard but acted upon.



Activity

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What school leaders said

Help pupils understand evaluation and how they contribute to this, eg use pupil representatives to explain, at year group level, a forthcoming build project and how pupil voice will be sought on this and used.	
Use school council members from different schools to work together on undertaking self-evaluation, eg of study support provision and its effectiveness.	
Provide a group of pupils with digital cameras to record where they feel safe or not safe within the school grounds to inform behaviour management practices.	
Audit the extended school day activities pupils sign up to by year groups and ask questions as to why/ why not pupils take part.	
Involve pupils in quality of learning and teaching dialogue, use focus groups to review lessons.	
Although valuing the role of the school's council, allow opportunities for pupil voice beyond this. Use different groups and consider representation, eg regular users of ICT facilities to evaluate how well these support their learning.	
Use questionnaires on aspects such as marking and feedback, followed up by smaller group discussions. Encourage dialogue behind the responses and share this with staff. Tailor surveys to year groups.	
Involve pupils in research and development activities, interviewing peers in aspects such as assessment for learning, and use their findings to influence improvement initiatives.	
Tour the school building with a small representative group and seek their opinions on how conducive the environment is to their learning. Ask the pupils to consider the qualities of their best teacher and their best learning experience. Use the data to explore with staff what makes a great teacher and what makes a great learning experience.	

There are of course many ways in which schools work with their staff in self-evaluation activities; however, processes in which governors were involved were less well-represented at the seminar.



Questions for reflection

- What do you do currently within your school to enable these voices to be heard?

Staff?

Governors?

- How might you further develop their contribution to the self-evaluation process?

How might we develop self-evaluation in our school?

Having read this guide, what might the next steps for you and your school be? You might wish to draw on the responses you have already made in earlier activities.



Activity

What self-evaluation processes do you already use to inform you as to **How well are we doing?** – and – **How can we do better?**

You might wish to use the grid opposite to identify the school's existing practices and identify against each activity which stakeholders are involved in these. This activity could be carried out in collaboration with others, eg the school's leadership team or governors.

It might be advisable to focus on the school's core purposes and therefore consider those self-evaluation processes linked to one or more of the following questions below.

- 1 How well do we meet pupils' individual needs in our school and how well do they learn and achieve? How good is the teaching in this school? (enjoying and achieving)
- 2 How good is our school in providing for, and supporting:
 - pupil well-being (being healthy, staying safe, economic well-being)
 - pupil citizenship (making a positive contribution)?

Using the *Every Child Matters* Outcome Framework will further inform this activity.

	How should the question be asked?			Who do we ask?			How does the data get used?				
<p>A What is the question? Eg how well do pupils learn and achieve?</p>	<p>B What tool do we need? Eg questionnaire</p>	<p>C Who asks it?</p>	<p>D When is it asked?</p>	<p>E Parents</p>	<p>F Pupils</p>	<p>G Governors</p>	<p>H Staff</p>	<p>I Wider community including external advisors and agencies</p>	<p>J What happens to the answers?</p>	<p>K How do we communicate this to the stakeholders?</p>	<p>L Do we need to ask the question differently next time?</p>



Now consider existing practice in the light of John Dunford's five questions:

- 1 Are you asking the right question – is it telling you what you need to find out? (section A above)
- 2 Why are you asking the question?
- 3 Is it being asked in the most appropriate way or would a different data collection approach be better? Would it be better for somebody else to ask it? Is it being asked at the most appropriate time? (sections B, C and D above)
- 4 Who needs to be asked? Is there anything the other stakeholders could bring to the issue? (sections E to I above)
- 5 How does the data get used? How do you communicate its use to your stakeholders? (sections J and K above)

How effective is this process and how do we know? Who evaluates the evaluation method? Do we ask for feedback or suggestions about the questions we ask, whom we ask them of and what we do with the data? (section L above)



Questions for reflection

- How will we ensure these activities:
 - are built in rather than bolted on?
 - are owned by stakeholders?
 - are ongoing?
 - have impact on improvement?
 - relate to and contribute to our core beliefs and aims?
- Will we use off-the-peg commercially produced approaches or develop our own using an à la carte menu of options?
- How do we view the place of individual school context in this decision?
- What will our first steps be?

Final comments: Keeping it realistic

This guide seeks to raise issues, provide stimulus material and offer practical suggestions that can be adapted to different school contexts.

As a final point it is important to ensure self-evaluation processes are manageable and productive, or as John Dunford expresses it – ‘data-rich and workload light’ – to prevent:

- an inability, real or perceived, to deal effectively with data gathered, resulting in a feeling of being swamped
- a feeling of guilt that more data could be collected on a whole range of issues



Key tips

- Plan for self-evaluation – link it into what is going on at certain times as part of the school’s improvement agenda: what are our three current key priorities and what processes have we in place to capture data from multiple perspectives about how well we are doing and how we could do better in these? Consider the questions posed by Dunford and MacBeath: What data do we want to help us evaluate? Who could provide this? How will they be asked? What will we do with it?
- Integrate self-evaluation into management systems such as performance management
- Focus on what is important – prioritise.
- Allow sufficient time – collect data effectively.
- Develop gradually – some schools’ practices have emerged over a considerable period of time during which the climate of trust has increased: assess the stage of readiness for your own school.
- See it as a shared task – ‘Who can ask apart from me, as head – which stakeholders (eg staff (individual or group), parents, pupils, governors) can I involve as data collectors and evaluators?’ whilst acknowledging work pressures.
- Communicate findings and act on these to give the message: ‘We have listened, acknowledged, discussed and acted’.
- Acknowledge context – eg what is the capacity of my school’s staff to carry out self-evaluation? Is there a need to develop others’ skills and if so, how might this be achieved? Given the school size, what can be realistically managed?
- Avoid the self-fulfilling prophecy: finding what you want to find through not asking the difficult questions, or disregarding data that is challenging.

Acknowledgements and further reading

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