

A New Relationship with Schools: Improving Performance through School Self-Evaluation



Introduction

This document aims to provide a *brief* guide to the relationship between self-evaluation and school improvement under the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS). It sets out how to get the best out of self-evaluation and how to use the findings effectively to plan for improvement.

The guidance also explains how Ofsted's self-evaluation form (SEF) will be used during an inspection. To get the greatest benefit from inspection, headteachers and governing bodies will need to ensure that their school has undertaken an objective evaluation of its performance, identified priorities for improvement and set achievable targets. Ofsted's SEF provides schools with a means of capturing the findings of their self-evaluation.

The guidance is arranged in 2 sections:

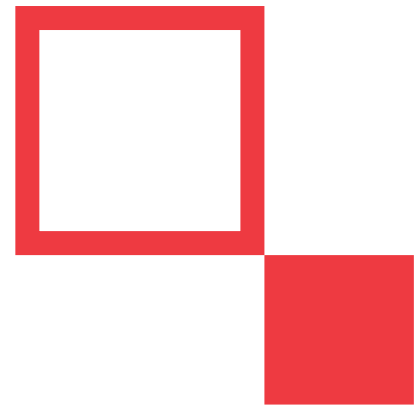
- A:** A brief introduction to effective school improvement and its relationship with self-evaluation
- B:** Ofsted's self-evaluation form (SEF)

APPENDIX: A

Illustrations from SEFs showing how schools inspected through Ofsted pilot inspections in the summer term 2004 summarised the findings of their own self-evaluation.

The guidance is aimed at a wide range of settings where different terms are used, but for simplicity we use the terms *schools*, *learners* and *development plans*, throughout the document.

Section A



EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION

WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS ENGAGE IN SELF-EVALUATION?

1. Schools want to be able to demonstrate that they are accountable to their stakeholders; to do this they must be in a position to provide convincing evidence of their success and a clear plan of action which maps out how improvements will be made.
2. There are four key points about self-evaluation that schools should keep in mind:
 - rigorous self-evaluation helps schools to improve; it should not be undertaken solely for the purpose of inspection
 - schools should shape for themselves a process that is simple and integrated with their routine management systems
 - schools must listen to and do something about the views of their stakeholders
 - the school's recorded summary of its self-evaluation process (Ofsted's self-evaluation form) should be up-dated at least annually and include information about the impact of its action on learners; assertions and lists of initiatives are unhelpful.
3. Intelligent accountability should be founded on schools' own views of how well they are serving their learners. All schools should be able to answer the questions:
How well are we doing? – and – How can we do better?
4. To offer the best possible education for learners, staff and governors should know how well their school provides for them, the impact of this provision and how it can be improved. Thorough self-evaluation provides the best means to identify strengths and weaknesses; from these, arise the key priorities for improvement.

Self-evaluation is only effective if it is based on openness, honesty and trust – balancing the desire to highlight any barriers to learning facing the school with the need to challenge and seek the highest standards and levels of progress possible

5. Evidence gathered from self-evaluation should be analysed and used fully to:

- diagnose precisely where strengths and weaknesses lie and the implications for change
- identify the key priorities
- plan the action needed to bring about improvement.

6. One of the principles of the NRwS is that schools should have a single, integrated development plan which maps out the actions needed to bring about improvement. It should have regard for and incorporate previous plans that have an impact on the work of the school. It must be based on an objective assessment of the needs of the school and should set out the priorities for development. It is all too easy to identify a weakness and include that area for development without diagnosing exactly what needs to be done and why. An intelligent self-evaluation will identify the precise issue that needs tackling and what to do about it. In this way action can be targeted to have the greatest impact.

7. It is important to check whether the planned activities for improvement are having an impact and, if they are not, why not. Such interim review might lead to a minor adjustment of targets and activities and the reallocation of resources part way through a school's annual review cycle. Alternatively, it might identify actions for the next development plan.

8. The rationale for self-evaluation is clear. The next sections explore what this means in practice.

WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS EVALUATE?

9. Schools should evaluate all they do, but not necessarily all at once. Schools need to know how well learners perform in terms of:

- the overall standards they attain
- the standards attained by different groups such as girls and boys, the gifted, children in public care, the talented, those from different ethnic groups, and those with different special needs,
- the progress made by different groups of learners over time - for example, how well they do between entering nursery and leaving the Foundation Stage or between Key Stages 2 and 4, or in all age settings across all the key stages

- outcomes from learners' personal development and well-being, including how far they meet the five outcomes sought by the *Every Child Matters*¹ agenda.

Schools should also assess the quality and impact on standards of:

- provision - teaching, the curriculum, and the care, guidance and support
- leadership and management at all levels including governance
- features and objectives which are special to a school
- links between the school and other providers, services, employers and organisations.

10. Governors and staff will want to evaluate the plans they have implemented, any strategies for improvement, whether resources are being effectively used and in particular, the impact of action taken on the learning and well-being of the school's learners. Some plans have less direct impact on learners than others, for example the relationships a school develops with external agencies, but nevertheless, leaders will want to evaluate the effectiveness of such relationships and whether or not they are making a positive difference.

HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF THEIR PROVISION?

11. The underlying process which the school employs to identify its strengths and weaknesses is not prescribed. Schools are free to follow any model which gives them the best insights into their improvement priorities. Some elements of practice will be common to self-evaluation in all schools. The best schools have simple processes which enable their leaders to measure progress in practical ways through their day-to-day work.
12. School Improvement Partners (SIPs) play an important role in challenging the processes used by the school in carrying out its review and the outcomes which result from this. Through the single conversation SIPs can pose questions, suggest sources of evidence and challenge interpretations of the school's evidence. They can discuss the accuracy of managers' improvement priorities and act as critical readers of the SEF *without writing it*.
13. To help ensure that self-evaluation is effective, schools should have the following six questions in mind; these will help them to focus on the process.

Question One: Does the self-evaluation identify how well our school serves its learners?

14. At the core of successful self-evaluation is a clear analysis of the outcomes for all learners. Careful analyses of data such as those found in the PANDA report, PAT² report and the NRwS Exceptions Report³ enable the majority of schools to benchmark the standards learners reach and their levels of progress against schools nationally and against similar schools; they also help schools to set challenging but achievable targets for their improvement priorities.
15. Most schools also have their own data that provides greater detail about individuals and groups of learners. In some schools, such as special schools and nursery schools there is little or no data from national tests. In these cases, information collected, analysed and interpreted, should give a clear insight into how well the school is providing for every learner. In all schools, there are many other aspects of work where no clear cut data exists and a school's own evidence must be used.
16. Academic achievement gives only part of the picture of learners' development. It is much harder to quantify learners' personal development but this must not be shirked. The *Every Child Matters* agenda is especially important to remember when carrying out self-evaluation. Schools can address the five outcomes for learners separately or by integrating them at relevant points throughout their evaluation.

Question Two: How does our school compare with the best schools, and the best comparable schools?

17. Good schools seek to go beyond the headline data to identify schools in similar circumstances with excellent results and to look in detail at their practice. Some schools with very high added value will need to look beyond schools with similar intakes, to find useful benchmarks. Analysis of the outcomes of benchmarking challenges teachers to review their practice and ensure that they are doing everything they can to raise the achievement of all groups of learners.
18. Different aspects of data are compiled in a variety of ways; consequently a school may be rated more highly in some measures and lower in others. Schools should understand why such discrepancies occur and be certain that their priorities for improvement and related action are based on data which are directly relevant and statistically reliable.

² Pupil Achievement Tracker.

³ The exceptions report is being trialled with a small number of LEAs and schools during the 2004/05 school year.

19. If senior managers are not sufficiently robust in taking account of helpful benchmarks the school's subsequent action is not likely to lead to sufficiently improved standards and better levels of learners' progress. Inspectors would take account of this in coming to a judgement about the effectiveness of the school's leaders.

Question Three: Is the self-evaluation integral to our key management systems?

20. Self-evaluation is not an activity carried out just once, before planning starts. It is continuous and is at the heart of the school improvement process. School leaders will want to ensure they have effective, non-bureaucratic systems in place which allow them to collect appropriate evidence over time as part of the cycle of development and review. In this way rigorous self-evaluation and the judgements derived from it can be integrated within their day-to-day management, especially in relation to:

- the performance management of staff
- continuing professional development, particularly how this contributes to improvements in teaching and learning and how well subject areas and departments interact to share good practice and learn from one another
- assessment and target setting for learners' academic and personal development.

Question Four: Is our school's self-evaluation based on a good range of telling evidence?

21. Experience shows the most effective schools are those which are well organised to collect, analyse and evaluate evidence drawn from:

- monitoring and interpreting current attainment data, trends over time, and other performance indicators for key stages, subjects and groups of learners, including the use of both national attainment data *and* data which take into account the context of a school
- gathering and considering the learners', parents', teachers' and other stakeholders' views and perceptions about the quality of the school's provision
- checking that targets for learners, staff and the senior team are challenging but achievable and achieved

- evaluating the quality of learners' personal development, written and other work
- tracking the results of individual learners' progress and attainment
- observing and evaluating teaching – including the evaluation of how well the evidence gathered is used to bring about improvements in performance
- evaluating the best available local and national comparative data on finance, staffing, attendance, and exclusions
- evaluating the impact of extended services, including day care, on the learning and well-being of learners
- the results of monitoring undertaken by governors, including the impact of performance management
- reports from the school community and external agencies involved in the work of the school and with individual learners.

Question Five: Does our self-evaluation and planning involve key people in the school and seek the views of parents, learners and external advisers and agencies?

22. A school's leadership team is best placed to draw together the evidence and to make judgements about the key strengths, weaknesses and priorities for the whole school. However, self-evaluation should be systematic and undertaken at all levels. For example, subject and department leaders should be evaluating the progress made by learners, identifying priorities that need to feed into the development plan and putting in place action that leads to improvement. Equally, governors should be fully involved in school review. Schools' senior staff should recognise that governors may need support and training to help them fulfil this role.
23. It is up to each school to decide precisely who should be consulted and how views are gathered. The involvement of learners, parents and support agencies in the self-evaluation process is essential. Evidence can be collected in a range of ways, for example through surveys, focus groups, the school council, annual reviews and interviews. In some schools, students are invited to observe and evaluate lessons.
24. External perspectives can be provided by school improvement partners and LEA advisers, but the process is also enhanced through peer review, for example through: Leadership Incentive Grant collaboratives, workforce reform, Excellence in Cities partnerships and clusters, the Specialist Schools Trust and Network Learning communities.

25. Opportunities should be taken to seek the views of staff involved in the National Strategy, external CPD, feeder schools and providers of external services. There may be times when schools wish to employ external consultants to assist in the process.

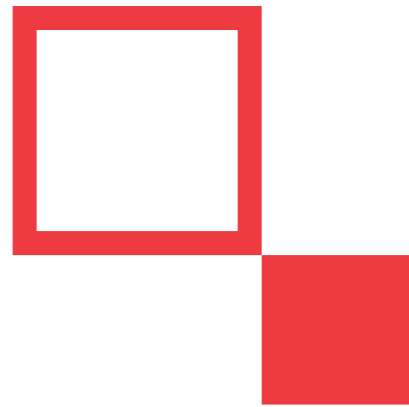
Question Six: Does our self-evaluation lead to action to achieve the school's longer term goals for development?

26. In drawing up an integrated improvement plan, it is important to distinguish between the short-term annual and operational priorities and the longer-term strategic objectives. This may mean that, in any one year, all staff focus on a few key areas and a small number of tasks and both they and the governing body keep a good check on the impact of action they are taking. National and local priorities should also be integrated in the plan. These will form part of the single conversation between the school and the SIP.

27. In response either to a full-scale evaluation or, assessment of an aspect of the school's work, a development plan should:

- identify a limited number of main priorities for action and improvement, based on an assessment of the potential benefits to the learners – remember that developing a strength may be a higher priority than eliminating a relatively minor weakness
- focus on the continued improvement of outcomes for learners - raising academic standards and learners' personal development - as the key drivers of school improvement
- include specific responsibilities, timescales and interim review dates, measurable success criteria and targets linked to learners' attainment and progress
- inform performance management objectives and the professional development programme for the forthcoming academic year
- identify and justify the cost benefits in terms of learners' outcomes
- identify how aspects of a school's work that are exceptionally effective can contribute to improvement within the school and in other schools.

Section B



OFSTED'S SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION FORM: THE SEF

28. The SEF is a replacement for Forms S1 – S4 and is structured to reflect the evaluation schedule. The criteria set out in Ofsted's *Evaluation Schedule* contained in the *Guidance for Inspecting Schools*⁴ have provided a very useful starting point for self-evaluation. Over the years the evaluation schedule in successive Ofsted Frameworks has given schools a structure for their self-evaluation. Many find that the evaluation schedule provides essential insights into a school's overall effectiveness.
29. The evaluation schedule has been revised; it now focuses tightly on the 'core systems' of a school and also reflects the importance of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes. Ofsted integrated the five outcomes when deciding what questions to put in the SEF; for instance *achieving* and *enjoying* are explored in the achievement and standards section and *contribution to the community* in the personal development section. The provision made by the school to promote these outcomes is covered in the care, guidance and support section.
30. Schools' leaders may find the questions in the SEF helpful when carrying out their self-evaluation. Senior managers might wish to use the SEF as a means of recording their interpretation of the evidence and, as a vehicle for dialogue with middle managers and others. Governors might find the SEF helpful in focusing their discussions with senior staff on the success of the school's work in terms of outcomes for learners.
31. The SEF prompts schools to demonstrate clear judgements that are well supported by evidence. The question, *How do you know?* is posed many times over as a helpful challenge.⁵ When completing the form, it is important to focus on what matters most and not to try to include every judgement and every bit of evidence. Completing the form offers a disciplined way to test out how effectively the school's self-evaluation has led to the clear identification of what matters most. It is a challenging, but worthwhile process.

⁴ Guidance for Inspectors of Schools: Using the Evaluation Schedule is available on the Ofsted website.

⁵ The form is in three parts – A, B and C. Section B lists data about a school and is largely pre-populated from other sources. Section C is a check list about statutory compliance. Part A is where a school records its self-evaluation findings. All that follows in this booklet relates to Part A.

32. *Completing the SEF is not, in itself, self-evaluation.* The SEF is only a place to record and summarise the findings of a thorough self-evaluation process. However, if the SEF is a fair reflection of the school, it provides headteachers, governors and others with an excellent basis for school improvement. A robust and professional SEF will virtually amount to the school's own inspection report on itself.

THE USE OF A SCHOOL'S SEF BY OFSTED INSPECTORS

33. Ofsted inspectors use a school's SEF throughout an inspection. They review the summary of school's self-evaluation, recorded in its SEF, alongside the previous inspection report and the PANDA report as a starting point for discussion with the school, and, for deciding what to focus on when planning an inspection. Issues for the inspection arise from important features of the school's work and, any inconsistencies between the SEF and the pre-inspection evidence such as the PANDA report. Issues might also arise from significant matters that the SEF appears to have glossed over. The SEF provides crucial evidence in evaluating the quality of leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve.

34. During an inspection, inspectors must establish how well a school's senior staff and governors know its strengths and areas for improvement. The inspectors do not look for pre-prepared portfolios to support a school's judgements, but expect schools to point to practice that substantiates the views they have expressed in the SEF.

35. SEFs are kept on the internet on a site maintained by Ofsted and are password protected. Schools can update their SEF as regularly as they wish and it can be printed.

ADVICE FOR COMPLETING A SEF

36. Keep it simple and avoid jargon. Try to be accurate, clear and honest. Inspectors will expect schools to update the SEF in line with their normal cycles of school improvement. It is important that this is not a time consuming, bureaucratic process.

37. Answer the questions by making clear judgements and remember each time to justify answers with a brief summary of the evidence. Assertion is not good enough. So, for instance, refer briefly to test and examination results and attendance figures where data is available and reliable, but remember to say what the data told you, prompted you to do, and the impact of your actions.

Also, refer to other reliable evidence where it is relevant. It is not intended that there should be large amounts of data and descriptive detail, and evidence should be used selectively to support judgements. Schools can indicate clearly in the SEF where more detailed evidence can be found.

38. When you are summarising your evaluation of the *Every Child Matters* five outcomes, remember to comment not just on what the school has done to promote the outcomes, but also on the impact that this has had on learners. For example, schools should comment on the difference that the school's action has made to particular groups of learners' behaviour not just in terms of their attendance and attitudes to school but also in relation to their progress.
39. Once completed, a SEF should reflect properly, governors' involvement in a school's self-evaluation and show that it has been completed with the agreement of the governing body or appropriate authority.

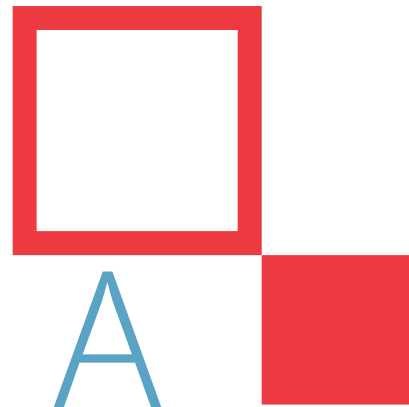
REACHING JUDGEMENTS

40. At the end of each section of the SEF, schools are asked to provide a summary judgement and grade using the guidance on the common grading scale provided by Ofsted in the *Guidance for Inspectors of Schools: Using the Evaluation Schedule*.
41. The overall summary judgement and grade must be composite. For example, in the achievement and standards section, the judgement must embrace both the standards attained by learners and their progress over time. In this section, the key element is the progress that learners make, rather than the actual standards achieved. In special schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and nurseries particularly, this must be the case. However, it must be borne in mind that, no matter how good the progress, very low standards greatly influence many learners' future life choices.
42. In the overall effectiveness section, the composite judgement is a summary of the all other main judgements. When coming to a judgement about overall effectiveness, school's leaders should consider the close link between learners' progress, the quality of provision and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Leadership and management, including the effectiveness of governance, are judged primarily in terms of outcomes for learners.

43. Where a school's judgements differ from their own, inspectors may draw conclusions about the quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher, senior team and governing body: for example, if they discover that a school's judgements about its performance are too generous.

Appendix A

EXAMPLES FROM SEFS



44. The following pages contain different sections from completed SEFs together with brief guidance. It should be noted that these are *only examples*, using SEFs provided by schools involved in pilot inspections in the summer term 2004. The excerpts are mainly as they were written by the schools, with some minor amendments to illustrate particular points.

45. Readers need to consider these examples critically, asking themselves if the schools' judgements:

- demonstrate that the school has attempted to evaluate the best available local and national comparative data on learners' standards, finance and staffing
- are sufficiently well substantiated
- are convincing and reflective of a thorough approach to self-evaluation, and are
- likely to lead to a clear and accurate overview of the school as a whole.

SEF SECTION 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROVIDER

In this section schools should set out the key contextual factors which they need to take into account in setting the priorities for development. There are five questions covering the main features of the learners, special features of the school, specific contextual or other issues that affect performance, the main objectives of the school's improvement/development plan and particular issues that the school would like to draw to the attention of readers including inspectors.

This section is an introduction to the school. It should explain in brief;

- the school's main features including its ethos and purpose
- the context in which the school works, drawing attention to its unique features
- any special status and or extended services.

Example from a 3 – 11 primary school.

The school is setting out very clear background information which will later be expanded in the rest of the SEF. This alerts the reader to the school's context and the challenges it faces.

- The school serves a community in the xxth most deprived LEA in England.
- Attainment on entry is below average, particularly in terms of children's development in communication, language and literacy (LEA-wide assessment and our own assessments).
- The level of special educational needs is above the LEA average and national averages, although the percentage of pupils with a statement is around the average.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has risen significantly over the last few years; around one third of the school's population is now drawn largely from families of African and Caribbean heritages. Almost all speak English fluently. Currently no pupil is in the early stages of learning English. The ability on entry of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is very similar to other pupils and so is their socio-economic status.
- Pupil mobility is increasing and is now judged to be high.

In response to the questions on other special features and contextual issues, the school goes on to explain its ethos, that it is in an Education Action Zone, is strong on music and has enjoyed stable staffing.

The school then lists its development plan priorities and concludes this section of the SEF with an evaluative comment by saying:

We have made very significant efforts in the past three years to counter our weaknesses and to address, in particular, literacy and numeracy. We have evidence to prove the success of our policies although we recognise that we still have a significant way to go before we meet our own high expectations in all that we do.

SEF SECTION 2: VIEWS OF LEARNERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Section 2 allows for a brief account of the ways in which the school gathers - and does something about - the views of its main stakeholders. There are three questions to address asking how the school gathers views and how often, what the views are, and what action the school has taken in response to the views.

The following is an excerpt from the SEF of a larger than average 11 – 19 co-educational comprehensive school.

Not all schools will have this school's systematic means of finding out about parents' views. If you don't, then report what you already do and what parents and carers are telling you. All schools know - from different sources - a good deal about what parents think.

The school has very constructive links with parents. The main links are parental questionnaires bi-annually from 1998 - 2004 which showed great satisfaction with the school. Findings were fed into the school improvement plan. The next questionnaire is planned for summer 2006. There is also regular contact through the pupils' organiser (diary), regular parents' evenings and other personal contacts.

Students are given a voice through:

- a structure of elected student councils based upon year representatives. All students participate in this and ring-fenced curriculum time is reserved for this activity
- a growing use of *Transforming Learning* and its attendant *Pupil Voice* to allow students to give feedback upon teaching and learning
- representation on the anti bullying working party
- being an integral part of the school self-review processes. Pupils are interviewed and opinions sought upon their learning experiences. This information forms part of the review feedback to departments.

We seek the views of the wider community of stakeholders in a variety of ways.

For example:

- a deputy head serves on the Xtown lifelong learning executive. This group is responsible for the town's community strategy
- both the head and school governors are represented on the community association management committee
- we are members of the Business Ambassadors scheme
- we work closely with the LEA and LSC.

This example indicates how the school has responded to parental concerns. References as to how the school has responded to learners' and other stakeholders' concerns were also in the original but we have not included them here for brevity.

We have acted upon parental feedback in the following ways:

- procedures relating to students making Key Stage 4 course preferences have been revised, and continue to be developed
- a licence for SAM learning has been purchased to allow ICT to be used to support learning outside of school hours
- a study club now operates outside of school hours
- parents' evenings have been split into 2 populations so that we can give
- parents and pupils more consultation time
- further development of anti-bullying strategy has been undertaken.

Not all schools will have a list as long as this. Some may even say that the school hasn't honestly responded directly to parents – and there may be reasons for this. Whatever, explain the situation clearly.

SEF SECTION 3: ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

What do we mean by achievement and standards?

Achievement: This is a measure of learners' knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to their capabilities. It reflects how much learners are challenged, the progress they have made and whether they are working to their capacity. Key here is the value that a school adds and whether learners are doing as well as they can.

Standards: By this we mean the level of knowledge, understanding and skills learners reach compared with learners of the same age nationally. In secondary schools, they are most likely to be expressed in terms of test and examination grades; in primary schools, in terms of levels; in early years' settings, they refer to children's learning in relation to the early learning goals.

To give a full picture, judgements need to be focused on the last academic year for which there is reliable data and, on trends over time. If a school thinks any data is wrong or gives a false or unfair view it needs to say so, explain why, and present what it thinks is the correct picture with supporting evidence.

Judgements are also needed on the progress and standards reached by *different groups of learners* in school; again, this needs explanation.

In addition to judgements on overall school performance it is essential to include brief judgements on standards in all subjects and, where appropriate, aspects of subjects.

Here we provide two examples from very different schools. The first example is from a girls' 11 – 16 comprehensive school.

To begin, the school sets out clearly under separate headings, the main messages from its PANDA report, its exclusion report and what its own data says. All three sets of data are important; only the school's data says much about non-core subjects. Here, there are no conflicts to resolve between the different data sets but if there had been, the school would have pointed these out.

Here is a very clear assessment based on the analysis (not shown here) of PANDA and the NRwS Exceptions Report. The school has not 'pulled punches' in respect of what it does well and where its weaknesses lie.

KS3

- Standards in core subjects well above average compared to other schools nationally (PANDA report/FFT)⁶
- Very good value added in English and science from KS2 to KS3 (PANDA report/FFT)
- Rising trend in the percentage of learners gaining Level 5+/Level 6+ in core subjects (School/County Data)
- Standards in non-core subjects generally very good including very good performance in modern foreign languages (annual return to QCA). However, there are weaknesses in RE, ICT and citizenship (school data).

KS4

- Overall GCSE results very high compared to all schools nationally, to similar schools (based on free school meals) and to LEA schools (PANDA report/FFT/LEA data)
- A* value added KS3 to KS4 top quartile (PANDA report/FFT)
- A* average total GCSE point score per learner in comparison with similar schools (PANDA report/FFT)
- High percentage of top grades at GCSE (35% A*/A) (School Data and PANDA report/FFT)
- High number of subjects listed as having a significant positive residual although with some variation between subjects. There are comparative weaknesses in PE (dance), history, RE and ICT (PANDA report)
- Students of all abilities perform very well in comparison to CAT score predictions which are used as targets. No significant variation in performance for different groups of learners. (School Data)

Students' Progress

Generally, learners make very good progress in school. However, we have only just started monitoring value added performance from KS2 to KS3 and KS2 to KS4. This has already raised issues with regard to targets set and progress made, especially in maths. Data confirms our overall very good progress judgement except in maths among lower attainers and in a few other subjects referred to above. This is an area of analysis we will be developing further in the future and is reflected in our development plan. Learners' performance against targets is generally very good with exceptions that we monitor closely. The school provides an evaluation of areas where it considers it needs to do better:

The school is equally candid here.

Areas for improvement

All subjects can improve and we are constantly seeking ways to do this through the review of practice and by setting challenging targets. Changes to the curriculum structure, teaching methods and use of assessment data should see significant improvements in KS3 value added results in maths and GCSE results for ICT and RE (see below).

- **KS3 Mathematics:** although there is an upward trend in results, learners, overall, are still significantly underachieving against similar schools and in relation to prior attainment. This is most significant for the lowest quartile of students on entry who are not making sufficient progress. We have introduced a new modular course and revised teaching methods to include improved use of assessment data, more precise target setting and more differentiation (PANDA report/FFT)
- **ICT and RE:** we have now given both subjects a more formal status and position within the curriculum, ensuring a more consistent experience for both learners and teachers. This should aid teaching and learning and improve progression and understanding of required standards. There is now formal target setting in both subjects (PANDA report)

- KS4 Dance - Significant downward trend in results. Linked with specific staffing issues which are being addressed (PANDA report)
- KS4 History - Dip in results not attributable to cohort profile; adoption of new GCSE course this year and identification of teaching improvements needed should address accessibility issues and raise standards (PANDA report)
- KS3 citizenship. Currently our curriculum (and therefore standards) is at an early stage of development. We are planning to develop this more rigorously by introducing a more formal curriculum for all learners including more formal assessment and target setting linked to tighter definitions of expected standards.

In reaching its overall grade 1 judgement, the school has taken into account both the standards achieved by learners compared to the national average and in relation to similar schools. It has also taken into account the progress that learners make.

Lastly, the school produces an overall summary, cross-checked against Ofsted's grades in its *Framework for inspecting schools* and grades itself 1.

Overall summary judgement on learners' academic achievement and standards

Despite the areas for improvement noted above, we have to recognise that the standards achieved by our students are well above average and are especially strong at GCSE, where results have been in the top 5% of schools nationally for many years. Our students generally make very good progress during their time in the school and achieve standards that are well above those that might be expected. They do very well irrespective of their background and ability.

This SEF indicates that the school has weighted standards and progress about equally in reaching the judgement. In other schools, it may be appropriate to give greater weight to progress.

The **second example** is from an early excellence centre which integrates day care and nursery education. There are no PANDA or exclusion report data; the principal data arises from what the centre collects. The ELGs referred to are the national early learning goals of the Foundation Stage.

The centre makes clear the difference between attainment on entry to the day care and attainment on entry to the nursery education.

- **Attainment on entry to the nursery education** for the majority of 3 year olds is below the nationally expected levels across all six areas of learning. This is evidenced by our formal teacher assessment programme within the first half term of a child entering the nursery
- **Attainment on entry for the majority of children entering day care** between the ages of 6 months to 3 years is developmentally age appropriate
- The ratio of those who enter at 6 months to those who enter at three is 1:4. Therefore attainment on entry for the majority of children across *the entire centre* is below nationally expected levels
- Up the age of 2 years the balance of provision leans more towards care than to educational provision. Between the ages of 2 and 3 years the balance shifts towards the nursery education
- Children are assessed on entry through a specially designed assessment system which also assesses their language levels. Children with special educational needs (SEN) are assessed on or before their entry to the centre. When they leave the nursery education, children are assessed against the ELGs

Note the clear judgements, not only on the standards achieved in relation to the national ELGs but also the progress that children have made during their time in the nursery.

- Those that have been in nursery since 6 months are on track to reach the ELGs by the end of the foundation stage. About 30% of these children are likely to exceed the ELGs, particularly in personal, social, emotional and language development. These children make very good progress. 50% of children meet the ELGs and make good progress. The remainder do not meet the goals but given their low standards on entry, many of these children nevertheless make good progress
- The majority of children who enter the nursery at 3 years also make good progress and are on track to reach the ELGs. Of these children, around 30% generally have little spoken English on entry, although their understanding of English is better. Monitoring demonstrates that the majority of these children make good progress towards achieving the ELGs in communication, language and literacy and the other 5 areas of learning. The part time inclusion worker who supports children with English as an additional language ensures their language and cultural needs are met effectively (see section on provision)
- Current identification of SEN children is 2%; this is very low. Individual needs are planned for through individual education plans. As a result of this, SEN children make good progress
- Overall, the majority of children make good progress towards the ELGs.

Here the school has reconciled the different 'very good' and 'good' judgements to arrive at an overall judgement of 'good' progress.

SEF SECTION 4: LEARNERS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Data on attendance and exclusions enables schools to evaluate the impact of any steps they have taken to improve learners' personal development, as well as their attainment and progress. Other evidence about learners' personal development is likely to be less tangible unless a school already has in place systematic evidence collection.

When completing this section, judgements must be firm and accurate not least because the contribution schools make to learners' personal development is crucial. It is important to remember that it is learners' development and the extent to which they are meeting the *Every Child Matters* outcomes that we are interested in and only subsequently, the quality of provision. The success of schools' provision should be judged through the quality of learners' development.

Example from a 4 – 11 primary school.

Here is just part of the school's SEF. Note the reference to *Every Child Matters* outcomes such as the extent to which learners feel safe and their contributions to the community.

Pupils' spiritual development is good. Class teachers monitor regularly against clear criteria and record these judgements in pupils' records. These indicate that for most pupils, they grow significantly in terms of their understanding of themselves and others during their time in school. As a result, they become far more confident and willing to explore and take sensible risks.

Pupils increasingly develop an understanding of beauty, love, justice and hatred and develop attitudes towards issues linked to conflict, social responsibilities and responsibilities towards the environment. As a result, pupils show high levels of compassion and, at times, anger at cruelty and injustice. Some pupils have strong religious beliefs. We work to support them in exploring their beliefs and we have clear evidence of children's deepening understanding and faith.

It is interesting here that the school has a clear idea of what it means by 'spiritual' and 'moral' development

Moral development is good for the majority of pupils. Our discussions with pupils and other evidence of the behaviour, attitudes and work show that, a large majority have a strong moral framework, based on the lead given by the school. This is particularly evidenced through regular discussion in PSHE/citizenship lessons, where pupils are encouraged to debate moral issues.

We operate a strong moral code, based on respect for all. Although we do not discourage dissent, the basic value system of the school is subscribed to strongly by almost all pupils. A recent whole school questionnaire shows that almost all pupils feel that the moral code is implemented; they enjoy attending, feel safe and secure. Unfortunately, the standards of the local community sometimes militate against the maintenance of standards once pupils leave the school. We have good evidence that we counter local pressures well.

This reads well. The school is not over-claiming so the argument is convincing. It is interesting that the school is monitoring and recording community participation and addressing issues.

Pupils make good contributions to the local community through an extensive and well established programme of charity and other events. For some events, participation rates are high – for instance on class visits. Where activities are optional such as supporting charities, inevitably participation rates vary and there is a tendency for some pupils to participate in lots of things and for some pupils none at all unless they are class activities. We are working to address this and monitor participation carefully.

Our PSHE programme has been broadened to bring in citizenship. In consequence, pupils have a useful, developing understanding – for example, of how decisions are made in school and in the community as a whole. As indicated above, pupils now have many more opportunities to participate in the running of the school including an effective school council system involving all pupils in their classes and council members in meetings (see council minutes).

The overall conclusion here is interesting and honest. Coupled with an effective strategy, this could point to a very effective management despite its decision to go for an overall grade 3 because of current weaknesses in some aspects of personal development. Perhaps grade 2 might have been more accurate judgement?

We think we can do better. Until recently, personal development was something we did incidentally except, of course, that it has always been at the heart of what we are trying to in this school. We plan to monitor pupils' personal development more closely so that we are more certain of pupils' needs and more certain that we are finding the best ways of meeting them. As indicated above, mainly because of the domestic circumstances of some children, there is a core of pupils who have both academic and personal difficulties. This shows itself in poorer academic performance and behaviour and attendance problems. We have strategies in place to deal with these but we think that with greater focus on personal development, we can do even better than we are. This is now an issue for our development plan.

Example from an 11–16 large, mixed comprehensive school.

In this second example, the school records a summary of its work to improve attendance and behaviour.

Attendance has been a major area of development for us.

Attendance figures have steadily increased over the past four years from 84% to a hard won 91%. This has been gained as a result of a fierce focus throughout the school on the importance of attendance. Measures taken are: the introduction of an electronic registration system; close liaison with welfare officers and the attendance project team; monitoring and evaluating attendance data on all students before they enter; reward projects with students, parents, staff, teachers.

Priorities for improvement: attain 92% attendance rate by September 2005.

Overall judgement: adequate but our rate of progress against this target is good.

The school provides evidence of the impact of its work on attendance, but does not directly link this improvement to the impact on learners' personal development or attainment and progress. Does the school know whether its efforts are making a real difference?

The school then contrasts improvements in attendance with continuing problems relating to punctuality (not shown). Finally, it focuses on learners' attitudes and behaviour.

Students' behaviour and attitudes towards learning have been an on-going focus. Steps taken include: instituting a code of conduct; revisiting our mission statement; seeking students' views through focus groups, through school council; through surveys. Students generally behave reasonably well and their attitudes to learning are improving.

There is a continuing problem with a minority of disaffected learners, overwhelmingly boys of mixed race. We permanently exclude as a last resort when all other methods have been exhausted and have widened provision of learning inclusion strategies through: the development of a learning support unit; expansion of the SEN support for a wider range of students than those on the SEN register; use of learning mentors; alternative programmes (at the PRU) for those experiencing difficulty; counselling services; youth work development; closer working relationships with families including home visits. We have reduced the rate of permanent exclusions in the last year for example, in Year 9, from 15 to 8.

Priorities for improvement: reduction of fixed term exclusions to less than 8 per year group. Overall judgement: adequate but progress against this target is good.

Again, the school can provide hard evidence about improvements to its disaffected learners' behaviour and attitudes, but does not make a clear link to academic standards and levels of progress.

SEF SECTION 5: THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

Judgements about the quality of teaching are linked to the quality of learning and must be substantiated by hard evidence. So, for instance, schools will consider the standards and progress made by learners and make a judgement about the extent to which the quality of teaching contributes to these.

To make judgements about teaching, schools must have a very good understanding of its quality. Evaluators are asked particularly to comment on how well teaching is matched to learners' needs. This involves judging how well assessment information is used. Again, the 'How do you know?' question is a vital one to respond to.

Schools also need to make unequivocal, well-substantiated judgements on the curriculum and the care, guidance and support they offer. If aspects of the curriculum or aspects of care provision are not statutorily compliant, then this should be stated clearly and an explanation given.

Example from an average sized nursery school.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. We know this because the results of a range of monitoring activities including teaching observations by peers and careful recording of pupils' achievements all show children make good progress.

The strengths of teaching by both teaching and support staff include:

At first sight, this looks like a list of unsubstantiated assertions even though it could well be true...

- good knowledge and understanding of the foundation stage curriculum
- detailed lesson planning which provides well structured opportunities for children to show initiative, develop independence and autonomy, think for themselves and take ideas forward with confidence
- accurate evaluations of children's learning. Teachers make clear assessments that enable them to plan effectively to meet the needs of individual children and to target them for focus activities, individual or group work
- specific and effective plans to meet the needs of particular groups, including double place children, isolated children, children with EAL and SEN
- high quality interactions with children using carefully selected open ended questions
- support for children, helping them to participate in discussions and giving the children time to think before they answer
- the use of mother tongue to promote confidence and competence in speaking and improve pupils' understanding of English. The quality of bi-lingual teaching is reflected in the very good progress, made by pupils with EAL

- good use of opportunities across all areas of the curriculum to ensure new learning and consolidate skills
- the fact that all staff provide good role models by showing respect for children so that they feel safe and self-confident
- consistent behaviour management which generates a stable and safe learning environment.

... but here the school is providing useful pointers to its evidence to support its judgements.

Evidence for the above comes from our peer and senior staff monitoring of all aspects of teaching. Full records are kept. We have regular peer monitoring of teachers and also regular and less frequent monitoring by the head and deputy. Our monitoring and evaluations processes enable us to ensure that teaching is good and meets the needs of individuals very well. We also have a close relationship with our LEA link adviser and with schools in our cluster. We have joint monitoring using both and both are used as external moderators of our judgements. The results of monitoring are on file. We also monitor very carefully our data on pupils' progress (see below).

To ensure consistency in the quality of teaching we have clear systems to induct new members of staff, ongoing staff development through in-service, peer monitoring, modelling and opportunities to visit other settings.

The impact of this good quality teaching is shown as it enables all children, from a low starting point, to make good progress.

The school then addresses the curriculum, followed by care, guidance and support. We reproduce the latter here.

Note that the nursery includes the quality of 'wrap-around care' here, and links this to the progress that children make in personal development and language skills.

Children are cared for, guided and supported very well.

- The quality of our day care provision is very good and children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills
- We are alert and respond very well to children's emotional needs through targeted observations and good communication with children and parents
- We have good working relationships with external agencies such as the Children's Health Paediatrician and are developing strong relationships with the new Sure Start Health Team.

Here the nursery's judgements about the quality of care provide insight into the impact that this has on personal development and aspects of the Every Child Matters outcomes.

- Our strong links with external agencies ensure that as soon as they are identified, vulnerable children's needs are well met; this includes children with complex physical, medical and educational needs
- Our induction procedures, which include home visits, are very good and mean that children feel safe, secure and settle quickly and easily. They soon learn to move around the nursery with confidence and make choices for themselves
- Our feeder primary schools link well with us (this includes teachers' visits to the nursery before children transfer) to ensure that they are able to support children's personal, social and academic needs as soon as they are admitted
- We have clear procedures, which are well known and implemented by staff, to ensure that health and safety, children's security and child protection are given high priority at all times

SEF SECTION 6: THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Section 6 is about leadership and management throughout the school. It is often the most difficult area for headteachers and senior staff to evaluate and an external perspective can be helpful in drawing up this section. Headteachers have found that judging leadership and management by outcomes offers a very useful starting point. Judgements about the quality of leadership and management must be consistent with others elsewhere in the SEF. If everything is very good in a school, the chances are that the leadership and management at all levels are very good. Likewise, the converse will be true. If, for example, there is an inadequate sixth form, it is difficult to see how managers and governors can bear no responsibility for this; it must reflect on judgements about their performance overall.

Some hard-edged judgements are required, based on well-founded evidence. For instance, how do managers know that opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled? What monitoring is done and how are problems averted or addressed when they arise? Similarly, how do senior managers and governors monitor value for money in respect of staffing and resources or how is the quality of links with outside agencies monitored? It is not enough just to say governors are good; such judgements must be clearly substantiated.

Finally, leadership and management need not necessarily be of identical quality and most heads will readily recognise that they have strengths one way or the other. For instance, a head may offer inspirational leadership but rely on deputies for key management roles and decisions.

Our example here comes from a 3 – 19 community special school for about 100 pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties. We only show part of the school's response here, in relation to leadership.

There are a lot of claims here which may be regarded as assertions. Nevertheless, there is a lot of accompanying detail and explanation which is authoritative and convincing.

How effectively do leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of integrated care, education and training?

The Joint Evaluation of School Effectiveness (JESE) has for three years confirmed that leadership and management is very good because of the input this has had on raising standards and moving the school in positive directions. Governors and the external adviser in 2002 judged the work of the headteacher to be very good and, in 2003, to be excellent.

The school has a powerful vision based on strongly held beliefs and values that are centred upon principles of equality for its pupils, high standards and excellence in its provision. This message underpins all elements of the school's work. The strap line 'Challenge – Achieve – Celebrate' serves as a reminder to all, of the school's intentions. The vision is clearly articulated in the prospectus and school improvement plan.

The aims and priorities for the school are clearly set out in the School Improvement Plan. Annual review of these by all staff ensures that they have regular emphasis within school processes. Governors and parents are included in the process of reviewing the draft plan but have not suggested any changes in the last two years. Very good work was carried out with all staff in realising the role of the plan in self-evaluation and raising standards for example an exercise in 2002 on "When I am in a good lesson I see..."

Here, we get a feel for what inspectors can explore to test out the school's evaluations.

The School Improvement Plan accurately reflects and informs school planning promoting both the vision and goals of the school. It has two elements one which is strategic and plans for the longer term and the other which is an annual action plan. Both are linked to careful financial planning. At the time of the likely next Ofsted inspection the strategic element will be in draft and out for consultation in order to be confirmed at the commencement of the academic year, the annual action plan for 2004/5 be at final draft as planning for what needs to be taking place next year is linked to the allocation of resources in March/April 2004 and subsequent decisions by governors in June.

Having addressed the issues presented in the SEF, the school presents an overall conclusion.

Overall Summary

There are things we need to improve. We should:

- begin to remedy the effect of limited budgets in the previous years on existing buildings, ICT equipment and curriculum resources
- continue to develop the role of governors in challenging what we do and holding the school properly to account
- continue to seek improvements in services for pupils with mental health problems
- continue to improve interagency working in order to improve the way we meet the five outcomes of ECM.

Despite this, leadership and management of the school are very good. The school's vision is clear, shared with all and informs day to day provision and planning for the future. The highest expectations are held by the management team. Excellence is noted and rewarded and weaknesses are addressed ultimately without compromise.

Although funding recently has been poor and accommodation presents difficulties, the school has been imaginative and determined making the very best of what it has. Value for money is very good because the school produces good results. The school's inter-agency working is excellent and ensures that for the large majority of pupils the five outcomes of ECM are met.

The school graded itself 1. It would be hard to disagree with this view given the evidence in the SEF.

When inspectors visit the school, they will use the school's SEF to:

- select a range of evidence*
- explore a range of evidence to see whether the school's evaluations are secure.*

SEF SECTION 7: OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

In the final section of the SEF, all the previous evaluations are brought together. It addresses three main questions:

- the overall effectiveness of the provision, including any extended services, and its main strengths and weaknesses
- the effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection
- the school's capacity to make further improvement.

Judgements and supporting evidence need to be consistent *with all those given elsewhere*. It is also important to be very frank about the extent to which the school has improved since the last inspection, what needs to be done to improve further and its capacity is to improve in the future.

Here, the selection is from an 11 – 16 comprehensive school focusing on judgements on academic standards and teaching. In the original, other aspects of the school are also covered.

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. Improvement since the last inspection and the capacity to make further improvement has been very good. In making these judgements the following strengths have been identified:

- there is a high level of achievement across the full spectrum of the curriculum from learners of all abilities
- learners' personal development is very good
- there is effective leadership and management that promote high expectations and a continual quest for improvement and innovation
- high quality enrichment opportunities support learners' learning and development
- very good student teacher relationships create an atmosphere conducive to learning
- pastoral support systems help overcome barriers to learning and promote inclusion.

What has improved since the last inspection?

In terms of academic standards:

At Key Stage 4:

- overall pass rate of 5+ A - C have increased from 79% to 82%
- new GCSE courses in Japanese (83%) and Italian (94%) match existing MFL standards
- there has been significant improvement in results from a very high base in English Language/Literature, Design Technology, Art and Design and Drama.

This represents a useful summary of the overall effectiveness of the school.

At Key Stage 3:

- percentage of learners achieving Level 5+ in all core subjects has increased from 81% to 84%
- percentage of learners achieving Level 6+ in all core subjects has increased from 58% to 67%.

It is very clear here about what still needs to be done to improve the school still further.

What needs to be done to secure further improvement?

In terms of teaching and learning:

- we need to improve achievement in those subjects identified as under-performing relative to similar schools/other subjects/high expectations
- we need to ensure that the quality of teaching is maintained at a very good level by ensuring that the points for development identified in lesson observations are clearly identified in performance management objectives and address higher order teaching skills
- we wish to use the option of increased flexibility at Key Stage 4 to offer a wider range of vocational subjects
- we intend to maximise the use of the new virtual learning environment to improve access to ICT. We also intend to develop, further, our citizenship curriculum, especially in KS3.

In terms of facilities:

- we must continue to address the inequalities of provision in relation to accommodation particularly in Art, Music, Mathematics and PE
- we must increase access to ICT for learners and teaching and administrative staff.

In terms of management and organisation:

- we will address the inconsistency of middle management through an extended focus on leadership and management within departmental reviews and the extension of peer observation and coaching
- we need to monitor, review and evaluate the collection and use of data to ensure it effectively analyses performance and informs development planning.

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