

AIMING FOR
EXCELLENCE

EXPLORING
EXCELLENCE



HOW GOOD
ARE WE NOW?

PLANNING FOR
EXCELLENCE

HOW GOOD IS OUR SCHOOL? **THE JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE**

Part 1: Aiming for Excellence

Part 2: Exploring Excellence

Please note in the six-point scale a level 3 evaluation where strengths just outweigh weaknesses is now described as 'satisfactory'.

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Foreword

'Inspection evidence shows that Scottish education does many things well and some things particularly well.'
Graham Donaldson, HMSCI

Foreword

In the Commentary which introduces *Improving Scottish Education*¹, I wrote, 'Inspection evidence shows that Scottish education does many things well and some things particularly well.'

The fact that I can write such a statement in 2006 bears testimony to the success of the 'Scottish approach' in combining internal and external evaluation in order to bring about school improvement. This distinctive approach to improvement, first outlined in the common language of *How good is our school?*², and in *The Child at the Centre*³, has developed over more than fifteen years within a creative partnership which has brought together schools, education authorities, the Scottish Executive, HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and other partners. The effectiveness of the approach has been widely recognised across the international educational community.

For many good or very good schools, particularly those with a strong critical awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses and a track record of improvement, the challenge now is to move on and aim for excellence.

The aim of *How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence* is to provide practical support for all those schools and early education centres which are now ready to make that step change: from good to great. This change of perspective from aiming for 'very good' to aiming for 'excellent' is a sign that the quality culture within Scottish schools has matured, that Scottish education is ready to take self-evaluation to the next level. It means moving the focus from reflection to action.

In order to improve, leaders need to win hearts and minds. However, evangelising rhetoric is not enough. What is needed is clarity of perception, accurate and honest analysis and the will and capacity to drive forward improvements for learners. These qualities, combined with an equally clear recognition of the key drivers for improvement, are the ingredients of 'intelligent accountabilities'. And schools are accountable to children, to parents, and to all stakeholders of the school's community.

¹ *Improving Scottish Education*, HMIE, February 2006

² *How good is our school?*, HM Inspectors of Schools 1996

³ *The Child at the Centre*, HM Inspectors of Schools 1998

As education is a service for children, young people and their parents and families, Scottish education has largely avoided being pre-occupied with competition or the kind of choices which benefit one set of 'customers' at the expense of others. It has focused on ensuring that all children learn well. It recognises the distinctive and invaluable contributions which each of the key players makes to ensuring that all young people experience success. These players include parents and teachers and all the support staff who make up the school community, the partners with whom they work for the benefit of young people, and the wider community within which the school plays such an important role and from which it gains so much. All these players have a voice. However, it is the voices of children and their parents which need to be listened to first and foremost.

All these qualities are aspects of excellence. Excellent schools demonstrate them to an extent which is outstanding, which marks them beyond the norm. In this publication, we have called these aspects 'dimensions' and have identified some of the key features of each. We have selected the dimensions from those which appear repeatedly in international research and in our inspections of schools and early education centres. Each of the dimensions is linked with one or more quality indicators. These indicators will be published in Part 4 of the series, in *How good are we now?*. They replace the quality indicators in the 2002 version of *How good is our school?*. For each dimension *The Journey to Excellence* 'unpicks' and identifies practical actions which HMIE knows make a difference.

A key driver for improvement in any organisation is leadership. Leaders build excellence into their day-to-day work. They set and meet improvement goals, and they plan, monitor and evaluate improvements. They quality assure the improvements they have made and they ensure that the reputation of the school is one of 'high quality'. They create value by working with partners and stakeholders. They are not faint-hearted.

Leaders of excellent schools and early education centres do exactly the same. Inspectors see that in schools and they report on it. The leaders of excellent schools ensure coherence across all aspects of the work of the school and, importantly, they ensure consistency of quality across learners' experiences. They focus on purposes and on improving the processes which are central to the success of the school – success in learning. They avoid failure through prompt and effective interventions. They quantify outcomes and develop and apply measures of success for these. Leaders of excellent schools align all the school's processes to focus on improving learning and relationships. They listen to and value people.

THE JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

Inspection and reporting can help both HMIs and colleagues in the establishments they inspect to focus on what needs to be done and how to bring about a step change in the quality and consistency of learning. Action will always focus on meeting the needs of the children and young people served by the school. Action will also involve organising and managing effective continuous professional development for staff. Crucial to the process of aiming for excellence is the education authority. The most successful authorities involve school leaders as senior officers of the authority in decision-making, planning and delivery, thus eliminating any potential barriers to progress in relationships between schools and authorities. This involvement is a key responsibility of all headteachers. It brings with it accountability not only for the children within their 'own' establishments but for all young people in all the schools within the local area.



Graham Donaldson, HMSCI

How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence has deep roots in the development of the quality culture in Scottish education. It brings together the principles of self-evaluation, school development planning, measuring and managing performance and school effectiveness and improvement. But it does more than that. It takes these principles to the next level by presenting a coherent view of what works, and how schools can achieve excellence in all that they do. It is ambitious but builds on the secure knowledge that Scottish schools themselves are ambitious for the children and young people of Scotland.





Introduction

'It's an excellent school!'. What do people mean when they say that? Is there such a thing as an excellent school? Can schools be 'excellent' across the board? What sorts of things are people thinking of when they talk about excellence?



Introduction

'It's an excellent school!'. What do people mean when they say that? Is there such a thing as an excellent school? Can schools be 'excellent' across the board? What sorts of things are people thinking of when they talk about excellence? Would children and young people have the same idea of an excellent school as their teachers, or their parents, or members of the local community?

'Excellence' is a term we use to describe the farthest end of the quality spectrum. When we think of excellence, we think of an aspect which is outstanding, a model of its kind – the very best there is.

This resource attempts to look at some of the things we think of when we talk about 'excellence' in schools or early education centres. We have called them 'dimensions' and have identified ten of them and some of the key features of each.



Where do these ten dimensions come from?

We have selected the dimensions from those which appear repeatedly in international research in schools and in HMIE inspections of schools and early education. We have tested them out by talking to a range of people who are actively involved in school communities which demonstrate some of the features of excellence. In this respect, excellence is attainable by all in schools.

There is no single formula for excellence, because there are many different ways in which schools can pursue the achievement of excellence in the various aspects of their work. Excellence is seen as a journey rather than as something fixed and pre-determined. How to get there will depend on the road chosen, the conditions at the starting point and along the way, and the interactions of the group of travellers who make up the party.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for everyone who works to teach, support and improve the learning experiences of children and young people in our schools.

It is for all staff:

- who lead and direct the learning process within the classroom and playroom
- who lead and contribute to developments in learning within their school communities
- who lead teams within the school.

It is for all leaders – within the school itself and the education authority – who direct and support the work of others.

It is for all staff who contribute to learning within and beyond the classroom or playroom, and provide support for individual pupils.

It is for people who work in partnership with the school: parents³, residential care staff, agencies, community groups, other educational establishments and local businesses.

What does this guide do?

This guide describes some of the things which school leaders, teachers and support staff do, and which we know are successful in helping children and young people to learn and achieve.

It is based on real examples of some of the best practice from Scottish schools, drawn from observations by HM Inspectorate of Education.

It summarises and builds on the conclusions of international research on learning and teaching and on school effectiveness and improvement.

It takes forward the approach which has been at the heart of the quality culture and improvement framework in Scotland for almost two decades.

It reports some of the things which young people, teachers, headteachers, parents, support staff and other members of the school community have told us they are doing to achieve excellence.

Throughout this guide the terms:

- ‘school’ should be taken to include early education centres, residential and day special schools (including secure provision), and primary and secondary schools, wherever it is used
- ‘teachers’ and ‘staff’ should be taken to include all adults who contribute to children’s learning, including support staff, staff working in early education centres and care staff in residential special schools (including secure provision), wherever they are used
- ‘parents’ should be taken to refer to parents, foster carers, carers who are relatives or friends and care staff in residential settings (including secure provision), wherever it is used. In the absence of parents, local authorities have a statutory duty to take on this role for looked after and accommodated children
- ‘young people’ should be taken to refer to children aged three to eighteen. The terms ‘learners’, ‘children’ and ‘pupils’ are also used, to provide variety. In all cases, the terms cover those within the 3-18 age group, who are learning in early education centres, residential and day special schools (including secure provision), and primary and secondary schools.

What does the guide contain?

The guide is in five parts, to be published at intervals over the next year. This publication contains Parts 1 and 2.

Part 1: Aiming for Excellence

- describes the concept of excellence
- discusses the nature of the learning process and what we mean by successful learning
- outlines ten dimensions of excellent schools and early education centres.

Part 2: Exploring Excellence

- describes the key features of each of the ten dimensions of excellence in more detail
- provides examples and illustrations in a variety of forms
- indicates some of the ways in which excellent practice differs from practice which is good
- suggests the direction schools need to travel to transform their practice from good to excellent.

Part 3: How good are we now?

- provides the next version of *How good is our school?*, a quality framework made up of quality indicators and performance measures to help you work out where you are now and think through your next steps in continuous improvement.

Part 4: Planning for Excellence

- provides advice about how you and your partners can go about selecting the most appropriate dimensions for improvement
- recommends ways of planning for your journey to excellence
- suggests how you can check your progress.

Part 5: Journeys to Excellence

- provides real examples of excellent practice in schools and early education centres, in audio-visual format
- presents the voices of children, young people, staff, parents and partners describing the stage their school has reached on the journey to excellence, the route it has taken and where they are going next.



What are schools and early education centres about?

Schools are complex organisations. To suggest that there is a simple blueprint or recipe which guarantees excellence is to misrepresent and undersell the very sophisticated process which is the day-in day-out job of teachers and support staff across the country.

What are schools and early education centres about?

Schools are complex organisations. To suggest that there is a simple blueprint or recipe which guarantees excellence is to misrepresent and undersell the very sophisticated process which is the day-in day-out job of teachers and support staff across the country.

What we do know, is that there are certain pre-conditions which make excellence possible or, at least, more likely.

We know that schools are about people, and the relationships between them. Schools are about learning. Schools are about supporting children so that they develop positive attitudes to learning from a very early age. Schools are about being successful and wanting to learn and achieve, and to carry on learning and achieving.

Schools are about children with developing minds and an enormous potential for learning.

Schools are about young people, many of whom have retained all that enthusiasm for learning which they had in their early years. Others are disenchanted with school, feel they are failures, find school boring and, perhaps, don't want to learn any more. Some may have little support at home and little preparation for learning. Some may no longer be able to live at home. Some may be moving along at a reasonable speed but could gain so much more and go so much further.

Schools are also about parents. Most think that their children's schools are good places for them to learn in. Of course, at times they are concerned about whether the school is good enough, whether their children are learning well enough, whether they are safe and happy, whether they will be successful, whether they will do well when they move on to the next stage of their education, or into work. Parents also worry whether they – and their teachers, and other adults who help them – are doing the right things, whether they have equipped their children properly, whether they are giving them the right help.

Schools are about teachers and early education staff, classroom and support assistants, care staff, technicians, office staff and janitors who, every day, support and encourage and tidy up after these enthusiastic – and sometimes reluctant – young minds. They too need to learn, but sometimes feel too tired or too busy.

And schools are also about all the other people out there – beyond the school gates – who support the school and its pupils. Youth workers, social workers, quality improvement officers, police officers, voluntary workers, careers officers, nurses, doctors, therapists, psychologists, chaplains, employers... Some of them are around and about the school a lot. Some of them work hard behind the scenes. All of them make invaluable contributions to the lives, well-being and achievements of children in our educational communities.

These communities – both within the school and surrounding it – provide the social context of most towns and villages in Scotland. Excellent schools reflect this close community relationship in many different ways.

How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence is about bringing together the various people within the school community in positive, productive and creative relationships with each other. These relationships focus on achieving success for all children and young people.



What is certain is that every child can learn. It is up to the people who support them through the learning process to strive to ensure that each and every one of them learns at the pace that is most appropriate for them, and to meet their needs in the best possible way.

Success involves wanting to learn now, and wanting to carry on learning in the future.

What do we mean by success?

Success manifests itself in many different ways and in many different forms.

Success involves wanting to learn now, and wanting to carry on learning in the future.

In Scotland, learning is, in particular, about developing the four capacities in *A Curriculum for Excellence*⁵. It is about being successful in learning, being confident, being a good citizen and being able and willing to contribute. And in order to achieve this, all Scotland's children need to be safe, well looked after, healthy and active. They need to be treated with respect, to be included, to be helped to achieve and encouraged to act responsibly.

But for all, success is about realising potential, about achieving.

Achievement is not about soft options, it is about becoming fit and healthy and feeling good about yourself, about learning to achieve in sporting activities. Success is about developing creative skills: in problem-solving, in technical activities, in music, art, design, media and drama. It is about being enterprising, about becoming productive. It is about learning to work effectively on your own or with others in groups. Success is also about learning to express yourself, becoming confident and assured, believing that the contribution you make to society is valuable and will be valued. It is about making thoughtful decisions and choices. It is about feeling included and responsible for yourself and for others and about learning to care about other people. It is about learning to care about the world and wanting to make it a better place now and for future generations.

For some, success will mean high attainment levels: in SQA⁴ results, in 5-14 levels, in class assessments, in tasks completed. And attainment is important for all young people. It can have a significant influence on the 'life chances' of our young people. It opens doors.

Success may also mean improved attendance, being more engaged and involved, learning to live and work with others. It means being well prepared for the next stage of learning, whether that is primary school, secondary school or post-school education and employment. It means being well prepared generally, for example, by parents who can help by making sure that their children are well cared for, and are happy and ready to learn.

Success in learning will always mean progress. With growing success comes growth in self-esteem. The pace of children's progress may be faster or slower, depending on the stage they have reached, their history of success in learning, the skills, abilities and talents they bring with them into the learning process and the range of barriers and challenges they face. It also depends crucially on the quality of learning and teaching they experience.

What is certain is that every child can learn. It is up to the people who support them through the learning process to strive to ensure that each and every one of them learns at the pace that is most appropriate for them, and to meet their needs in the best possible way.

⁴ Scottish Qualifications Authority

⁵ *A Curriculum for Excellence*, Scottish Executive, 2004

What are the kinds of things which people want from schools?

I want to do well.

I want to enjoy learning and find it interesting and fun.

I want my children to learn and I want them to be safe and happy at school.

We want schools which enable children to be successful in learning, to achieve highly and gain the qualifications they need.

We want schools which provide good value. We want children nowadays to have a better education than was sometimes the case in the past.

We want schools to help children become healthy.

What are the kinds of things which children and young people often say?

What do parents often say?

And teachers?

I want my pupils to do well.

I want them to get on with their work, but I also want them to enjoy it.

I want to get on well with other people.

I want to have a good teacher, a teacher I like.

We want schools in which children learn to take responsibility for themselves and for other people, and which nurture children's talents and provide activities such as music and sport beyond the formal curriculum.

What do we often hear the rest of society saying?

We want schools where children learn through the most up-to-date technologies, and where they develop the skills they need to work and to support themselves and others. We want them to have the ability and confidence to contribute to their local communities and to the well-being and prosperity of Scotland as a whole.

We want schools where children learn to be safe and to keep other people safe.

We want schools which look after children and care about them, which make children feel good about themselves, and which help them to succeed.

All this sounds like a lot to expect from schools.

So why all the talk about ‘excellence’?

If we go back a number of years – to the 1980s – a lot of the talk was about ‘effective’ schools. Effective schools were schools which did the job they were set up to do. At that time, the main concern was ensuring a consistent level of quality across all schools so that no matter where they lived, children would be assured a good quality of education – quality assurance, in other words. The priority was to ensure that no schools fell below acceptable standards in relation to the education they provided and the way they were managed.

A lot of research was carried out into the key features of effectiveness and HMIE published two influential reports *Effective Secondary Schools*⁶ and *Effective Primary Schools*⁷. These reports provided sensible practical advice about ensuring appropriate standards across a range of factors recognised as being important in school effectiveness.

Since then, of course, ideas in education have moved on. ‘Quality assurance’ has evolved into ‘quality improvement’ as people realise that expectations change, and that what was good practice then, is less appropriate – or not good enough – now. In the first edition of *How good is our school?*, HMIE wrote: ‘What we mean by quality changes over time in response to changes in society.’ These changes affect the world young people live in, a world of fast and far-reaching change, a world of emerging uncertainties in the social, political, technological and economic environments. Each one of these changes poses a challenge.

Over the years, the emphasis has increasingly been on continuous improvement, on reviewing the quality of education, on planning and delivering a better service. This emphasis is as it should be. For children and young people in Scotland, ‘only the best will do’. And there is little doubt that most schools have got, and are continuing to get, better.

How good is our school? *The Journey to Excellence* aims to provide further challenge for those schools which have already made considerable progress. They may already be good or very good in many aspects of their work. The guide provides a map of the territory, and suggests different ways of getting to the chosen destination.

Experienced travellers know that having completed the climb or finished the walk they feel a sense of satisfaction, yet are also ready for another challenge. So it is with learning – the destination is really only a stop along the way. There will be new generations – children and staff – offering new perspectives and presenting new goals. And schools will respond with new ideas and solutions.

The dimensions of excellence described in this guide do not cover all the things which schools do. Rather, they focus on those aspects which we have found to be particularly important for success. The guide assumes other aspects of schools are working well. For example, most schools now have effective development plans, policies and systems. They are good at looking after their resources and ensuring they are used effectively. They are well prepared for the journey to excellence.

The guide focuses on the key activity within schools: learning. It is about how children learn, and the best ways of enabling them to learn. It is about communities of learners in which everyone is learning – teachers, early education staff, support staff and care staff, parents and partners, as well as children. It assumes that the whole purpose of a school is to enable children to develop and to achieve through learning and that the best way for children to learn is through positive relationships with others: relationships with their teachers, with other adults, with other pupils, and with all the other people who make up the school’s wider community.

⁶ *Effective Secondary Schools*, Scottish Office Education Department (1988)

⁷ *Effective Primary Schools*, Scottish Office Education Department (1989)

What is 'learning'?

We may recognise in people when certain types of learning have occurred – perhaps they know more, or have developed new skills. But what, exactly, is 'learning'?

There are many theories of learning. New evidence, like that beginning to emerge from the neurosciences, adds to the complexity. At a very basic level, learning is a change in a person resulting from interactions with the environment. That change takes place most significantly in the hugely complex pattern of connections that form and re-form in the brain. This notion of a person being unique, adapting flexibly to his or her environment throughout life is underlined by evidence of the enormous plasticity and capacity for change in the brain. Young learners have a great capacity for such change. It lasts throughout life.

Since the learner has to engage directly in a process through which he or she is physically, emotionally and mentally changed, it is clear that some teaching can take place without resulting in learning because the learner has not actively engaged with the experiences provided for him or her.

Learners engage actively by thinking, experiencing, experimenting, doing, practising. Thinking about what they are sensing in the environment. What they are hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, feeling, imagining – thinking. Frequently in language, but not exclusively so.

Learners also engage through curiosity and personal motivation and interest. They gain sudden insights and want to know more. They both build on what they already know and use the 'scaffolding' which others provide.

And as learners encounter new ideas or ideas that conflict with what they have previously learned – what they 'know' – their learning is gradually built up, by exploring these new ideas and conflicts. An ideal way of doing this is through talking and listening – and other forms of communication. A vital part of improving learners' experiences is increasing thinking time, and time for dialogue. For example, really good dialogue is encouraged when the teacher poses open questions, questions that challenge learners to engage, to explore, to think, to understand, and to learn. Great teachers ask great questions.

What might prevent the learner becoming actively engaged? Most teachers, and parents, will be familiar with the commonsense responses of being 'well fed and watered', rested, safe, happy, interested and motivated. All of these are true. Children will not learn effectively if they are hungry or dehydrated. They will not learn if they are stressed, resentful or anxious, so emotional and physical well-being and the development of positive relationships and a climate for learning across the school are vital. They will get 'bored' if they don't see the relevance of what they are learning. They won't learn if the activities they are engaged in take too little account of

where they are now, or of any individual barriers they face. Being or feeling excluded, or having insufficient opportunities to be active in their learning also makes it difficult for children⁸. In other words, schools need to have a readiness for learners, a readiness for learning. In dealing with these

⁸ *Missing Out*, HMIE 2006

challenges and barriers, parents, carers and residential care staff are essential partners. While there is a high correlation between a learner's home background and his or her success, excellent schools succeed in taking all children's learning well beyond what may seem to some to be predetermined by social and economic factors.

And by no means all learning takes place in the classroom. Much learning takes place in school but beyond the classroom or playroom – through visits and activity weeks, social interactions, breaktimes, experiences in clubs and societies, student councils and school plays. In residential schools, this is provided through the '24 hour curriculum'. All such activities and interactions are opportunities for learning, and the more schools plan such experiences for all learners, and the more diverse they are to attract all learners, the better.

These social interactions are all the more productive in the context of positive relationships. In developing positive relationships and interactions in every aspect of its life, the school is developing learning – learning for children and young people and learning for the whole school community. Children need to experience high quality learning regularly, and in all classrooms and across all aspects of school life. Excellence should not be reliant upon particular individuals, although they may give the necessary lead. Sustainability of excellence is key. Excellence involves the whole school community and ensures excellence for everyone in that community.

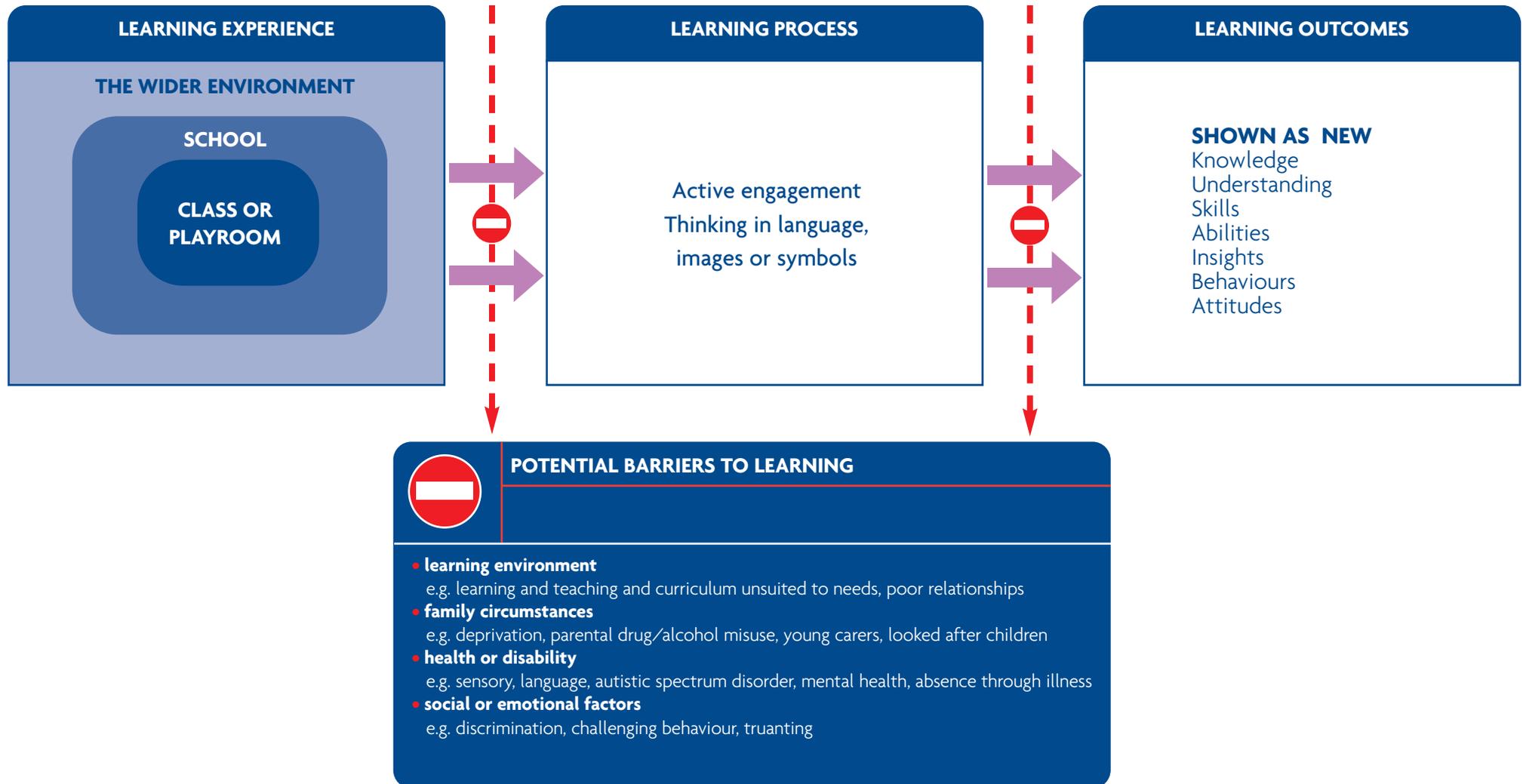
Children and young people are only in classrooms for a portion of their lives. They construct their views of the world from a number of diverse sources. And they will carry on doing this for the rest of their lives. Much learning takes place beyond the school gate and the school day. It is a wider social activity which takes place within families, within the care aspects of early education and residential settings, in activities out in the



wider community. Often these stem from the natural relationship between the school and the community and people round about it – things like concerts, shows or helping the environment. Sometimes these activities are organised by youth workers or members of the business community.

School, however, is a place of accelerated learning via highly structured interactions with others and with new ideas. It is vital that all this school time is maximised, inside and outside the classroom. Every minute is a learning opportunity, and every minute counts.

Learning as change through interacting with the environment



Excellent schools achieve that. They create the highest quality learning experiences. And they focus at all times on achieving their agreed outcomes. They do it through developing positive relationships in everything they do.

Some people like to visualise the concepts they are thinking about.

The diagram on the opposite page demonstrates how the learner interacts with a range of experiences in a number of different contexts: in the playroom, in the classroom, in the school as a whole and in the wider community.

The skilled educator chooses how to structure the environment for the learner – a crucial aspect of ‘teaching’. The diagram also shows the kinds of barriers which can come between the learner and learning. Usually, we use language – or images, or symbols – as part of the process of learning. Learners formulate ideas, interpret patterns within them, and work out relationships between them. They articulate them and rehearse them. Learning of any sort is marked by changes in the structure of the brain. It can be observed through developing knowledge, understanding and skills, and through changes in attitudes and behaviour.

How does learning link to teaching?

When groups of teachers get together to discuss how to improve learning for children and young people, the conversation often revolves around courses and programmes of work. For example, they might talk about structure and sequence, whether of topics or sections or modules, or the texts or worksheets used.

All of these considerations are very important. However, there is often less discussion about what learning is and how it takes place or, adopting the learner’s perspective, how learning can be organised for the best possible outcomes – the professional craft of teaching.

In schools, you might sometimes hear people say, ‘that was a good lesson’ or ‘that was a good activity’. How did they know? What did the learners think about that particular lesson? Are we sure it was a successful lesson from the learners’ point of view?

At the heart of this publication are the four outcomes of *A Curriculum for Excellence*: that children and young people should become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. To achieve these outcomes, we need successful learning and teaching. And successful learning and teaching depends on two particular features being in place:

- teachers creating the highest quality learning experiences; and
- both learners and teachers focusing rigorously on the achievement of learning outcomes.

This involves young people knowing what it is they need to learn. And staff getting to know learners well as individuals, and discovering exactly what their learning, and other, needs are, and how they learn best.

That may sound obvious. But not only do learners need to know where they're going, they also need to know when they've got there. In other words, they need to know what the teacher is looking for. Even very young children can benefit from this process if given careful and sensitive support. The Assessment is for Learning programme has looked at many of the features of successful learning and teaching. It has asked us to consider:

- whether learning outcomes are made clear to learners, in a format which they find accessible, whether this be in words or pictures or using some other medium;
- whether we continue to give learners a clear indication of what it is they are aiming to learn as work continues on a topic or skill;
- how to stimulate children's thinking and confidence as learners;
- the amount and quality of feedback we give to learners on their progress, 'quality' meaning the extent to which feedback focuses on what the learners need to do next to achieve the outcomes, and, as part of this, finding out what learners already know and building on it; and
- how to develop children's own awareness of, and reflection on, their learning – their approaches to it, their successes, their needs and how to get help.

Assessment for learning is not new, and it's not that complicated, but for many it does represent a shift in thinking.

Clear indications of what it is the teacher is looking for enable teachers and pupils to establish mutual expectations. There is a clear link between expectations and success. In order to set expectations at the highest appropriate level, schools need to know how well their children are doing. And that's where comparisons with the success of others come in. It is vital to know how well groups of pupils are doing compared with other similar groups:

- how pupils in one curricular area are doing in comparison with how the same pupils are doing in other curricular areas;
- how the school is doing in comparison with other similar schools; and
- how groups of schools are doing when compared with other groups of schools, be that in an education authority or some other grouping.

That is one aspect of 'sharing the standard'. It is not only about individual teachers and groups of teachers sharing the standards they apply when assessing the work of individual children, but also about departments, schools and groups of schools sharing their standards to encourage all to aspire to the best. Staff working in early education may also find it helpful to compare their own practice and the progress and development of their children with examples from other establishments. This is likely to be through descriptions of what children can do rather than through formal levels of achievement.

Another important aspect of sharing the standard is developing a common understanding of success criteria related to areas of learning and applying them in assessing classwork and what children can do. As professionals, when we judge success we look for signs that learning has taken place through obvious changes in, for example, knowledge, understanding, skills, abilities, insights, behaviours and attitudes. A continuing challenge for us is

that, often, these complex areas are not easily assessed. Yet such assessment of learning through teachers' professional judgements is vital for achieving excellence. Well-designed national assessments and examinations are additional measures that increase the validity and reliability of assessment overall, but do not replace teachers' assessments.

Assessment arrangements that support excellence operate at a number of levels. Schools need to be information and data rich, in respect of both teachers' assessments and external results, and to use that information and data to assess how successful learning has been in the round. They need to use assessment to develop and support learning and teaching, and to share standards, in the sense of both understanding criteria and comparing the levels of attainment of pupils in the school with those achieved by others.

That means both using assessment for learning approaches, and, equally, sharing standards both formatively and summatively.

What about teaching itself?

It almost goes without saying that the whole point of teaching is to make learning happen. High quality teaching is a key factor in achieving successful learning and a vital context for the journey to excellence.

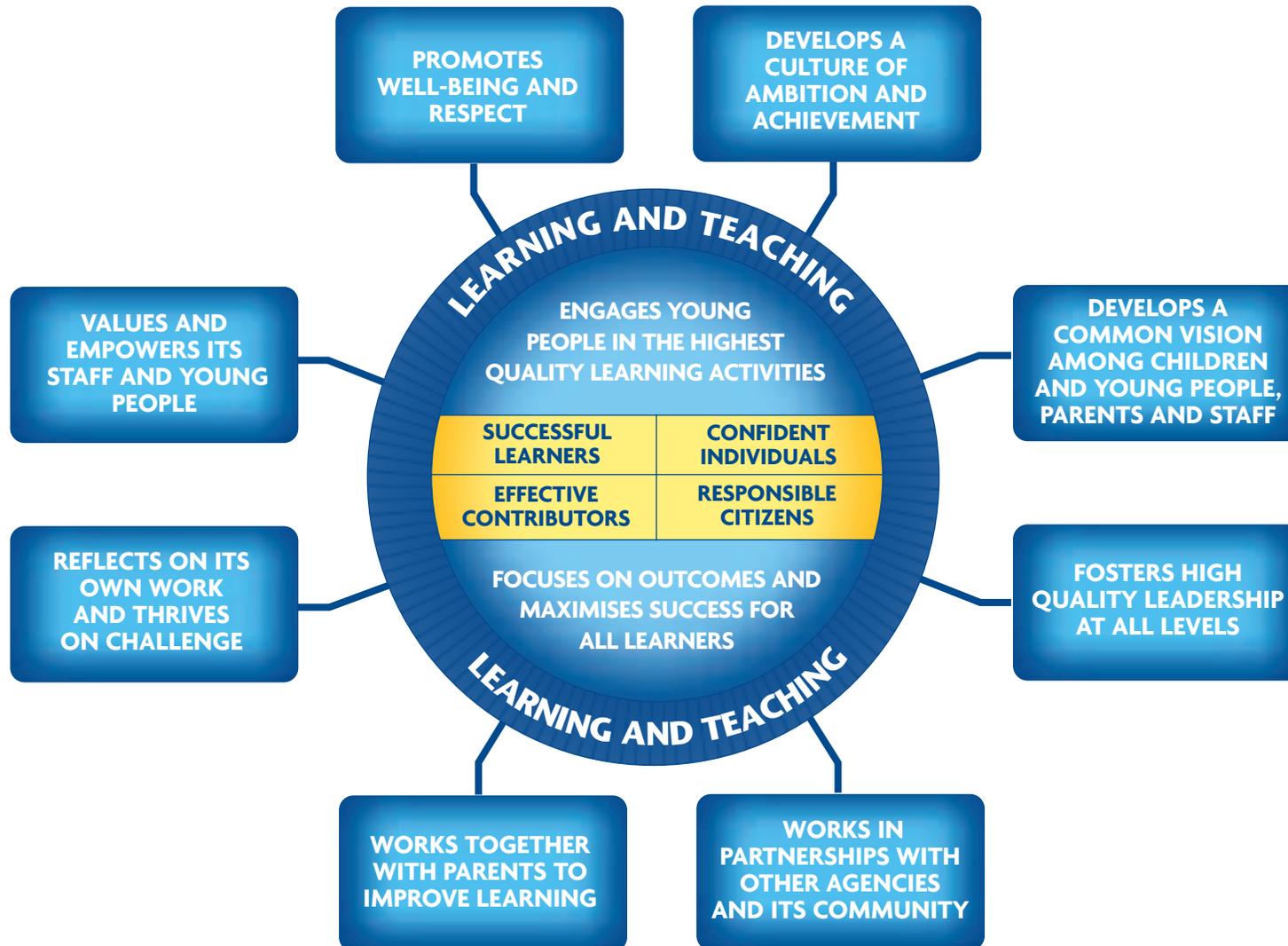
In excellent schools, teaching involves skilful organisation of the classroom or playroom which enables all children to learn and develop, and to build on and sustain their learning. Such teaching employs a variety of carefully planned teaching approaches, well matched to the different learning needs and stages of development of individual children. It gives children choices about tasks and activities, where these would help them to learn. We know that young people learn best when their teachers provide clear explanations,

which build on what they already know and lead them to deeper understanding. Excellent teaching ensures that children and young people are knowledgeable about their own strengths and needs and clear and confident about what they need to do to improve.

In excellent schools, teachers are aware of different kinds of questioning and select the most effective from their repertoire to meet the needs of the learners, the topic and the learning activity. Remember, great teachers ask great questions. They observe how children respond and adapt their teaching accordingly. Such schools encourage children to be active in their learning, to debate with and challenge the views of their fellow learners and their teachers. They have teachers who share their enthusiasms and insights with children and create a rich, challenging and supportive climate for learning. They have teachers who share their enthusiasms and insights with each other, who engage actively in their professional development, and who apply what they have learned. Excellent schools are very successful in developing and nurturing productive and constructive relationships between all members of the school community, and particularly between teachers and learners. Excellent schools know themselves well, and the people in them work together to make things better.

High quality teaching is a key factor in achieving successful learning and a vital context for the journey to excellence.

The Ten Dimensions of Excellence



How is this guide going to help you on the journey to excellence?

Travellers need to know their destination, what and where they are aiming for. In this guide we have attempted to describe the main 'dimensions' of excellence, in other words, what excellence looks like. We have chosen ten dimensions and described the key features – and sub-features – of each.

Each of the ten dimensions relates to key processes within the school. Each should contribute to the very highest quality outcomes for all learners. Although the dimensions are presented one by one, there are strong relationships between them. The dimensions help you to make sense of what may look like complex – and sometimes conflicting – expectations. It is up to you to decide which ones you focus on and in what order.

The diagram on the page opposite shows the ten dimensions of excellence, and the relationships between them. At the heart of the model there are two key dimensions:

- engaging young people in the highest quality learning activities; and
- focusing on outcomes and maximising success for all learners.

These two key dimensions derive from the highest standards of learning and teaching, an essential context for all that the school does.

All the other dimensions contribute to excellence in learning and a focus on achieving successful outcomes. Working clockwise round the model, we can see that in an excellent school the school community as a whole is involved in developing and living a common vision. Such a school has strong leadership at all levels, leadership for learning. It works with other agencies, the community and parents to enable young people to be successful in their learning. Excellent schools expect all staff to reflect on the quality of education they provide, and to respond positively to challenge from within and beyond the school. They value their staff and

pupils, providing them with the support they need, while also empowering them to make decisions about, and take responsibility for, improving learning. Excellent schools treat children and young people with respect and entrust them with active roles in decision-making. They care for young people, and for the staff who support and teach them, and do all they can to assure their health and well-being. And fundamental to all this is a school culture which values and promotes the highest levels of ambition and achievement.

In conclusion

To get from good to excellent requires a strong moral purpose, and a commitment to making a positive difference to children's lives which is shared by all members of the school community. It requires you to get in touch with the values which you bring with you and to explore others' values to find the common ground.

With this guide, as with all guides, it is up to you to decide which of the various routes you wish to follow. Some may take you into completely new territory. Others will be more familiar. For some you will already be well prepared. For others, you and those around you will need to develop new skills, and adopt altogether different ways of operating. Some of your team may be carrying 'baggage' which may slow you down. Some may be quite wary or sceptical of the likelihood of success, perhaps because they have had fruitless or difficult experiences in the past. You will need determination and resilience to achieve your goal.

Remember to stop occasionally, to enjoy your achievements to date, to reflect with others on the experience, to regroup and plan ahead in the light of the journey so far.

There are no shortcuts to excellence, unfortunately. But this document describes some of the routes which have proved successful for others.



Introduction

The ten dimensions of excellence give you some idea of your destination, of what you are aiming for.

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The next thing to consider is how you are going to get from where you are now to where you want to be.

When we visited schools and early education centres, we did not just ask people what dimensions of excellence they had focused on. We also asked them how they had got to where they are now and how they were planning the next stage of their journey.

Part 1 of this guide, *Aiming for Excellence*, describes the concept of excellence, the nature of the learning process and what we mean by successful learning. It also shows in diagrammatic form what the ten dimensions of excellence are and how they relate to each other.



Part 2, *Exploring Excellence*, looks in more detail at each of the ten dimensions. It focuses on specific features of each dimension which have been identified by research and inspection as key contributory factors in helping children and young people to learn and to achieve success. Many of the features deal with ways of interesting and involving the people in your school – children, staff, parents and partners – and gaining their commitment.

In **Part 3** of the guide, *How good are we now?*, which is the next version of *How good is our school?*, we include the tools, or sets of indicators, to help you find out exactly where you are and plan your journey to where you wish to be. Schools are not alone in seeking excellence. There are others too – education officers, youth workers, social workers and so on – with differing starting points and perspectives, but aiming for the same destination. All use similar sets of tools to work out where they are, tools which have been developed within the same quality framework but contextualised to reflect the specific aspects of the work they do.



If your school still has a lot of work to do to become an effective school, you might focus firstly on using the quality indicators in Part 3, *How good are we now?* to identify areas of strength and weakness in the education your school provides so that you can concentrate on improving specific aspects. You can then use Part 2 *Exploring Excellence* to take you forward, and Part 5 to provide ideas of the kinds of things other schools have done to improve their practice.

Part 4, *Planning for Excellence*, describes the kinds of preparations which you will need to make, how to choose and plan your route and how to check on how you are getting on.

The audio-visual resource, *Journeys to Excellence*, which is **Part 5** of this guide, provides examples of changes and improvements which people have made before you. Some people may already have reached excellence in some dimensions. Most will be part way there. They can recommend some good routes to follow and point out some of the challenges. These examples are, if you like, 'rough guides' to excellence. The resource looks at how change has happened in the schools we visited. It considers aspects like building a collaborative culture, dealing with complexity and diversity, developing a community of learners, making use of knowledge, learning from disagreement and making connections among things which do not appear to be coherent.

How good are we now?

An important stage in any journey is to plot your starting point.

The framework of quality indicators and performance measures included in Part 3 of this resource, *How good are we now?*, provides a complete set of tools for evaluating the key outcomes of your school and the extent to which it is meeting the needs of its stakeholders: children and young people, parents and families, the staff who work in and with the school, and the community it serves. You can use these indicators to answer six key questions about your school, questions which are also used by other organisations to evaluate their work. The questions provide a common framework for evaluation shared by all staff who provide services for children. The six questions are:

- What have we achieved?
- How well do we meet the needs of our school community?
- How good is the education we provide?
- How good is our management?
- How good is our leadership?

And finally

- What is our capacity for improvement?

The framework of indicators is designed to be used diagnostically to help you identify those factors which have led to significant strengths or weaknesses in outcomes and impact in your school. These contributory factors may relate to the quality of education your school provides, how effectively it is managed or how well it is led. It could relate to all of these factors.

The same framework of indicators is already being used to evaluate other parts of the education system, for example, the quality of community learning and development and the quality of education services within the council as a whole. This means that centrally deployed officers may draw on evaluations arrived at in your school or neighbourhood to make judgements about the quality of education services within the council as a whole.

Exploring excellence

If you have decided that you are ready to move from 'good' to 'great' in your pursuit of excellence, you can focus on Part 2 *Exploring Excellence*. The dimensions presented in Part 2 address some key aspects of the quality indicators in Part 3, those aspects which we know are significant drivers for achieving excellence in learning and success for all. They do not include everything which goes on in a school. Instead they focus on the key activities and relationships which lead to effective learning. They cover issues such as:

- the vision for learning shared by all the school community and the motivating force and direction of the leadership which drives this forward at all levels within it;
- the school's work with its partners in the community, in other services and among parents and families to support and promote excellence in learning;
- approaches to involving and empowering all children, young people and staff, and their roles in helping to improve the school; and
- the development of positive communities for learning which enable health and well-being and promote a culture of achievement and ambition.

Exploring Excellence is designed for flexible use. You may decide to focus on developing excellence through your partnerships with agencies, or through enabling young people, staff or parents to undertake more significant roles in shaping the school. It is your choice which route you take, which dimensions you focus on and the order you follow. You do not need to look at all the dimensions. You could, for instance, focus on the features relating to health and well-being, as part of your work towards becoming a health promoting school. You might want to improve your partnership with parents, and focus on that dimension. The most important thing is that focusing on any of the dimensions of excellence should lead to improvements in learning and in successful outcomes for young people – in particular, the outcomes of *A Curriculum for Excellence* – because the dimensions are all inter-related.

Exploring Excellence looks at each dimension in turn, focusing on some key features of each. Some features and sub-features are more appropriate to

school settings than to early education, or to day as opposed to residential settings, so you may need to select those which are most relevant for the children with whom you work. You can go into the detail of the features identified as much or as little as is useful for the stage of development which your school has reached. For each dimension, we have given some examples of the kinds of things we see in establishments with particularly strong practice, together with quotations from young people, staff and others involved in schools up and down the country.

In order to chart your journey from good to excellent, we have described the kinds of features that we tend to see in schools which are providing good quality in terms of each of the dimensions. Much of what you will see here may be quite familiar. You will probably be able to recognise features of your own school. We have also provided descriptions of what the same features and sub-features might look like in an excellent school. The challenge is to travel from the left hand to the right hand side of the page.

A school is good to the extent that...

For each feature there are

descriptions of the kinds of effective practice that we tend to see in schools which are providing **good quality** in terms of the features identified for a particular dimension.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

For each feature there are

descriptions of what practice looks like in schools which demonstrate **excellence** in relation to the same features. These descriptions include and build on those in the left hand column, but without repeating them.

This box contains quotations from young people, parents and staff.

As you go further on your journey towards excellence, taking your practice from good to very good and from very good to excellent, you will start to see more frequent and observable signs of the impact of what you do on the experience of key people in your school, in particular, of course, on the learning of children and young people.

Exploring Excellence does not provide a recipe for achieving excellence or a checklist to determine when you have got there. What the charts do is to demonstrate the differences between practice which is fairly typical of good quality and practice which is associated with excellence. Unlike quality indicators, which focus on the balance between strengths and weaknesses in order to arrive at a judgement on a six-point scale, the content of the charts is expressed in terms of strengths only. The charts provide positive targets to aim for. They complement the descriptors within quality indicators which represent a level of performance. The challenge they offer will take you further in your journey towards excellence.

How you get from one side of the chart to the other, or which of the dimensions you tackle first is up to you. Part 5, *Journeys to Excellence*, will give you some idea of what other schools have done to develop excellent practice. By 'visiting' another school in this way, you can arrive at a view as to what is the best route for your own.





1

Dimension 1

Engages young people in the highest quality learning activities

Dimension 1

Engages young people in the highest quality learning activities



DIMENSION 1

Engages young people in the highest quality learning activities

The school offers wide experiences – rich, motivating, exciting and challenging. It strongly promotes the expressive arts for developing young people’s confidence and self esteem, and promoting originality and creative thinking.

Children are proud of their personal research projects and achievements in sports, environmental activities and the arts – there is a focus on lifelong learning.

The school provides learning and teaching of a very high quality. It focuses on the needs of each individual pupil, on creating the right learning environment for each individual pupil and on giving each pupil opportunities to develop.

Returning with ideas from an in-service course, the depute headteacher produced a paper on learning and teaching and shared this with all staff. This resulted in the school engaging children further with their learning. The introduction of Assessment is for Learning, ‘*The most sensible thing we’ve seen in a long time*’, the development of collaborative learning, the introduction of reflection time and discussing learning outcomes with pupils, have placed learning and teaching at the heart of the school’s discussions and development activities.

Key features

Dimension 1: Engages young people in the highest quality learning activities

Through education, society hands on knowledge and culture to young people. Through education, young people should develop into rounded human beings, who are active in the pursuit of their own identities and dreams.

For very young children, opportunities to be active, take risks, make mistakes and learn from these are fundamental to their becoming enthusiastic about learning. They need broad and varied experiences which enable them to explore and investigate. Staff working with young children need to have a sound knowledge of child development and to be aware of the ways in which they learn. Young children need thoughtful and reflective staff who actively encourage them to become independent through giving them responsibility for their learning from a very early stage.

Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction.

(Martin Luther King)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.



I like it when the teacher tells you what you're going to be learning so that you know where you are at the end of the lesson. (P6 pupil)

The focus on learning and teaching has become part of the fabric of thinking in all that happens in the school. This ranges from the large scale and obvious, such as engaging with the education authority's learning and teaching policy, reviewing the S1/S2 curriculum, extending target setting to all stages within the school and introducing a successful programme of study support, to reinforcing recurring, smaller, daily strands. All this was backed up by the powerful signal given by the way that resources were allocated to curriculum needs and developments in learning and teaching.

The nursery children were keen to learn and co-operated well with staff. Staff interacted skilfully with them to support and extend their learning. The pace and balance of activities was very good.

It is the responsibility for diagnosing educational needs that lifts the teacher's work out of the category of routine instruction into that of the highly respected professional.

(The Primary Memorandum, 1965)

DIMENSION 1

Engages young people in the highest quality learning activities

Learning as personal development – meaningful in the lives of children and young people

The significance of relationships, emotions and values in learning; purposeful and stimulating work, promoting learners' motivation and commitment; enjoyable and satisfying learning.

A school is good to the extent that...

Relationships among children and between staff and children are friendly, and staff make efforts to promote agreed school values.

Learners enjoy most of their learning experiences, some of which are highly motivating.

Staff are aware and take account of young people's motivations and emotions. They recognise the importance of these and how they affect young people's learning – including their need for concentration and hard work.

Staff take steps to encourage independent learning.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Relationships are consistently friendly and trusting, within a strong sense of community and shared values.

Learning experiences are imaginative, creative, stimulating and challenging. Young people enjoy them and are fully involved.

Staff understand and develop young people's motivations and emotions. They build on them and are successful in achieving their sustained attention and commitment to successful learning.

Staff consistently promote curiosity, independence and confidence. They interact skilfully with children to support and extend their learning.

The best teachers are inspirational and well organised, helpful and approachable. (class teacher)

Promotion of active learning

The use of a wide range of learning and teaching approaches; learners' willingness and confidence as seekers of new knowledge, understanding and skills; the development of the ability to think, linking new knowledge to what learners already know and can do; many opportunities to respond to "open" questions; collaborative learning.

A school is good to the extent that...

Learners experience different approaches to learning and teaching.

Teachers' explanations of new topics make appropriate links with previous learning.

Children are encouraged to explain key ideas in their own words. Tasks and activities involve them in learning through thinking and doing, rather than by rote.

Teachers' questions focus on key learning aims and they invite learners to think about them.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Learners experience a wide range of learning and teaching approaches. Contexts for learning are challenging and enjoyable, and include creative and investigative activities. Young people engage confidently in such activities, and are prepared to risk making mistakes because they understand that they can learn from them.

Teachers' explanations of new topics and the skills pupils will learn are very clear. They fully demonstrate the links with previous learning across the curriculum and real-life situations and make new learning meaningful.

Children often demonstrate or explain information, ideas, processes and skills to the teacher and to other learners. They understand that excellent learning means being able to show or explain it clearly to others in their own words, orally or in writing or pictures. Young children will be involved in 'hands on' learning.

Staff questioning is skilled and young people's responses are always listened to and used to enhance their learning. By being regularly asked open questions, they learn to give considered answers from a personal viewpoint. Children get time to think and reflect before responding and they all expect to be invited to do so. Their answers lead to further questioning and dialogue which form coherent lines of enquiry.

The best teacher explains things really well and helps you when you need it. (P3 pupil)

DIMENSION 1

Engages young people in the highest quality learning activities

Promotion of active learning *(continued)*

A school is good to the extent that...

Class discussions involve an appropriate range of pupils within the class.

Teachers are well organised, ensure that resources are of good quality and focus on the key learning aims.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

All pupils understand that their individual responses will be valued. Children as well as teachers ask questions – of each other and of the teacher. Those who are not involved in discussion participate actively by listening, thinking and reflecting. The size of the discussion group, and other contextual features, is planned to meet the children's needs. Discussions with very young children, and with less confident older children, often take place in small groups.

Teachers spend significant amounts of time actively teaching. They deliver learning personally to individual pupils and groups according to their needs, rather than relying on working only through textbooks. Teachers present material actively in a structured way. They continuously monitor the development of pupils' understanding, tackle difficult concepts in small steps, elaborate, enhance and exemplify.

Copying off the board is not learning. (former pupil)

Meeting children's learning needs

An appropriate pace of work; appropriately challenging tasks; support and feedback based on teachers having a thorough knowledge of the understanding and learning needs of individual learners; learners discussing their own ways of learning and their success and progress.

A school is good to the extent that...

Teachers recognise the importance of providing learning experiences appropriate to the stage of development which young people have reached.

Some co-operative learning and group discussion takes place.

Most lessons, activities and episodes of learning proceed at a steady pace, adjusted as appropriate to children's needs. Allocations of time and deadlines are clear. Staff establish routines to ensure time is not lost on administration or behaviour issues.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Teachers have a comprehensive understanding of children's learning and development and provide feedback personalised for each learner. They observe learners closely, track their progress and use the information to plan their future progress. They strive to ensure continuity of learning approaches and experiences at transition stages.

Young people often engage in co-operative learning and discussion with other learners. These activities are designed so that independent thinking by each learner contributes to the group's work. Young people build on each other's contributions to reach a common understanding while respecting minority viewpoints.

Children consistently work at a brisk pace, but are also given sufficient time to develop and make sense of their learning, particularly in the early years. Teachers allocate appropriate time to instruction, signalling changes of focus in lessons, activities and episodes of learning. Time is not wasted or spent on non-progressive tasks. Where activities are repeated, this is done judiciously and with the stated aim of consolidating previous learning.

Being allowed to discuss things helps you to understand. (P6 pupil)

DIMENSION 1

Engages young people in the highest quality learning activities

Meeting children's learning needs *(continued)*

A school is good to the extent that...

Teachers design or modify tasks and necessary support, taking account of the rates of progress and needs of broad groups of learners. They state objectives, outline the content of the lesson and point to the main ideas and the need to review them. Teachers give clear detailed instructions and explanations and provide active practice.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Learning is flexible and adapted to take account of learners' interests. Children become more confident in their learning by being given appropriate support and challenge. Teachers take full account of the understanding and learning needs of all learners. Lessons and episodes of learning are well structured, with challenging goals and use of organisers. New knowledge is linked to prior learning. Ideas are linked and contextualised. Materials are presented in stages. Structured curriculum areas are taught in structured ways. Learners master basic concepts before moving on to the next steps so that they develop confidence in their abilities. Teachers interact sensitively with young people, as appropriate to their stage of development.

Pupils should get to choose topics. I want to be good at things. (pupil)



2

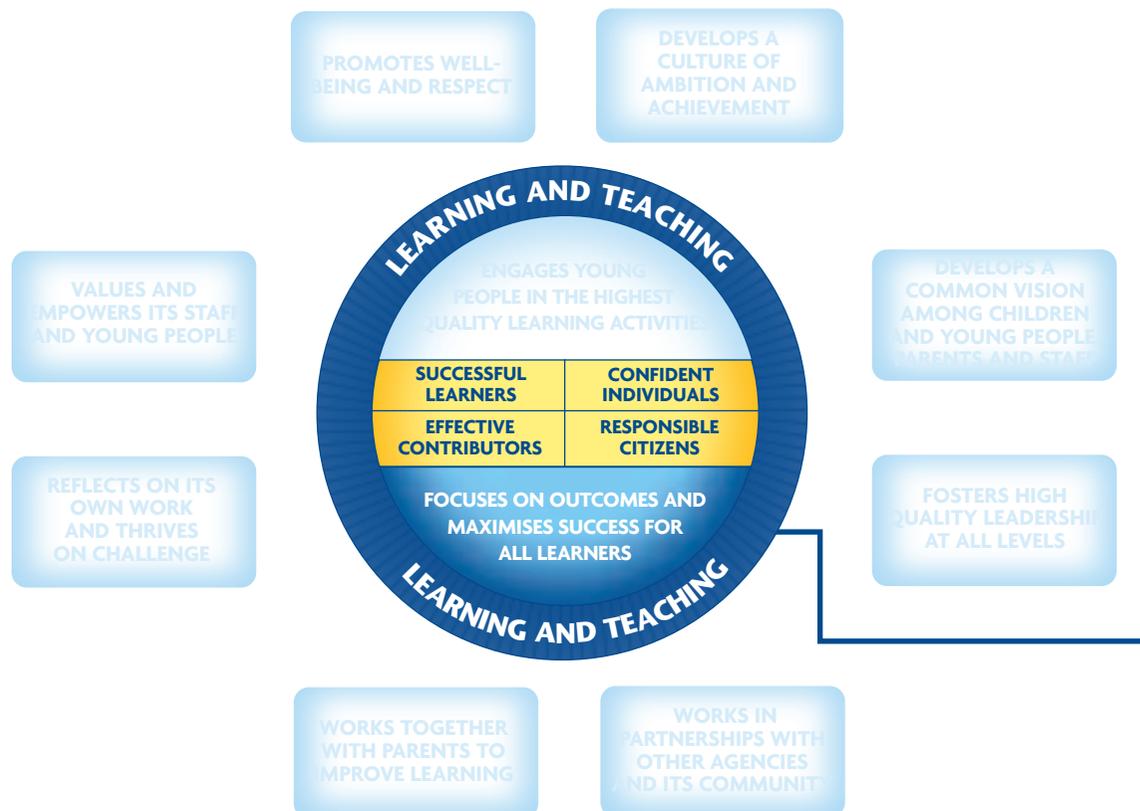
Dimension 2

Focuses on outcomes and maximises success for all learners

Dimension 2

Focuses on outcomes and maximises success for all learners

Let them make the effort to express these ideas in appropriate words without the aid of symbols, and if they succeed they will not only lay us laymen under a lasting obligation, but we venture to say, they will find themselves very much enlightened during the process. (James Clark Maxwell)



Dimension 2

- Planning the outcomes of learning
- Assessing the outcomes of learning
- Reflecting on and recording success based on outcomes
- Reporting on success in achieving outcomes

DIMENSION 2

Focuses on outcomes and maximises success for all learners

The school has a personal target-setting week. Children choose a target, and at the end of the week parents, the headteacher and the child comment and give a 1 to 5 self-assessment grade. Children need to provide evidence and are encouraged to be honest about whether they have done well. Next, they come up with their own target. *'It's about teaching the children not to be being happy with less than the best.'*

The senior management team continually look at the progress of individual children. There are target-setting meetings with teachers for a half-day each in September when they discuss all pupils and where they are. This is updated in January. The headteacher monitors children's progress monthly. Support is targeted to all children with individual needs, including able children.

Improvement and accountability can be effectively interwoven. (Michael Fullan)

Support us, encourage us, listen to us. (S4 pupil)

Key features

Dimension 2: Focuses on outcomes and maximises success for all learners

Education has four main outcomes for children and young people. It aims to help them to become:

- Successful learners
- Responsible citizens
- Confident individuals
- Effective contributors

To achieve these, schools need very effective planning which builds on previous success and takes a learner's perspective. It also needs to carefully maintain its success in achieving the intended outcomes and to reflect and repeat on its successes.

All the children learn how to make an impression and be confident in the real world. I demand the best and I always get it. If you don't, you are doing the child a disservice. (headteacher)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.



Success breeds success and builds up self-confidence in both learners and staff.

(headteacher)

The school is positive about the impact of the Assessment is for Learning (AifL) programme in bringing about a focus on skills and targets. 'We adapted planning to make learning outcomes clear, the "we are learning to" (WALT) approach helped us to make more accurate assessments, the "what am I looking for" (WILF) approach focused us on progression in 5-14 skills. We used religious and moral education, music, drama and mathematics to begin with. Now we are involving children in negotiating their own targets.' In writing, AifL has given the teaching a sharper focus. The children are now clearer about where they aim to be as a result of having more clearly defined criteria, and teachers now make more criterion-focused formative and summative evaluations.

The deputy headteacher has developed a self-evaluation grid for teachers for 'sharing learning intentions'. The management team also measure impact through sampling pupils' jotters and looking at writing in relation to quality and organisation and the children's motivation and enthusiasm. This has raised their awareness of where they are currently and what they have to aim for.

The main 'wow' factor is the children, we do it for them. We share their joy in their achievements. (support staff)

DIMENSION 2

Focuses on outcomes and maximises success for all learners

Planning the outcomes of learning

Curriculum planning for the whole school that successfully achieves the outcomes of A Curriculum for Excellence; collaborative planning, which takes account of pupils' and parents' views; selecting achievable outcomes; building on previous successes; taking a learner's perspective; agreeing and using targets for learning; choosing outcomes to meet individual needs.

A school is good to the extent that...

Curriculum planning is informed by national and local advice.

Staff plan future outcomes after considering what has already been covered, and inform learners of what comes next in the programmes being studied, in as much detail as is appropriate for their stage of development.

Staff use general targets to guide learners' expectations of what they are going to learn.

Teachers explain the aims of lessons and activities. Explanations usually focus on content and coverage.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Curriculum planning takes full account of the principles identified in *A Curriculum for Excellence*. It is based firmly on a clear identification of the needs of all young people and is designed to address and meet these needs, result in successful learning, and develop pupils' confidence, skills and ability to contribute.

Staff plan future outcomes, both curricular and relating to personal development, after reflecting on children's previous learning. They involve young people, parents and other partners in planning future learning.

Staff agree targets with learners, depending on their age and stage of development. These targets set clear expectations.

Learners have a detailed awareness of the skills they will learn through engaging in the planned activities, and the kind and quality of work required to meet the aims which have been outlined. Staff work alongside learners as role models, encouraging them to develop a positive attitude to learning.

When staff are clear about targets and objectives, teaching is more focused and children are more involved in their learning. (class teacher)

Assessing the outcomes of learning

Interactive questioning focused on outcomes; sharing of both outcomes and the basis of teachers' judgements with learners; use of a wide range of evidence in deciding next steps in learning; timely feedback geared to improving learning.

A school is good to the extent that...

Assessment of young people's learning involves interactions between learners and teachers. It is based on questions which focus on key learning aims.

Young people know that their success will be based on achieving the outcomes of the course or programme.

Teachers provide regular written feedback on learners' work, and have some discussion with them about the strengths of their work, their learning needs and their ways of learning.

Children assess their own work and are aware of their main strengths and weaknesses. They work with their peers and offer them helpful comments on progress.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Assessment involves planned and high quality interactions with young people and is based on thoughtful and probing questions derived from the learning outcomes achieved to date. It invites pupils to think.

Young people are clear about the kind and quality of work required to achieve success in the agreed outcomes.

Individual learners seek and receive timely feedback about the quality of their work. They actively engage in discussion with teachers about the strengths of their work, the steps they can take to improve it, their individual ways of learning and other approaches they might use.

Teachers enable children to develop the skills to evaluate their own and each other's work against clear criteria. Learners have a very clear awareness of their own learning needs, how well they are progressing towards learning targets, the links with previous learning and any action they need to take to improve their work and inform their next steps.

Telling us what we have to do, and why, at the beginning of a lesson makes it easier and I work quicker and better. (secondary pupil)

DIMENSION 2

Focuses on outcomes and maximises success for all learners

Reflecting on and recording success based on outcomes

Tracking and recording progress followed by prompt intervention; learners' ongoing records; children's awareness of their progress in learning; reflection by teams on how to maximise learning; comparing achieved success with planned success to improve future learning; sharing standards.

A school is good to the extent that...

Tracking of progress takes place at class and individual levels.

Young people keep personal records of their attainment levels and broader achievements.

Pupils and staff use evidence from day-to-day learning activities in deciding next steps in learning.

Summative assessment is well planned and designed to assess the key learning aims of a block of work or course.

Departmental and stage teams engage in reflection with partner professionals at other stages and in other establishments and agencies to ensure that standards are shared and discussed.

Staff use benchmarking to help improve learning. This involves analysing data on whole school attainment levels, using nationally and locally available data.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Detailed tracking of progress takes place at all levels to ensure progress against shared high expectations. Staff intervene promptly if the progress of individuals is not maintained.

Young people keep ongoing records of their progress so that they can track their pace of progress, recognise their success in achieving learning outcomes and assess the effectiveness of their own learning.

Pupils and staff plan for, collect and use a wide range of evidence from learning activities in deciding next steps in learning and in identifying who can best help.

Teachers use well-founded summative assessment information to evaluate learning and teaching and help them to improve their practice.

Teams engage in reflection with their partners to agree standards, evaluate approaches to learning and ensure that all partners can maximise their contributions and take action to improve learning where necessary.

Benchmarking for improving learning involves analysing data on the achievement of outcomes compared with expectations, using data from groups and schools working in similar contexts. Staff and teams reflect on it and take action to set the highest expectations and improve the learning of all pupils.

They recognise good work and if you're having problems, they try and help you. (S4 pupil)

Reporting on success in achieving outcomes

Information to parents about their children's progress to date and how to support their future learning; public reporting.

A school is good to the extent that...

Parents receive reports identifying their children's strengths, development needs, next steps in learning and overall levels of attainment.

It demonstrates accountability for the success of its pupils by reporting appropriately at school level.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff are successful in helping parents to understand and contribute to discussions about their children's progress, next steps in learning and the learning approaches which are most appropriate for their individual needs. These discussions involve staff and the children themselves. Staff are good at helping parents to understand the role they can play in supporting and improving their children's learning. Following these discussions, parents take active steps to contribute to their children's education.

It demonstrates accountability for the success of its pupils by reporting appropriately to the parent body and the community about the performance of groups, as well as at the level of the whole school. It contributes to the wider reporting of the success of schools in the local area in relation to pupils' attainment levels, broader achievements and current and future participation rates in education, employment and training post-school.

Teachers talk to you about your work so that you know what to do to get better. (P7 pupil)



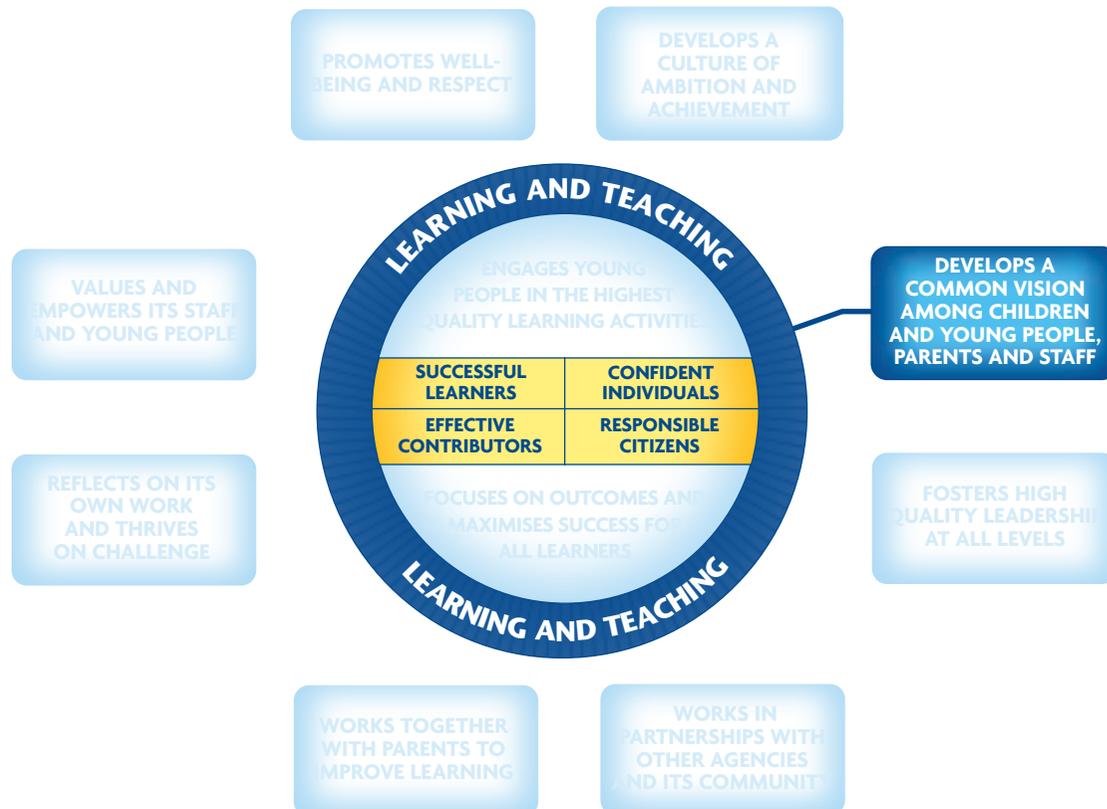
3

Dimension 3

Develops a common vision across children and young people, parents and staff

Dimension 3

Develops a common vision across children and young people, parents and staff



It's important that the vision of the school is shared with parents though different means, for example, prize-giving, induction meetings, curriculum workshops, school concerts and regular newsletters. (parent)

Dimension 3

- The nature of the vision
- Creating the shared vision
- Sustaining the shared vision

DIMENSION 3

Develops a common vision across children and young people, parents and staff

The new headteacher involved the school community and its partners in looking at the vision and aims of the school together. The staff and School Board worked closely to co-ordinate the consultation with parents. The school community feels that it owns the vision and aims. The headteacher and staff together reflected on current practice across the school and identified people with particular strengths which would be important to the school in striving for improvement.

The school has a clear vision which is summed up in the phrase 'only the best will do.' The key aspects are high expectations, and valuing staff and investing in their professional development. The headteacher also takes responsibility for planning and day-to-day organisation, giving staff time to innovate and improve. The consistency of practice and very high levels of organisation in classrooms, display and planning are striking.

Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. (John Dewey)

Key features

Dimension 3: Develops a common vision across children and young people, parents and staff

It is particularly important to develop a common vision among all members of the school community. At the heart of that vision will be the provision of the highest quality learning and teaching and the need to ensure that all children achieve their fullest potential.

We are constantly trying to improve the school. It would have been easy to sit back but we wanted to know what needed to be improved and looked at it. We finish a job and say 'now what?'. For example, spelling was good but not good enough. We have very high standards.

(class teacher)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.



The vision for the school is linked to the priorities in the three-year development plan. The agenda is set through a collaborative approach to decision making which values and involves staff and the school's partners. Staff always return to the vision and aims when making final decisions. Striving to achieve the Charter Mark Award has given the school a common focus and engaged everyone in the process of reflecting on and improving practice. The school has decided to become involved in projects and initiatives to encourage partnership working. It aims to embrace change but also to monitor and evaluate progress continuously. It has established clear links between the school development plan, the standards and quality report and its vision and aims.

The vision of the school should be shared through open days to allow parents and the community to come in and experience what the school is all about. (class teacher)

DIMENSION 3

Develops a common vision across children and young people, parents and staff

The nature of the vision

The responsibility of all the school community in enabling all children and young people to develop relevant capacities and attitudes; setting a direction which promotes high aspirations and a 'can-do' attitude; creating the conditions where creativity and innovation flourish; promoting fairness, justice, equality of opportunity and equal access; establishing a focus on learning and relationships; putting values into action; focusing on improvement and raising achievement.

A school is good to the extent that...

It aims to promote and develop young people's capacities across the curriculum.

Staff have adopted effective practices for promoting positive behaviour. Approaches include establishing rights and responsibilities and systems of rewards and sanctions.

Staff are encouraged to develop their practice as part of the school's vision for improvement.

Children are encouraged to show tolerance and compassion and to support others. Staff take firm action to address discrimination.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

All staff focus on developing young people's capacities and attitudes through the medium of learning and teaching approaches and through in-school and out-of-school experiences. They create the conditions in which learners feel safe, valued and secure.

The school community has a can-do attitude. Children not only behave well, they learn with and support others. They want to achieve highly in relation to their personal goals, to be involved in the life of the school and feel good about themselves and their school.

It nurtures creativity among staff and young people. All members of the school community interact productively across perceived boundaries of age and stage, formal roles and remits and involvement in the formal curriculum or in learning outside school hours. Both staff and young people are encouraged to be innovative and to engage in original thinking and critical reflection and enquiry.

It stresses the importance of putting values into action. Staff and pupils demonstrate personal responsibility, compassion and support for others, and actively promote fairness and justice in their dealings with each other.

Schools need to get to know families and children well. (headteacher)

The nature of the vision *(continued)***A school is good to the extent that...**

School improvement and pupils' achievements are part of the school's vision.

Leaders analyse information, identify appropriate approaches and mobilise teams within the school in order to deliver the vision.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff demonstrate through their actions that school improvement and raising standards of achievement are of paramount importance. They promote and ensure equality of opportunity and equal access.

Staff apply consistent approaches across the school which are supported by policies, systems and structures and which reflect the vision of the school. They consistently promote a collective commitment to the highest possible standards and success for all learners.

It's about having the vision and innovative ideas, imagination and a 'have a go at everything' attitude – and that rubs off on the children. (headteacher)

DIMENSION 3

Develops a common vision across children and young people, parents and staff

Creating the shared vision

Setting a strategic direction which is ambitious and challenging; actively involving staff, pupils and parents in developing a common vision through reflection and debate; shaping this vision in close consultation with partners, stakeholders and the wider community.

A school is good to the extent that...

Its aims provide a clear, strategic vision which takes into account the views of all involved with the school and informs development/improvement planning.

Staff are committed to the vision. It is exemplified in well-established vision statements and school policies which are consistent with such statements.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

The direction for the future is ambitious, challenging and ongoing. It is shaped by an informed awareness of current educational thinking and involves recurring reflection and debate among young people, parents, staff and partners, and analysis of where the school, department or team is at.

The necessary collective commitment of all staff, pupils, parents and the wider community has been secured. Leaders at all levels motivate and inspire others to sustain this commitment through their daily interactions.

We are always reviewing what we are doing and looking critically at our own practice and the needs of each of our children. (headteacher)

Sustaining the shared vision

Self-evaluation, joint planning and accountability are the essential drivers; motivating and inspiring others to sustain a collective commitment; involving representatives of wider partnerships when reviewing the work of the school; planning new developments and identifying future improvements.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff plan and evaluate effectively at all levels in the school. Leaders keep up-to-date with national and local initiatives, make information about these initiatives available within the consultative structures of the school and use them as drivers to shape policy.

Leaders disseminate information and performance data and routinely consult staff on policies and development/improvement plans.

Staff make reference to the vision at key stages in the development/improvement planning process.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff see self-evaluation, joint planning and accountability as essential drivers. They base the school's challenging and ambitious vision closely on the results of accurate self-evaluation. The school's involvement in national and local initiatives has been carefully planned and is sustainable.

Staff recognise the value of using a wide range of data in analysing the impact of the school's vision for learning. They use the results of their analyses to focus their improvement activities on action which will have a significant impact on pupils' learning experiences.

All members of the school community take full account of the school's vision when reviewing its work, implementing improvements and shaping future direction.

Planning and organisation are the fulcrum of this school. (headteacher)

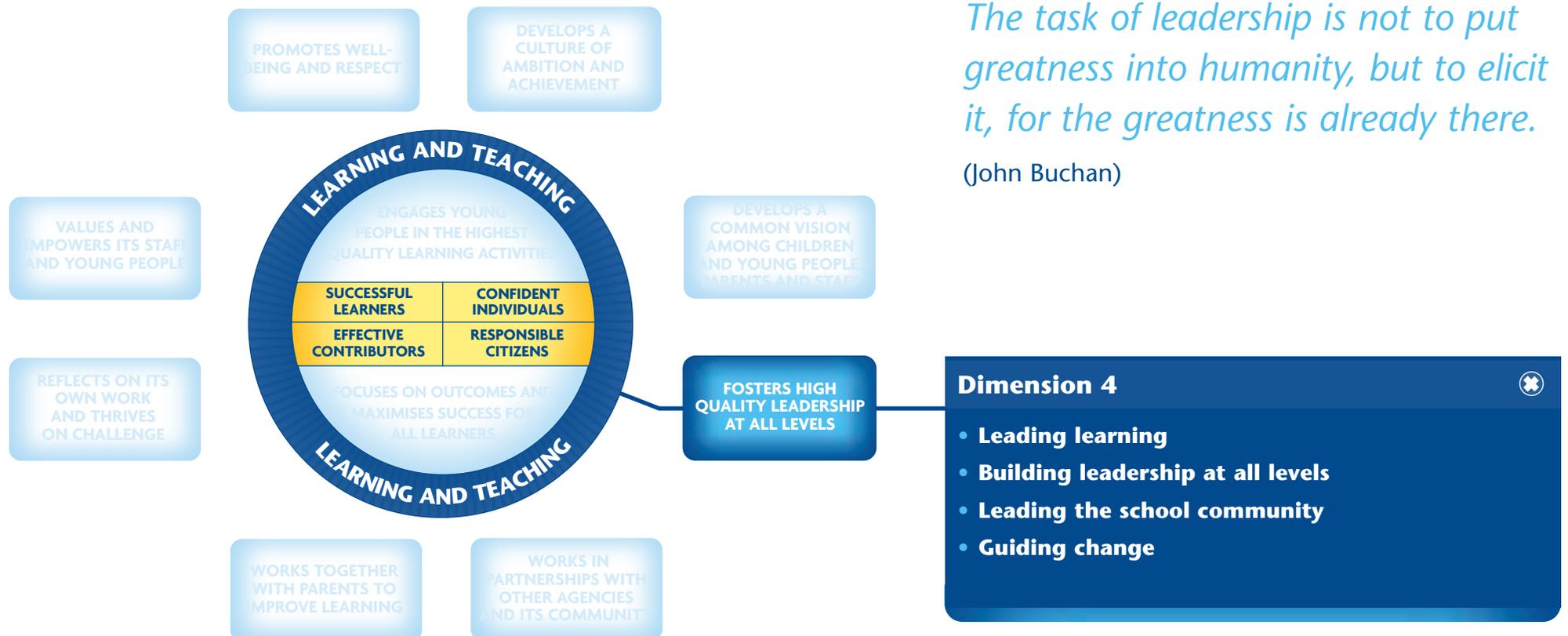


4

Dimension 4

Fosters high quality leadership at all levels

Dimension 4 Fosters high quality leadership at all levels



The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there.

(John Buchan)

DIMENSION 4

Fosters high quality leadership at all levels

Success has come from a shared vision promoted through high quality leadership which develops a team approach to improvement. High expectations from the headteacher and senior management team permeate through to staff and pupils. *'Only the best is good enough for our pupils'*.

The headteacher is highly visible and actively involved in support for pupils. He is accessible to all groups of staff, giving a vital signal as to the value placed on people. Face-to-face personal engagement offers so much more to the individual and, by extension, to the school.

The headteacher refers to 'informed practice' (a combination of experience and research). The headteacher sees leaders in the school as learning leaders, who engage directly through class visits. Each leader learns through experience and reflection and understands the key role of the environment for learning.

We take every opportunity to stress the importance of the work we do as teachers. It is 'professional' in that it matters to us, that we want to do it well. In this way, we signal to pupils their importance and worth. (teacher)

Key features

Dimension 4: Fosters high quality leadership at all levels

Excellent leadership is inclusive. It involves a wide range of people within the school, including pupils, in leading on aspects of the school's work. The most effective leadership will always focus on improving children's learning as its key priority.

Excellent leadership is also about taking people with you towards a shared vision. Such a vision needs to be persistent and sustainable. Excellent leadership retains a straight forward and coherent picture of where the school is going.

An excellent headteacher has the honesty and ability to learn quickly when necessary, but more often, reflectively.

(principal teacher)

The headteacher cares about us all and wants us all to do our best. (P7 pupil)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.



A range of volunteer staff examined the state of health of the school as a community of learners, for a 'Taking Stock' exercise. They focused on good practice and areas needing improvement. Initial sessions involved brainstorming, focused on a number of areas, including responsibility and accountability (enhancing the role of the classroom teacher), relationships and perceptions, and leadership roles and collegiality.

All staff, the management team, teachers, auxiliaries, therapists, nurses, classroom assistants, cleaning staff, catering staff and administrative staff are involved, where appropriate, in development planning and in staff training which is directed at supporting people to meet the needs of all the pupils. Staff are valued by being engaged in discussions about the future direction of the school. The leadership style of the senior management team is inclusive and encouraging.

The head and depute had fostered very good teamwork with staff, placing children at the centre of nursery improvements.

*Headteachers need to lead by example.
They should be high profile and be seen to
be prepared to get their hands dirty. (parent)*

DIMENSION 4

Fosters high quality leadership at all levels

Leading learning

The focus on learning and teaching as the central driver to school improvement; placing learning and teaching at the centre of planning and staff development; modelling as a lead learner.

A school is good to the extent that...

Leaders set out an effective learning and teaching policy, developed in consultation with others. They alert staff to its principles and practice.

Leaders make learning a consistent strand in school development/improvement planning, along with a range of other priorities.

Leaders plan staff development programmes, in consultation with others, which balance school, group and individual needs and priorities, and which provide opportunities to improve approaches to learning and teaching.

Leaders support staff development in learning, create opportunities for staff to develop their expertise and establish procedures for class visits.

Leaders structure a curriculum, in consultation with others, which takes account of national and local curriculum principles and priorities.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Leaders at all levels in the school make the practical implementation of the learning and teaching policy the central driver to school improvement. It informs, and connects with all other policies and its principles are translated into daily action.

Leaders ensure that learning is the central focus of school, department and stage development/improvement plans, and that learning priorities are linked to classroom approaches.

Leaders provide staff development which has a central focus on learning, teaching and meeting needs and their impact on pupils' achievement. Staff learning is collaborative and collegiate, and led by valued and respected practitioners. Staff have a strong personal commitment to furthering their own learning and to modelling learning for pupils.

Leaders are lead learners, making class visits, giving feedback, sharing insights widely and stimulating self-evaluation. They prompt an on-going focus on the craft of teaching. They share the findings of research.

Leaders assert and reassert the purposes of the curriculum in developing young people's capacities and attitudes.

To hear that class teaching was to be a main focus of the school improvement plan was important to us. (principal teacher)

Building leadership at all levels

Reinforcing collegiate and collaborative working practices; reinforcing a culture which effectively models leadership while training leaders; creating conditions where people and teams feel empowered and are confident that they can and do make a positive impact on the life of the school.

A school is good to the extent that...

Leaders delegate effectively, as appropriate to their level of responsibility.

Leaders provide opportunities for some staff to take leadership roles, for example, through a committee structure and consultative mechanisms in the school.

Leaders create effective channels of communication and systems for sharing knowledge and expertise and shaping existing school policy.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Leaders at all levels within the school act to show that influence is two-way. They draw on the collective knowledge, experience and personal interests of a wide range of staff and on pupils' views.

Leaders reinforce a culture where staff and pupils feel able and confident to take lead roles within and beyond the classroom. Current and future leaders learn with and from others, formally and informally, prompting reflection and change. Such modelling and training promotes the conditions through which the school sustains excellence.

Leaders create conditions where staff have confidence in exercising their initiative and in grasping opportunities to share knowledge and assume responsibility. They recognise complementary forms of leadership and the capacity of people and teams to achieve a positive impact on the life of the school.

Each individual – from pupils and parents to teachers and all members of staff – is integral to the running of the school. (janitor)

DIMENSION 4

Fosters high quality leadership at all levels

Leading the school community

Deploying a range of leadership styles appropriate to context; adopting a high profile exemplar role, especially in engaging with people; valuing all children and young people and setting high expectations within a context of rights and responsibilities; sustaining high levels of personal credibility and trust.

A school is good to the extent that...

Leaders apply well-established systems so that they successfully maintain standards of efficiency. They consistently adopt successful management styles, securing the commitment of most staff to the school's policies and values.

Leaders organise and deploy people and resources effectively, within a consultative management system, and as part of the development of a supportive school climate.

Leaders establish effective working relationships. They support, persuade and praise. They are accessible and visible and lend legitimacy and support to school activities.

Leaders provide opportunities for young people to identify with the aims of the school, to be proud of their school, to participate in a range of activities, to have a say in the running of their school and to achieve and attain. They set the conditions in which children feel safe, valued and included, and they respond appropriately and effectively to discriminatory behaviour.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Leaders at all levels within the school use a range of leadership styles to mobilise people. They adjust these styles to context and setting, and are sensitive to relationships. Their styles are consultative and collegiate, securing shared commitment. When required, leaders drive action forward directly.

Leaders continuously reinforce an atmosphere of collective responsibility and mutual support between staff and staff, pupils and pupils and staff and pupils. They create, review and improve structures for formal management, learning and support, in order to secure these relationships.

Leaders at all levels within the school act as exemplars in sustaining the school climate. They demonstrate empathy with a range of groups and individuals. They are prepared to challenge individual staff and pupils. Through their own behaviour, leaders persuade others that core values are shown in small-scale daily actions, as well as in strategic moral vision.

Leaders create activities and systems which signal to every child his or her worth as a learner and as a person, enabling all to experience success. They emphasise the capacity of young people to support each other. They set high expectations and lead by example. Leaders give high priority to the pupil voice within a context of rights and responsibilities. They promote equality of opportunity and encourage the celebration of diversity.

Excellence means the children all know 'I CAN'. (teacher)

Leading the school community *(continued)***A school is good to the extent that...**

Leaders create effective referral channels for dealing with misconduct and disruptions to learning.

Leaders show competence in managing and directing staff and young people and are aware of the effect they have on other people. They persuade through demonstrating the appropriate professional knowledge and skills. They deploy resources effectively.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Leaders retain active personal responsibility for the school's approaches for promoting positive behaviour, understanding what motivates learners and managing behaviour. They establish coordinated and integrated support for pupils.

Leaders establish high levels of personal credibility and gain the confidence of the school community. They demonstrate a willingness to learn from others and to acknowledge mistakes. They convince people and cement the trust of others by their actions. Leaders sustain an optimistic outlook about the potential of the school community to achieve success and to make a difference.

Headteachers need to be inspirational but this must be achieved through being supportive and approachable. (parent)

DIMENSION 4

Fosters high quality leadership at all levels

Guiding change

Encouraging and promoting critical inquiry and creative thinking; placing change within an understanding of the whole school context; guiding and managing the pace of change and taking account of risks; creating conditions where staff feel confident to initiate change and are committed to change.

A school is good to the extent that...

Leaders plan and sequence innovative activities in consultation with others, and in line with development/improvement planning processes in order to manage the process of change.

Leaders effectively engage departments and teams in the annual planning cycle.

Leaders respond to national and local initiatives, in most cases using review and analysis as a basis for action. Leaders understand their role in managing change and take account of risks.

Leaders create effective consultative groups and teams to shape and lead developments. They organise programmes which allow staff time to consider proposed changes.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Leaders at all levels encourage and enable individuals and groups to engage in innovative activities where evaluation has indicated that this would lead to improvement. They promote the view that continuing critical inquiry and creative approaches should be integral to the thinking and practice of all staff and pupils.

Leaders embed planning for improvement across the school, particularly at classroom or playroom level. They consistently demonstrate the interconnectedness of all the school's activities and improving learning and outcomes.

Leaders have a coherent vision of what is important for the school and its community and innovate in line with that vision. They guide and manage the pace of change. They win hearts as well as minds. They understand that change management is about people learning and adopting new ideas and changing practices. They develop project management at all levels. They avoid overload, innovation fatigue and potential division among staff.

Leaders create conditions for all staff to initiate, and be committed to change. They stimulate intellectual curiosity and the creation and sharing of knowledge. At times this involves challenge and creative disagreement as staff come to a shared awareness of the key issues and the way forward.

We ask ourselves the searching questions. That implies a commitment to scrutinising practice and exploring ways of effecting improvements. (headteacher)



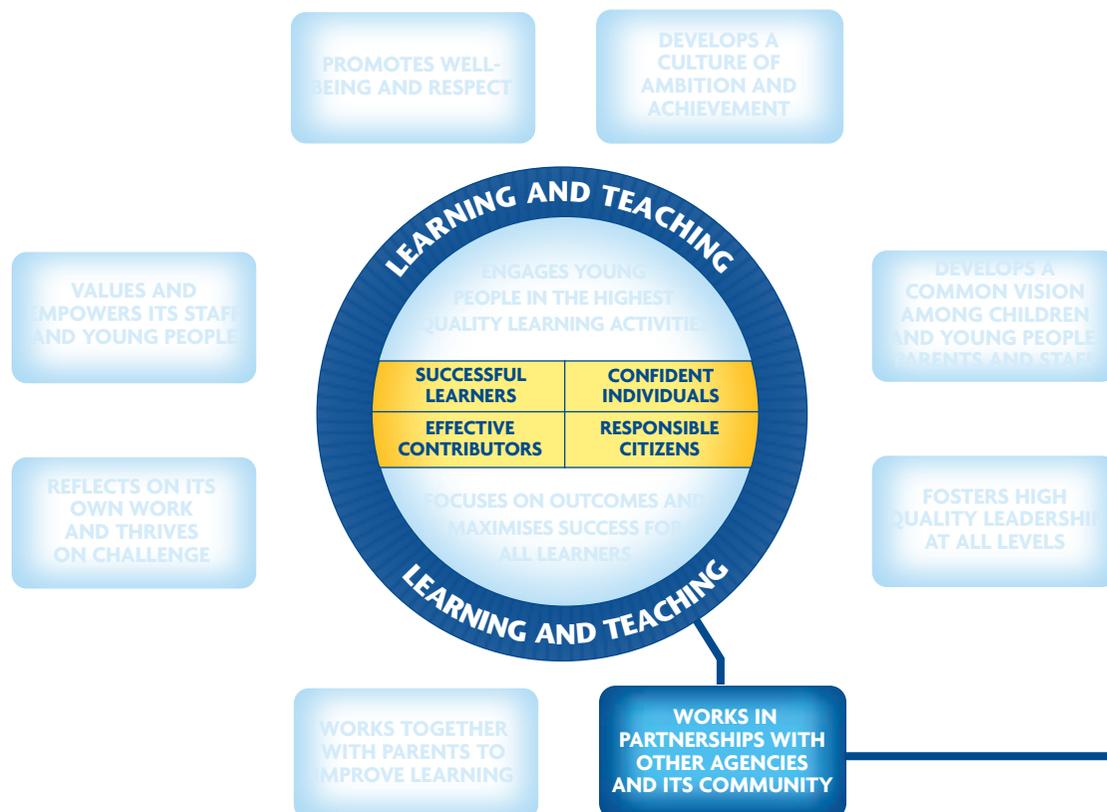
5

Dimension 5

Works in partnerships with other agencies and its community

Dimension 5

Works in partnerships with other agencies and its community



If a partnership is to succeed, it must be based on mutual trust and respect, an ongoing exchange of information, agreement on goals and strategies, and a sharing of rights and responsibilities. (headteacher)

Dimension 5

- The school in its community
- Working with partners to meet the needs of all children and young people
- Multi-agency approaches to improve learning
- Leadership and coordination

DIMENSION 5

Works in partnerships with other agencies and its community

A chess development project run by community learning and development staff addresses young people's literacy and numeracy needs. It helps to develop critical thinking, improvements in verbal reasoning and reading skills. In preparing learning materials, community learning and development staff take full account of learners' needs. The project has raised young people's self-esteem and helped them to achieve. Teachers report improved concentration and behaviour among learners who had been experiencing difficulties. The project has also developed effective home-school links.

In one cluster, school staff and their partners commented favourably on the impact of a joint education and social work peer education programme. The programme has been successful in developing the potential of pupils identified as being at risk from underachieving at school.

Scottish Executive funding is used to deploy youth workers in primary and secondary schools. School staff express strong support for the initiative. It has been successful in supporting vulnerable and isolated pupils, reducing absenteeism, developing social skills and improving behaviour.

One cluster has very successfully promoted integrated working among front-line staff from different professional backgrounds. Support is given to children and their families by a team of school staff, social work services staff, community staff and health professionals. Joint training has been very successful and has included imaginative sessions with families on a range of topics.

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.

Key features

Dimension 5: Works in partnerships with other agencies and its community

No school operates in isolation. Children learn within, through and about the community in which they live. Wider links broaden their horizons even further. Many people touch the lives of young people. Of these some, working closely with teaching and support staff, make all the difference.

We are working with our Comenius partners in Finland, Latvia, Wales and the Spanish Basque region. We are taking health promotion and developing it in our community. We then look out into the wider community of our partners and see how they are developing this aspect. We learn a lot from our partners – they all have different ways of achieving the same thing. (headteacher)



Visitors to school – like the police and fire fighters – can help us learn. (primary pupil)

One secondary school has established a group for supporting pupils in danger of exclusion. Pupils who participate have become more supportive of each other. Direct support from a mental health worker and youth social worker has helped them develop anger management techniques and more positive attitudes to school.

The self esteem and confidence of a small targeted group of S4 pupils have improved through their participation in a car mechanics course and national XL activities provided in partnership with a range of other agencies. Their attendance and motivation has significantly improved.

In one residential special school young people had very good opportunities to participate in drama productions at a local arts centre. As a result they became keen to attend drama events in their local area and also gained in confidence and self esteem when performing to others.

Nursery staff worked closely with parents and a range of agencies such as social work and speech therapy.

Education is all a matter of building bridges.

(Ralph Ellison)

DIMENSION 5

Works in partnerships with other agencies and its community

The school in its community

A focus on broadening and deepening the learning of children and young people and developing their confidence and self esteem; understanding and awareness of the needs of the community; involvement of all staff and young people with the community; external contributions to young people's learning across the curriculum.

A school is good to the extent that...

Links with the community provide experiences which enhance young people's learning and help them to develop positive relationships.

Staff make effective use of local facilities and organisations when planning learning activities. Such activities focus on developing a wider awareness of the world beyond school and encourage young people to perceive and use the community as a resource.

Young people participate in activities and learning experiences within the community designed to develop skills in problem solving, decision making and making informed choices.

Both staff and pupils contribute to local projects and engage actively in the wider life of the community. Members of the local community make use of school facilities.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Work with other establishments, organisations and businesses is used to broaden and deepen young people's learning and enable them to achieve success in wider contexts.

Staff take advantage of opportunities for community involvement which help them to improve their work with young people, provide innovative approaches to learning and address new challenges. Community-based activities are used to develop young people's self-esteem and creative skills, meet individual and group needs and prepare them for their future roles in society. They also enable young people to make positive contributions to the experiences of other people.

Staff draw on community resources to develop young people's leadership skills. All pupils participate in enterprise activities, community involvement, work placements and shadowing, sports leadership awards or similar activities.

Staff demonstrate a highly developed understanding and awareness of the needs of their communities. Members of the community see the school as central to community life.

We are involved with our local community through a range of enterprise activities, collaboration on building our sensory garden and providing use of our minibus. (headteacher)

The school in its community *(continued)***A school is good to the extent that...**

Classes undertaking specific curricular programmes have access to community-based activities. Staff and young people make productive contacts with groups beyond the school as part of projects or activities or through out-of-school activities such as music and drama.

Staff call on the services of partners, agencies and community groups which they know can provide relevant and high quality additional experiences, to contribute to programmes in specific curriculum areas.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

All staff and young people expect to be actively involved with the local community in some way and at some time. Individual staff and pupils, classes and groups have strong and sustained links with groups elsewhere in the UK or abroad. They share interests with them and provide and receive information, expertise or enrichment.

Staff actively seek out and enter partnerships which are productive in helping to provide imaginative contexts, learning experiences and opportunities for personal development. Teachers build such contributions into the curriculum to improve learning and meet identified needs.

The school has several international links. Pupils correspond in Scottish/Irish Gaelic with pupils in Ireland. The school's Gaelic choir has performed in Canada and the football team has had fixtures in Spain. (headteacher)

DIMENSION 5

Works in partnerships with other agencies and its community

Working with partners to meet the needs of all children and young people

Agreeing aims and objectives; supporting vulnerable young people; effective transition arrangements for all young people; maximising wraparound care and cross-sectoral and out-of-school learning; active engagement of all leaders with key partners.

A school is good to the extent that...

Most school staff have a good understanding of the needs of their pupils and how some of these would be best met through integrated approaches. They identify key aims and involve other professionals in delivering them.

Vulnerable pupils and their families receive positive emotional and educational support from the school and its partner agencies. They feel that their needs are understood.

The school has effective transition arrangements, working in partnership with other local educational establishments. These arrangements focus on providing the personal support necessary for pupils to settle in well and approach their learning positively.

Staff organise wraparound care and cross-sectoral and out-of-school learning within the constraints of the existing arrangements or timetable. Wraparound care and out-of-school experiences are well organised and productive and part of a well-managed programme.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

School staff and other professionals involved in providing integrated services to children and community-based projects work together to identify local objectives which fulfil the specific needs of all the young people they serve.

Interagency working relating to care and welfare provides vulnerable young people and their families with a prompt service, as soon as possible after their needs are identified and well matched to these needs. Staff respond flexibly to the needs identified. All staff recognise their own roles in supporting all young people and in particular those who are vulnerable.

Staff ensure that individuals and groups, including the most vulnerable, are well supported and that their learning needs, in particular, are addressed throughout transitions. Young people experience coherent and progressive curricular programmes, consistent learning approaches and appropriate levels of challenge when they transfer from one establishment to another.

Staff build their planning of young people's learning experiences and activities, the school day and, where relevant, the school timetable round the needs of individuals and groups, adjusting it to enable cross-sectoral and out-of-school learning when, where and in the ways in which it most benefits pupils.

We deploy two youth workers to support a small group of S1/S2 pupils who present behaviour difficulties during lunch time. These workers engage with the pupils both in school and within an out-of-school programme overseen by a deputy headteacher and a community education manager. (secondary headteacher)

Working with partners to meet the needs of all children and young people *(continued)*

A school is good to the extent that...

Links with some partners, community representatives and agencies are well established. Specific members of staff manage these links.

Through flexible approaches to learning some young people participate in alternative curricular arrangements such as attending college to enhance their vocational and lifelong learning. Younger children may visit colleges for specific topic work and enterprise activities.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Leaders throughout the establishment engage actively with partners, community representatives and agencies and promote and support community partnerships.

Partnership agreements with colleges include monitoring of the progress of all pupils and prompt intervention to ensure pupils stay on track when things do not go according to plan.

Excellent teachers are nice, funny, helpful, make you work, are strict and are good at organising. (primary pupil)

DIMENSION 5

Works in partnerships with other agencies and its community

Multi-agency approaches to improve learning

Commitment to joint working by all parties; clarity about the distinctive contributions of community groups, professional and voluntary agencies and the business community; joint planning which draws on a range of information and support; joint training of staff from schools and partner agencies; focus on improvements in young people's learning and support; minimising barriers to partners' involvement.

A school is good to the extent that...

School leaders and staff whose professional responsibilities relate to support for pupils are involved in multi-agency work.

Staff identify gaps in the school's provision and engage with community groups, partner agencies and others who can provide the necessary expertise.

Joint projects are included in the school development/improvement plan and receive appropriate support from school resources.

School staff involved in teams made up of different agencies are given guidance on how they should fulfil their roles.

Actions agreed with partners result in improvements in the learning and support of pupils. Success is carefully monitored and reviewed.

Staff have a practical understanding of established limits to joint working and operate within them to provide productive experiences for young people.

Staff are open to advice and views expressed by partner agencies and change their practice in response. Consultation and reporting back are ongoing and regular.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

All staff are fully committed to joint working. They expect to be involved in some way and as part of ongoing support for pupils.

Staff work with a variety of agencies to identify their distinctive contributions to providing rich and inclusive educational experiences for pupils. Staff participate actively in initiatives led by other agencies.

Joint planning and coordination of projects take place within an action plan agreed across agencies which reflects key national and local priorities. Plans encourage innovation.

Joint training of staff from different backgrounds and agencies helps them to learn from each other, discuss common issues and make joint decisions.

Staff seek creative ways of working together to benefit pupils. They and their partners identify their individual and shared roles in ensuring that children are safe, active, nurtured, valued, successful, respected and included. They have an integrated approach to quality improvement.

Staff actively reduce barriers and obstacles which hinder joint working.

Staff actively seek feedback from partner agencies and, where needed, change course significantly to benefit pupils. They listen to partners and stakeholders at times suitable to partners and respond to, and do their best to act promptly on concerns, challenges and contributions.

Communication is really important – reporting on progress particularly to parents who for varying reasons have limited contact with the school. (class teacher)

Leadership and coordination

Clear guidance on joint working; consultation and communication; involvement in joint decision-making groups; active seeking of feedback and constructive challenge from partners, stakeholders and the community; openness and responsiveness to unsolicited suggestions from partners, stakeholders and the community.

A school is good to the extent that...

It has established effective links with a range of establishments, agencies, local businesses and voluntary organisations. Leaders of partner agencies are clear about the aims of their joint working and communicate these to the staff involved.

Aims, policies, procedures and guidance make clear the purposes of joint working and the roles and responsibilities of individual partners. They result in consistency in the way children are treated to ensure their safety.

Protocols for information sharing are clear and are followed by staff. They enable the necessary decisions about pupils' learning and welfare to be made. Partners, young people and families are consulted regularly and at an early stage in developments.

Representatives of the community, agencies and other stakeholders are informed of relevant decisions taken within school committees.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Partnership activities with other establishments, local businesses, voluntary organisations and training and careers organisations are managed through partnership agreements which make clear the expected outcomes of joint working, the roles of the key partners and the funding arrangements. Partnership agreements ensure that young people benefit from enrichments to their learning, achieve success and are safe and well supported.

The success of aims, policies, procedures and guidance for partnership working is regularly monitored and evaluated. Necessary improvements are made to ensure that pupils' learning is maximised. Policies and guidelines encourage innovation and flexibility.

Management information systems enable all partners to have access to the information they need to ensure young people's emotional well-being and improve their learning. Pupils and their families are fully aware of any information held about them and with whom it might be shared. Partners, young people, families and other stakeholders are actively involved in decision making at key stages.

The community, agencies and other stakeholders are represented on relevant school committees and decision-making groups. Members of joint groups make decisions and commit resources, within agreed parameters.

We keep re-inventing ourselves constantly – evolving practice – we're never satisfied with what we do. (headteacher)



6

Dimension 6

Works together with parents to improve learning

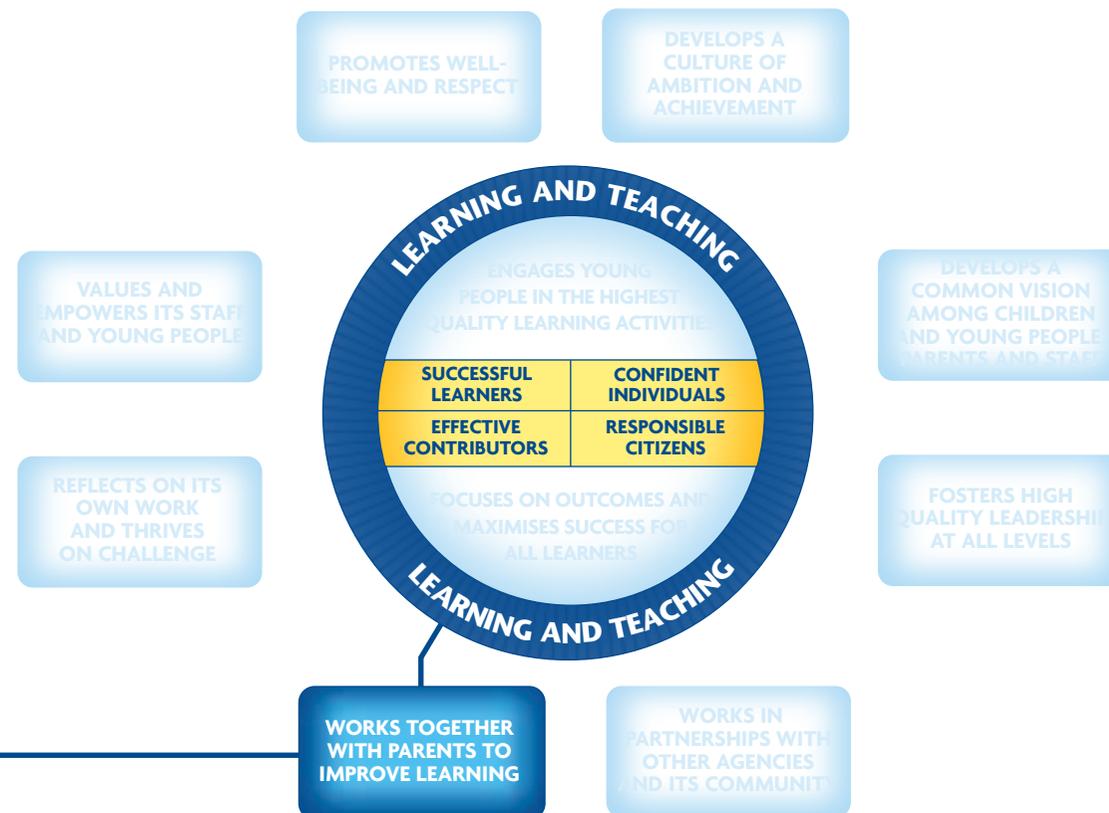
Dimension 6

Works together with parents to improve learning

Children who succeed do so because they grow in understanding both at school and at home and are able to build a learning bridge between them. (How can parents help their children's learning?)

Dimension 6

- Developing parents' support for their children's learning
- Active involvement of parents in school activities
- Collaboration and representation



DIMENSION 6

Works together with parents to improve learning

Two partnership officers are based in the school's community offices. They run well-attended workshops for new parents. They also visit homes to support parents and carers. This year, staff held a family learning week in October for parents of children from P7 to S2. It focused on the numeracy and literacy skills of both parents and children. Partnership officers also meet weekly with guidance staff. They discuss short-term targets in individualised educational programmes with learning support staff and parents.

Regular newsletters let parents and carers know the interests of children in the nursery and how they could help their children learn at home.

The school produces leaflets to help parents engage with their children's learning. These cover health education, reading and writing, support for learning, national assessments and homework. The homework leaflet details the amount, type and frequency of homework at the various stages. Each class teacher sends home a letter indicating the type of homework being given. Parents are encouraged to ask their children about homework tasks and to establish a routine time and place to complete it. They sign homework jotters and comment where necessary. At parents' evenings, teachers share targets for learning and for personal and social development.

Good communication is the key. I let them know what is happening. (class teacher)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.

Key features

Dimension 6: Works together with parents to improve learning

Many schools are good at involving parents in school activities. Many parents provide invaluable support for the school. Helping parents to contribute to their children's learning, and involving harder-to-reach parents, are greater challenges.

Home-school visits are helping to break down barriers, particularly where parents have a medical, physical or communication difficulty. Parents now feel part of the school family. (special school)

We engage closely in a supportive and non-threatening way with a small number of disengaged parents. We try to be positive and appreciative and build their self-esteem. (depute headteacher)



Open door – staff need to be available for informal chats with parents at the beginning and end of the day, offering help if difficulties arise. (nursery teacher)

The library is managed and operated by parental volunteers. Parents plan and deliver storytelling sessions and support pupils in independent study and research. They organise book fairs and carry out research into popular fictional texts. They find non-fiction texts to support social subject and science project work and advise pupils accordingly. Parents have held workshops for other parents to promote storytelling skills and raise awareness of key ideas in early literacy. Parental volunteers have also developed materials to support library skills.

One residential special school⁹ provided additional learning experiences on three nights per week to allow students to pursue practical craft activities and gardening. Pupils attended these classes enthusiastically. This enhanced the school's daytime curriculum, increased opportunities for accreditation and also developed specific interests and strengths in some pupils.

Parents should feel able to speak to the school about their concerns. (education liaison officer)

⁹ In residential settings, the school takes on the role of parents in providing experiences beyond the school day.

DIMENSION 6

Works together with parents to improve learning

Developing parents' support for their children's learning

Developing parents' support for their children's learning; sharing information.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff invite parents to events in school and ask them for information on their children's care and welfare needs at transition stages. Parents receive a settling-in report and can contact the school to make an appointment to discuss their children's attainment, achievement and progress. They listen to parents' views about their children's learning and progress.

Where necessary, staff from the school or partner agencies engage in a less formal way with parents, holding workshops, delivering handbooks and visiting homes. Staff make themselves available, where this is possible, at other times beyond planned parents' evenings. Regular newsletters detail school and community events, classwork, teaching approaches, learning activities and curriculum developments, and celebrate successes.

Parents receive regular and up-to-date information on aspects of their children's attainment, achievement and pastoral needs, the progress they are making, and their strengths and next steps. A school handbook provides information on all the school's policies and procedures.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff take active steps to encourage parents to engage with the school and, in particular, to reach out to those who may need help to overcome barriers of various kinds. They discuss a range of issues with parents, for example, arrangements for learning, individual aspirations and expectations, learning targets and approaches to learning. Staff maintain particularly close contact during settling-in and vulnerable periods.

Workshops and resource packs illustrate work in curriculum areas and teaching approaches. Staff encourage parents to take active roles in contributing to their children's learning and to discuss approaches to learning and teaching. As far as possible, staff meet parents at times which are most convenient for parents.

Staff help parents to understand assessment procedures. Parents have easy access to their children's current levels of performance. They understand options and progression routes and staff check that their aspirations are being met.

The children know the school and parents are working together. We can turn a child round because they know their parents trust and support the school.
(headteacher)

Developing parents' support for their children's learning *(continued)***A school is good to the extent that...**

It provides information to parents about their role in helping their children to learn.

Most parents feel included and involved in the school, and are confident that they could approach it if they had any problems. Staff make efforts to tackle disaffection.

In residential learning environments, key workers show interest in what young people have been doing during the school day.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

As a result of strong partnership with the school, and, in particular, the quality of support and information they receive, most parents help their children to engage with learning, sustain their attention and develop their confidence.

Staff establish a culture of inclusion, acceptance and positive discipline. They particularly reach out to enable disaffected young people and their families enabling them to experience success and acceptance. They maintain a particular focus on learners for whom there is little consistent support at home.

In residential learning environments, key workers are knowledgeable about young people's learning needs and are committed to supporting them in the residence and in the classroom as appropriate.

Like an extended family. From the minute they walk in we're all on the same side. (depute headteacher)

DIMENSION 6

Works together with parents to improve learning

Active involvement of parents in school activities

Parents' contribution to school activities; support for parents whose children have individual needs; support for parents in the development of their own skills and knowledge.

A school is good to the extent that...

It invites parents into the school to attend social activities, school shows and prize giving.

Parents work with staff and pupils to raise funds for the school. A wide range of parents is involved in social and educational activities, in supporting trips and activities and in assisting the school in sharing its achievements at special events and concerts.

It offers some support to parents in developing their own skills and knowledge, particularly in relation to parenting and supporting their children's learning. Staff find out what parents want to know and co-ordinate information, events, classes and support groups for parents. The school enables groups of parents who have particular needs to support each other and their children.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Parents participate in debates and discussions about education, and use their skills to contribute to school improvements. Parent representatives are involved in school development groups, working parties and committees. They also represent the school's views in wider educational debates.

It takes active steps to involve adult helpers in contributing to the life of the school. Some parents help the school promote effective partnerships with other parents and with employers. For example, they provide career/vocational role models for young people. Parents talk about their work, culture or lifestyle as part of the curriculum, and contribute to careers guidance.

It brings together parents with specific needs and interests, working with partner agencies. They form support groups and forums which benefit both parents and their children, focusing on education as well as common interests.

Our parents are really involved – if we've got stuff on out of school they're always invited. (pupil)

Collaboration and representation

Awareness of parents' views; involvement of parents in implementing the school's plans for improvement.

A school is good to the extent that...

It consults parents on key issues relating to school life and provision.

It actively seeks out the views of parents and the wider community on its strengths and areas for development.

It ensures that parents are fully involved as it implements its plans for improvement.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

What parents think is important for the school and for their own children has a significant influence on the school's vision. They help to formulate the school's priorities for improvement.

It consults effectively with parents on the improvements and changes it is planning. It asks them for formal feedback on specific events, the quality of education, school leadership and on the way the school is run.

It involves parent representatives alongside pupils and staff in identifying improvements. Parents are confident in contributing ideas, expressing concerns and making suggestions. Parent representatives communicate regularly with the rest of the parent body, systematically canvassing opinions and views.

Keep them updated. Parents should be asked for feedback through questionnaires and letters. (classroom assistant)



7

Dimension 7

Reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

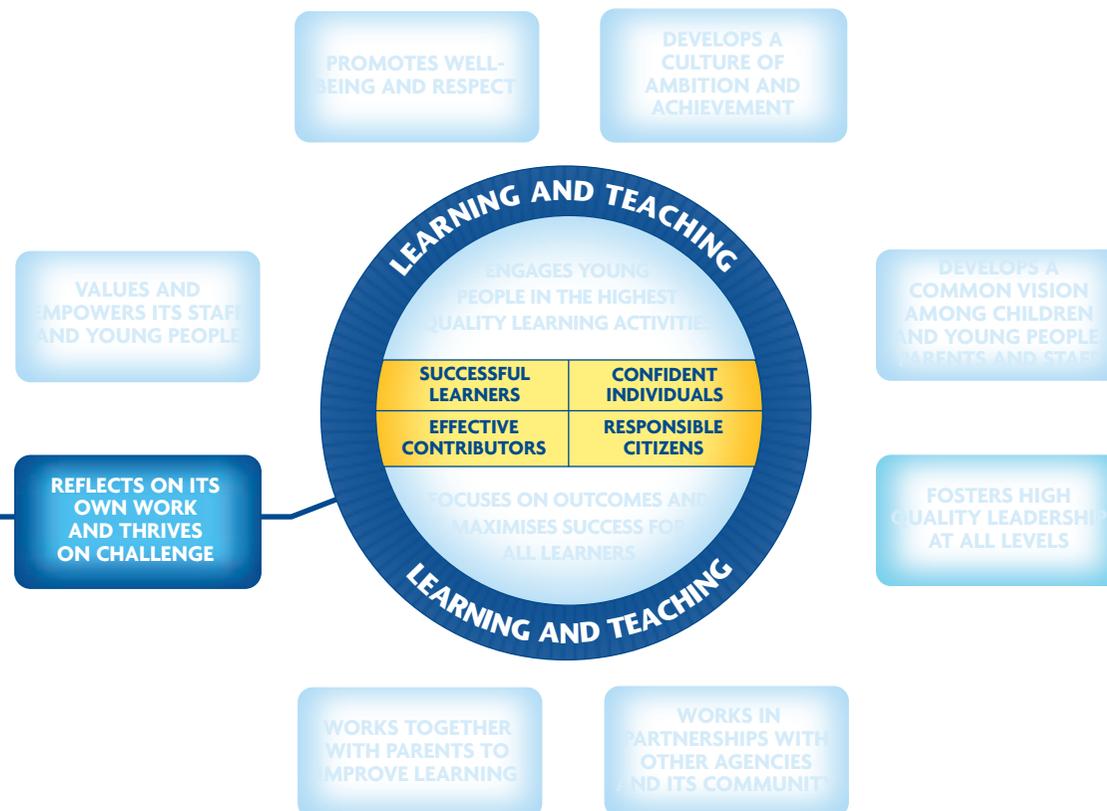
Dimension 7 Reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

*What's done we partly may compute,
but not know what's resisted.*

(Robert Burns)

Dimension 7 ✳

- Continuing and critical enquiry
- Welcoming challenges
- A collective commitment to improvement
- Continuous professional development
- Being data rich



DIMENSION 7

Reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

Reflection on practice is a way of life for the school and for each member of staff. They regularly reflect on achieving the school aims and use quality indicators systematically as the basis for gathering evidence and making evaluative judgements. Pairs of staff regularly look at specific indicators using the 'traffic lights' approach. Small working groups of staff systematically audit practice, and discuss the outcomes of self-evaluation and what needs to be improved. Classroom observation is systematic and sustained and is matched to both quality indicators and the school aims. All forms of pupil data are consistently monitored and evaluated and benchmarked against past trends and national and local performance. Regular feedback to staff is supportive and challenging. There is an agreed quality improvement calendar. Staff seek the views of parents, staff and pupils and use them to improve performance. The school community has agreed what it needs to aim for beyond 'very good'. The school is now focusing on achieving this and has linked these criteria to priorities in the school development plan. Posters focus on 'What makes us a good school?' and 'What would make us a better school?'.

Classroom observation works and brings about improvements. There is a culture of continual reflection which is embedded into classroom practice. (class teacher)

Key features

Dimension 7: Reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

Reflection on the quality of education provided by the school is a key responsibility of the professional. Welcoming challenge and drawing evidence from a wide range of sources are crucial components of reflective activity.

Reflection and evaluation – knowing where you are, what you can build on and what needs to be improved – are at the heart of our work. Self-evaluation is clearly linked to development planning. Staff meetings are used to focus on specific school development plan priorities, first on implementation and then on monitoring progress and making adjustments or agreeing support. (headteacher)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.



All development priorities are tied to quality assurance monitoring. Managers have agreed clear criteria with staff about forward plans, jotter sampling and classroom observation visits. A one-to-one meeting takes place between the headteacher and each teacher to discuss learning and teaching and the progress of individual pupils, including tracking and meeting individual needs. A focus on improvement through monitoring has changed the culture in the school. Staff are requesting classroom visits now because senior management team members work with the class and offer valued feedback. Written evaluative comments on planning encourage staff to be more evaluative and more aware of the school's standards and expectations. Reflection on learning and teaching and on their impact on children and young people is part of everyone's daily thinking and practice.

*We aimed for Charter Mark accreditation to extend our ambitions for continuous improvement. Expectations were agreed and standards of performance set. These complemented the quality indicators in *How good is our school?* and gave the school another view of its practice and outcomes. (headteacher)*

DIMENSION 7

Reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

Continuing and critical enquiry

Reflecting on the impact of classroom practice and response to external critique; a strategic overview of best practice within and beyond the school.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff are involved in self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

They participate in monitoring and evaluating at classroom and school levels.

It implements learning priorities through a consistent departmental, stage or team approach.

Departments and subject or stage teams actively consider the most appropriate approaches for the learning priorities they have identified.

Staff value the support of the education authority or managing body. The school reports on progress through a standards and quality report and the development/improvement planning process.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff reflect on the impact of classroom and playroom practice, adapt as necessary and know what works. They seek and respond to external critique.

Self-evaluation is embedded in the school's culture, the work of its entire staff, and the pupil body. It is focused on improving learning and reducing barriers to learning.

Senior managers prevent administrative or other factors using up time needed to develop effective learning and teaching approaches. Departments, stages, teams and the school as a whole consistently engage in collaborative approaches. Staff reflect on their current practice and monitor and evaluate any new initiatives, ideas and changes they have introduced.

Senior managers, individual departments and subject or stage teams consistently focus on the learning priorities they have identified, both in their discussions and in class visits. They consider how their plans for improving learning are working out in classroom practice.

Staff welcome the challenge provided by the education authority or managing body. They use it as an opportunity to demonstrate the benefits the school provides for pupils and the extent to which they are providing best value in the use of resources.

We're not going to stand still. Diligence, dedication and genuine reflection, asking ourselves searching questions about our practice, these are the hallmarks of any professional. (headteacher)

Continuing and critical enquiry *(continued)***A school is good to the extent that...**

Staff engage in regular monitoring of school performance.

Self-evaluation by staff is embedded in the annual review and development process. All staff have opportunities to contribute to policy and working groups.

Staff maintain aspects of good practice while focusing on bringing some aspects up to 'very good'. They achieve targets in the development/improvement plan within agreed timescales.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff reflect objectively on the extent of their own impact as teachers. They base their decisions about the most effective practice on evidence. They consider fully external advice and expertise.

Evidence-informed self-evaluation is an ongoing aspect of school culture and practice, and involves pupils as well as staff. Staff at all levels propose and lead developments and improvements. Young people contribute effectively to this work.

Staff are never fully satisfied and are always looking for ways of making things better. There is clarity and a shared understanding as to what constitutes excellent practice. Staff regularly explore and research innovative practice in other schools and organisations.

Everyone must create time to reflect – dedicated time – we all have a responsibility as professionals for our own improvement. (class teacher)

DIMENSION 7

Reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

Welcoming challenges

Encouraging innovative approaches; alertness to surprises or lapses; skills in problem solving; a focus on solutions.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff deliver planned improvements and their actions make a difference to young people's experiences.

Senior managers give advice and support to teachers on providing consistently high quality learning experiences.

Staff maintain good practice and have a planned approach to improvement.

Leaders take timely action where practice and/or impact fall below expected standards.

Staff have developed planned approaches to identifying and solving problems.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff strongly believe in their ability to make a difference to the experiences of young people and constantly seek to do so. They relish challenges.

Staff are challenged and supported by peers and managers to provide the highest quality learning experiences for all pupils.

Staff achieve sustainability by embedding excellent features while still anticipating further improvements.

Staff in general are alert to possible positive or negative surprises or lapses. They take immediate action to deal with the most urgent issues and reflect with their colleagues and school leaders on any strategic or long-term implications.

Problem solving is carried out in a resourceful, creative and innovative way that focuses on solutions.

Continuous improvement is now a habit – a way of life. We seek out challenges to improve our practice. (support staff)

A problem is not a crisis, it can be shared and acted on. Problems help us to identify the challenges which bring about improvement. (teacher)

A collective commitment to improvement

The learning and teaching policy being placed at the core of the school's everyday work; a joined-up approach to improvement; shared knowledge of learning and teaching; observation and mutual support; a commitment to identifying improvements and challenges.

A school is good to the extent that...

It has a comprehensive learning and teaching policy, which includes a focus on meeting learners' needs. It is sustainable and regularly reviewed.

The management team sets a clear agenda for improvement.

Leaders create opportunities for sharing good practice.

There is a planned programme for evaluating classroom practice.

Leaders are proactive in identifying areas for improvement.

Development/improvement plans include priorities relating to learning and teaching.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

The learning and teaching policy drives all the school's work and connects with all other policies and practices. It provides a framework for ensuring that all learners are treated fairly and are included in learning, and that their needs, including additional support needs, are met. Successful learning and teaching is placed at the heart of school, classroom and playroom activities.

The school community takes a joined-up approach to improvement across all that it does.

Staff discuss their practice, share knowledge of their craft and observe and help one another.

Feedback and self-evaluation are embedded into classroom routines so that there is a focus on continuously improving learning and teaching.

The commitment of staff to identifying areas for improvement and challenges for the future is secured and sustained.

Development/improvement plans at school, department, stage and team level all have learning as their main focus.

Reflective communities have staff who are motivated and enthusiastic and are happy to discuss what is going on in their classrooms. (class teacher)

DIMENSION 7

Reflects on its own work and thrives on challenge

Continuous professional development

Staff involvement; excellent practice; sharing of outcomes of professional development activities; evaluation of impact; a collaborative, collegiate approach.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff are aware of the aims and priorities for professional development. They have access to effective programmes of professional development designed to meet the needs identified in the school development/implementation plan. They evaluate the quality of professional development activities.

Staff are aware of the good practice which exists within the school.

Staff performance is evaluated. They are given feedback and opportunities for continuing professional development.

Individual staff have opportunities to play to their strengths and develop their expertise.

Continuous professional development gives staff opportunities to improve their knowledge of, and practice in, effective learning and teaching. Learning and teaching is discussed at staff meetings and on in-service days.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff are fully engaged in identifying the aims and priorities for their own professional development. All staff are proactive in furthering their own learning and sharing their learning widely with colleagues as appropriate. They evaluate the impact of professional development on learners' experiences and performance.

Staff recognise and continually keep up-to-date on what constitutes excellent practice.

Staff work as professional teams and are ambitious to do well. They and their managers are always seeking opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills and prepare for positions of responsibility. Self-evaluation is geared to improvement towards excellence.

Staff learning and professional development is collaborative and collegiate. It is led by valued and respected practitioners.

All staff engage in continuous learning. Teachers make arrangements for structured observation and feedback by colleagues. Debate on learning and how it takes place is promoted through planned and sustained professional development and through discussion with peers, school leaders and pupil groups.

Self-evaluation is a natural activity for a reflective professional. It is at the centre of our thinking and practice. If we ask children and young people to assess their progress in learning and identify their next steps, surely we can do the same about ourselves. (principal teacher)

Being data rich¹⁰

Use of a wide range of sources of data; improvement based on reliable and valid evidence.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff use standard sources of data for monitoring progress towards improvement objectives. They undertake regular reviews of data so that potential problems can be identified.

Leaders disseminate information derived from national and local performance data. They use this for benchmarking performance within the school.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff seek and use data and information from a wide range of sources, including from stakeholders and other sources which the school itself has identified as useful to help identify and tackle improvement challenges. They use performance analysis rigorously to identify strengths and to improve learning and teaching outcomes for young people.

Staff use comparative data judiciously to reflect on, and take action to improve the learning of all pupils.

Reflecting on practice is a shared process – a culture of self-evaluation is built in. (principal teacher)

¹⁰ Data may be of different kinds, for example, surveys of people's views, data relating to attendance, behaviour, exclusions, leavers' destinations and attainment. The range of data available for analysis will vary depending on the sector or setting in which you work. Some will be collected at national level and some by the local authority or by the school itself.



Dimension 8

Values and empowers its staff and young people

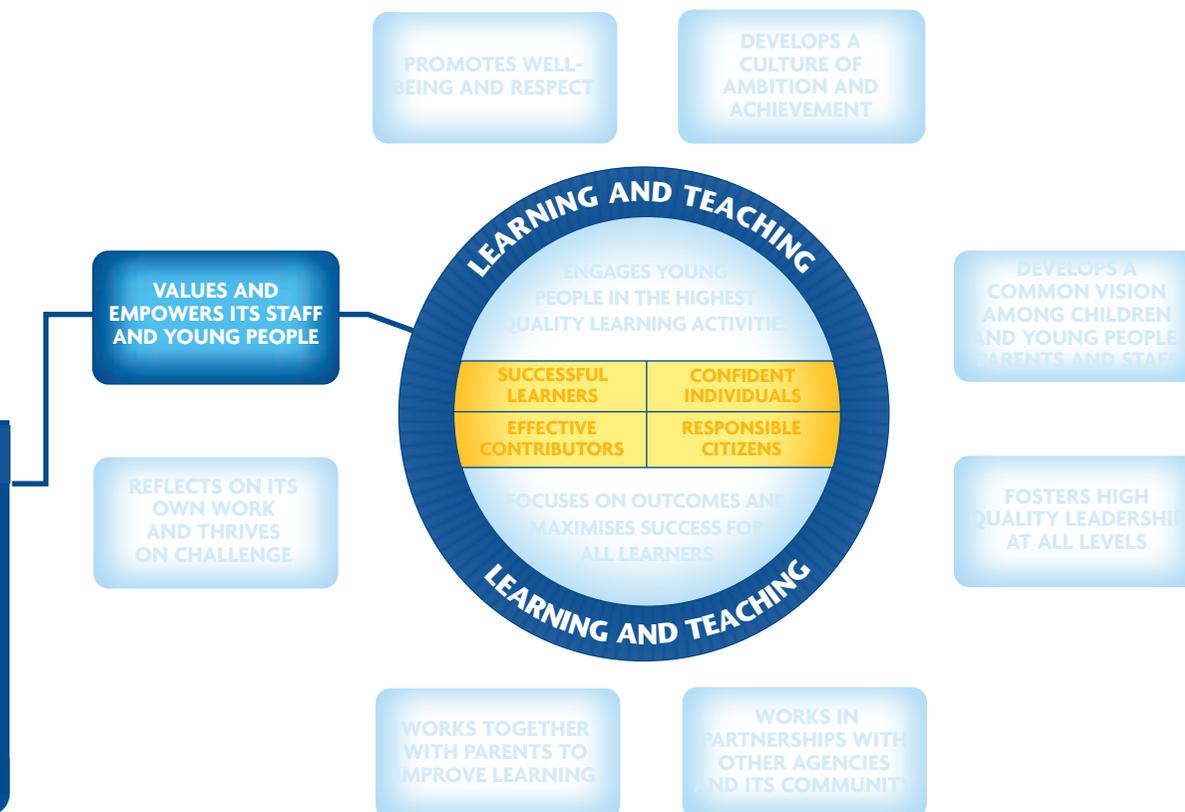
Dimension 8 Values and empowers its staff and young people

Each child who can form his or her views on matters affecting him or her has the right to express those views if she or he so wishes.

(The Children (Scotland) Act 1995¹¹)

Dimension 8 ✳

- **Having their capabilities extended**
- **Being empowered to influence the future development and direction of the school**
- **Giving pupils a voice and enabling them to take responsibility**
- **Being encouraged through a vibrant and progressive school culture and climate**



¹¹ The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Regulations and Guidance, Volume 1 Support and Protection for Children and Their Families

DIMENSION 8

Values and empowers its staff and young people

Staff are valued by being involved in decision making and are empowered to use resources wisely. They revisit, review or develop policies together. Working teams are created for target setting and enterprise activities. All of these activities create a team spirit that permeates the school.

The school listens and responds to pupils. A very strong feature of the school's approach to personal and social development is that staff take account of pupils' interests and preferences in designing and adjusting activities and materials. They all take account of pupils' personal circumstances in day-to-day learning and other activities.

All members of the school community are valued, and everyone is part of the school team. The school actively promotes the development of the skills of staff as teachers and of pupils as learners. All staff are encouraged to undertake development to enhance their skills, including award-bearing courses. The school ensures that pupils develop an understanding of the different ways in which they learn, and how to study, revise and carry out research tasks effectively. Staff and pupils are encouraged to bring forward new initiatives for the whole school, teams or classes.

Headteachers are good when they are prepared to take the ideas of pupils and use them in the school. (former pupil)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.

Key features

Dimension 8: Values and empowers its staff and young people

In excellent schools, staff and pupils feel valued, and know that their views will be taken seriously. They receive opportunities for making decisions which result in action. Decisions which result in improvements in learning are among the most important of these.

Everything was there – plans, systems, all teacher-friendly and easy to follow.

Everything was well organised. I came on so much in my first year teaching. The principal teacher spent a lot of time helping me with planning. It was only later I realised that she must have had all her own work but never mentioned it.

(teacher)

Age is foolish and forgetful when it underestimates youth. (J K Rowling)



A headteacher should be someone who can connect with pupils. A person who you can go and talk to, and know they will really listen to you. (former pupil)

Staff are valued by being engaged in genuine dialogue about the future direction of the school. Their views and opinions are sought and valued. The senior management team's leadership style is inclusive and encouraging.

The staff and pupils feel that the strength of the school lies in the strong leadership and excellent management team who were seen as being forward thinking and caring about all staff and pupils. They value everyone's views.

The school sets the agenda through a collaborative approach to decision making which values and involves staff, pupils, partner agencies, and parents. The vision and aims of the school provide a clear and useful framework for day-to-day work and future planning.

The management style within the school has made staff and pupils feel they have ownership over its direction. Regular meetings are held which all staff attend. These, along with meetings for pupils, provide an effective means of communication and consultation. The headteacher is consultative, and staff work very hard in groups to develop the school, with the wide involvement of pupils. Staff and pupils are committed and enthusiastic.

Nursery staff used praise effectively and encouraged children to make choices and develop skills of independence.

A pleasure to work within a school where you are valued and supported. (janitor)

DIMENSION 8

Values and empowers its staff and young people

Having their capabilities extended

Developing pupils' skills and capabilities as learners: understanding the ways in which they, and others, learn; high quality and focused induction and professional development for staff; having professional and personal concerns considered and addressed.

A school is good to the extent that...

Pupils have a general idea of their preferred ways of learning. They talk about these with staff who adapt the learning process to assist them.

Staff demonstrate that they value young people's learning through the use of high quality materials and delivery of high quality experiences.

The skills and confidence of newly appointed staff are developed through planned programmes of induction.

Staff have clearly defined and sustainable remits.

Staff have access to senior managers to discuss professional and, if appropriate, personal concerns.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Pupils are enabled to develop their skills and capabilities as learners. They understand the different ways in which people learn, including themselves, and are encouraged to extend their range of learning styles. As appropriate to their age and stage, they take notes, carry out research and revise and consolidate their learning.

Young people are valued as active partners in their learning. Staff encourage them to contribute to developing their own learning experiences. Staff recognise their personal and professional responsibility for the learning of all young people, including those with additional support needs. Learners recognise and value the role of staff as partners in their learning.

Induction takes place within a systematic approach to mentoring and development for all staff.

Staff remits are kept under regular review and agreed adjustments are made to improve individual and school effectiveness and to maintain job satisfaction and motivation.

Leaders know their staff and pupils and their individual circumstances well and set time aside to provide professional and personal support.

I was encouraged to do the probationer certificate that was about reflective practice – I focused on raising achievement in writing and overcoming barriers to learning. I felt this made me a better teacher. (probationary teacher)

Being empowered to influence the future development and direction of the school

Contributing to monitoring, reviewing and revising the vision for the school; being involved in planning sustainable change and improvement; contributing to decision making at appropriate times and levels; questioning constructively how things are done in the school.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff are consulted on the school's vision, values and strategic direction.

Staff are involved in making decisions on operational and, in some cases strategic, issues.

Staff are generally positive about their school and their contributions to its development.

Staff regularly participate in review groups and working parties.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff and pupils reflect on and debate the purposes of education and schooling and contribute to formulating and taking forward the school's vision and values.

Staff and young people initiate and are active participants in taking strategic decisions that influence the school's future.

The morale of staff and pupils and their levels of commitment are very high and are sustained through a sense of ownership and active experience of personal responsibility.

Joint (collegial) working is a distinctive feature of school improvement.

People raise achievement. Staff have ownership of everything we do. Support staff are valued and their importance to the success of the school is recognised.
(headteacher)

DIMENSION 8

Values and empowers its staff and young people

Giving pupils a voice and enabling them to take responsibility

Pupils' involvement in genuine decision making that is relevant to them; supporting other pupils; ensuring that the views of all pupils are taken into account through effective consultation.

A school is good to the extent that...

Specific pupils are given responsibilities for particular activities and aspects of school life. Pupils have opportunities to make their opinions known and their views are listened to when decisions are being made.

Young people are encouraged to become involved in activities with the wider community, including youth work opportunities, organised competitions and participation in the arts and sport.

Young people suggest improvements to the school environment and wider community through mechanisms such as pupil councils.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Young people are involved in making decisions about the future work of the school. Their views are regularly sought, discussed with them and taken account of. They receive feedback, and when their suggestions are not taken on board they are given explanations. Pupils are given responsibility, for example, for the management of a project budget. Pupils' concerns and complaints are recorded and taken seriously. Feedback is provided to pupils who make complaints. Pupils have confidence in the actions taken by the school to address their concerns. Staff ensure that the views of all pupils are considered.

Young people willingly assume positions of responsibility and become involved as active and responsible members of the community. They are given support and training in developing the necessary skills. They take part in activities such as action against bullying, and peer support and mentoring schemes. They take active roles in charitable work, building strong local partnerships and developing and sustaining international links.

Many young people, staff, parents and members of the wider community plan, consult and work collaboratively to improve the school environment and the experiences the school provides for its pupils. The pupil council, or equivalent, has taken on challenging issues and has been successful in having a positive impact on important aspects of school life and on the wider community.

Everyone gets a turn, it's not always the same people giving suggestions and making decisions. (P7 pupil)

You learn a lot more when you go out and do things. (P7 pupil)

Being encouraged through a vibrant and progressive school culture and climate

Recognising and praising excellent work done by all members of the school community; promoting professional trust and confidence; encouraging creativity, problem-solving and innovation.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff regularly express and share the need for high expectations and standards.

It recognises the contributions of all staff, including those of support staff.

Leaders seek regular feedback on their performance and listen to staff opinions and concerns.

All staff are encouraged to contribute to the development of good quality programmes and materials.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff and pupils internalise and exemplify high expectations and professional standards in all their daily routines.

It routinely and systematically shares and celebrates the achievements of staff, pupils, and the wider community.

Leaders systematically seek and act on feedback on their performance and communicate the outcomes to staff and pupils.

Staff and pupils are creative and innovative, working in a context where there is neither a blame culture nor a fear of failure. They have a problem-solving approach to challenges.

Recognition of good practice and achievement are key components of self evaluation but the "no blame" culture built on quality feedback enables problem areas to be tackled effectively and professionally. (principal teacher)

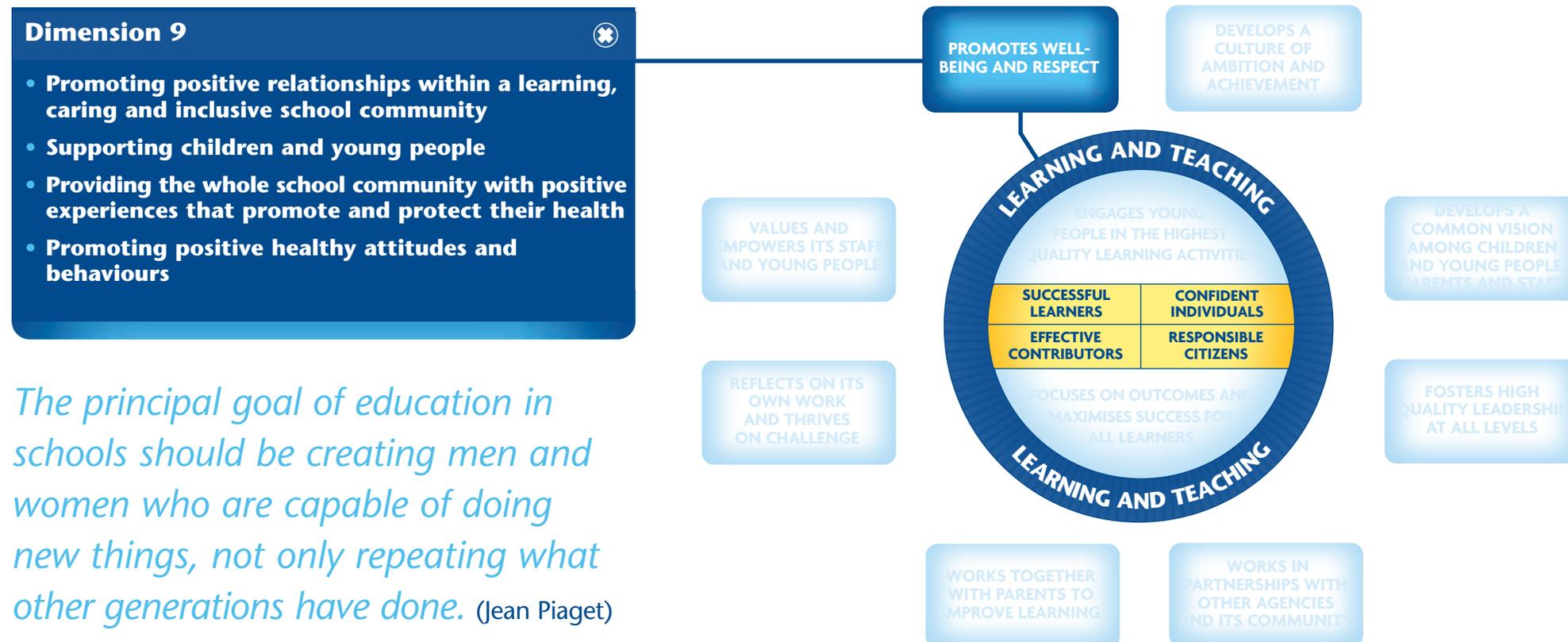


9

Dimension 9

Promotes well-being and respect

Dimension 9 Promotes well-being and respect



The principal goal of education in schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not only repeating what other generations have done. (Jean Piaget)

DIMENSION 9

Promotes well-being and respect

The school fosters a spirit of activity and cooperation. Staff see wider activities as fundamental to relationships within the school, with positive transfers to relationships within classrooms. After a visit to Japan for a school rugby tournament staff initiated a series of projects for pupils, including: home-to-home exchanges; visits to and from Japan involving music groups; learning Japanese; and demonstrations of Japanese arts and crafts.

The school is proud of its policy on inclusion and supports pupils with moderate learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Pupils are constantly reminded that they all have strengths and areas in which they can achieve. The headteacher congratulates individuals and groups formally and informally. S6 pupils support the school through the school council, helping younger pupils in class and promoting charity work. Senior school life is seen as meaningful, purposeful and based on responsibility to self and others. This transmits a responsible work ethic to the whole pupil body.

Drama teachers from the local high school hold taster sessions for young people in the youth centre in various arts activities. Young people select and work on challenging subjects such as drugs, sexuality, bullying and peer pressure. Senior members of the club support younger ones in drama and performance. The activities improve self-esteem, creativity and confidence and build skills such as communication and working with others.

Key features

Dimension 9: Promotes well-being and respect

Mental, physical and emotional well-being of young people are essential pre-conditions for successful learning. These qualities cannot be developed for individuals in isolation from the health and well-being of the school community as a whole.

What then is education to be? ...

Gymnastic, for the body, and music for the mind. (Plato)

Everyone gets along – there’s no bullying or anything. It makes you feel welcome – because teachers are friendly to us, we are friendly. Like you’re copying the teachers. They teach us to respect others, especially for high school and out and about when we are older. So that when you meet people you don’t offend them. (P7 pupil)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.



The best teachers don't shout and tell you off. They talk to you about how not to do it again. (P6 pupil)

The health promoting group chose three areas of focus for the year: stressing the importance of breakfast, with year groups coming in for breakfast with their class tutors; taking sufficient exercise, through early morning access to the fitness room; and providing water, with school vending machines now supplying water only.

Weekly form assemblies provide valuable contact with the whole year group, enabling values to be reinforced. The message that "we care for you" is demonstrated through extensive out-of-school hours activities, across a range of areas, lunchtime clubs, study support and homework drop-in clubs. Values are reinforced in daily actions.

One residential special school worked very closely with families and a local authority to support young people to re-integrate to their own community and local mainstream school. This involved key workers and key teachers providing families and schools with important strategies to do with managing behaviour and promoting appropriate learning opportunities.

The whole school community believes that each young person should be treated with dignity and respect. (headteacher)

DIMENSION 9

Promotes well-being and respect

Promoting positive relationships within a learning, caring and inclusive school community

Enabling young people to become confident and successful learners, with secure principles and self respect; helping pupils to become responsible citizens, who respect others and contribute to society; creating an ethos of care, respect and fairness for all in the school; recognising and celebrating diversity within the community; ensuring all young people and their families are included; enabling effective communication; modelling care, cooperation and collaboration.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff demonstrate that they value young people by focusing on their learning and attainment. They display pupils' work in classrooms and in some public areas.

Staff are committed and caring, and use praise to promote positive relationships and to improve learners' self-esteem.

A range of formal and informal activities contributes to the development of positive attitudes and self-assurance amongst learners. Activities both within and out of school hours are varied.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Young people are proud of their learning, attainment and achievements. Their work is displayed in classrooms, in public areas and, where possible, in the wider community. Achievements are recognised, valued and celebrated.

Staff create a positive and purposeful climate characterised by mutual respect, trust and confidence. Interactions between all members of the school community are relaxed and friendly but also productive and focused on success.

Children and staff develop self-confidence, self-esteem and positive views about themselves and their school, through participation in an extensive and varied programme of activities both within and out of school hours. The world beyond the school is regularly used as a source of learning for all young people.

Teachers keep encouraging me by saying nice things and helping me when I am stuck. (P2 child)

Promoting positive relationships within a learning, caring and inclusive school community *(continued)***A school is good to the extent that...**

Young people are treated in a fair and inclusive manner, made aware of their rights and responsibilities and encouraged to respect and understand the views of others.

Staff and learners acknowledge diversity and difference. The curriculum includes information about different cultures, religions and viewpoints in society. Staff receive appropriate training and take action to prevent discrimination.

The management of all aspects of inclusion is effective and well planned. The budget is sufficient and appropriate and staff agree about the broad allocation of resources and the delegation of responsibility.

Young people learn to work in groups and know how to resolve conflicts or get help to do so. They also work productively with teachers and are confident in accessing support and advice from adults.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Young people have frequent opportunities to reflect on and to discuss their rights and responsibilities and to demonstrate concern for and acceptance of others. Young people and staff respect differences and value diversity. Older pupils willingly act as role models.

Staff and parents have a very good understanding of policies on equality and equal access to the curriculum. The curriculum and culture promote a positive appreciation of equality, social justice and diversity in society. Incidents of inequality, racism, sectarianism, bullying and discrimination are dealt with openly, promptly and consistently.

Support facilities and accommodation are of very high quality. They are located at the very heart of the school. Physical and human resources are allocated fairly to ensure equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum.

Young people and staff work confidently with each other, for example, through arts and sports activities and activities such as charity work. A culture of active citizenship is fully embedded throughout the school.

The teacher gets the boys and girls to clap when I've done something good. (nursery child)

DIMENSION 9

Promotes well-being and respect

Promoting positive relationships within a learning, caring and inclusive school community *(continued)*

A school is good to the extent that...

Approaches to promoting positive behaviour are clear and consistent. Young people contribute to establishing, reviewing and revising the school's rules or code of conduct, as appropriate to their age or stage of development. They are clear about rewards and sanctions. Praise and reward are used to encourage good behaviour, as appropriate to the age and stage of the children.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Expectations of behaviour are clear, unambiguous and shared by all staff, learners and parents. Young people demonstrate self-discipline in their interactions with staff and with each other and are protective and respectful of one another. Behaviour procedures are applied consistently. Appropriate behaviour is reinforced and inappropriate behaviour is always challenged. Adults working in, or associated with the school uphold its standards and expectations. Learners and their families receive support through the provision of effective behaviour support programmes. Staff understand factors which affect pupils' motivation, and take action to improve motivation.

With integration, the child fits into the school. With inclusion, the school adjusts to the child. (primary headteacher)

Everyone bent over backwards whatever he needed was provided... he felt just like the other children. (parent of child with additional support needs)

Supporting children and young people

Providing sensitive personal support; identifying and responding to the needs of children and young people; providing care and support for individuals; integrated approaches to supporting children, young people and their families.

A school is good to the extent that...

Young people who face communication barriers receive the appropriate support needed to interact with staff and with their peers.

Staff are aware of the need for confidentiality when dealing with sensitive issues except where there are concerns about risk of harm. Approaches to supporting learners provide for a safe and secure environment.

Clear procedures are used to identify learners' needs.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff use a range of means to meet the communication and other needs of learners and their families. Staff teach children how to understand and communicate with those who have difficulties. They have strong links with staff who provide family learning and literacy support. Information is provided in a number of formats to meet people's needs.

Children had confidence to ask for help when they needed it and that adults would use their power to help them.

Children trust adults in school to respect confidentially but also share information appropriately to ensure the children get the help they need. They are confident that professionals work together effectively on their behalf.

Staff take positive and proactive steps to ensure that factors, such as the learning environment, family circumstances, health or disability, or social or emotional factors which may hinder learning are promptly identified and addressed effectively. Staff regularly review these needs and consider the adequacy of the support.

You get to talk to the teacher in private without anyone else knowing what you are saying. (P6 pupil)

DIMENSION 9
Promotes well-being and respect

Supporting children and young people *(continued)*

A school is good to the extent that...

External agencies are involved in supporting pupils.

Most staff know learners well. Individual learners have clear support plans which specify clear targets and timescales. Care and welfare arrangements for learners are effective. Parents know the name of, and have access to, the staff member responsible for supporting their child.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff address learners' needs through a variety of approaches including: prompt intervention; approaches to learning and teaching matched to their needs; curricular flexibility; deployment of support staff; and engaging the expertise and resources of all possible partner agencies and organisations, including voluntary. Effective multi-agency approaches are in place which provide a high level and quality of support to learners and their families through positive, planned intervention.

Every child knows whom they can approach with a problem and that they can be assured of effective support. Staff know each learner well. When a factor hindering learning has been identified, key members of staff become responsible for ensuring positive outcomes for individual learners and for working with parents and other agencies. Record-keeping is of a very high quality. Young people and parents are actively involved in planning future support where required.

Staff showed a deep understanding- not only of my daughter's schooling progression but also her character, and how to get round her little foibles. (parent of a secondary pupil: Happy, safe and achieving their potential, 2004)

Providing the whole school community with positive experiences that promote and protect their health

Ensuring the physical, social, spiritual, mental and emotional health and well-being of all children and young people and staff; working with families and others in identifying and addressing the health needs of the staff and pupils and the contribution of the school to the health of the wider community; planning programmes and activities targeted to improve the health and well-being of young people and staff.

A school is good to the extent that...

All staff accept responsibility for contributing to the wider personal and social development of all learners. There is a planned programme of personal and social development and health education. The health education programme is relevant to the age and stage of learners and covers key health issues, in line with local and national advice.

Children and young people have access to up-to-date, accurate and relevant resources for personal and social development and health education.

It aims to be a health promoting school. Pupils have access to fresh drinking water and healthy eating options.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff focus on developing and delivering a wide range of activities, opportunities and learning experiences to meet the learning, personal and social development needs of all young people, and enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Staff recognise their personal and professional responsibility for the personal and social development and health education of all children and young people and act on it.

Children, young people and their parents know where such information and advice is located within the school. Children, young people and their parents use the information to make informed choices and protect their health and well-being.

Healthy living is built into the school's culture. The work of the school reflects in all that it does the health needs of the community and health issues which impact on the lives of young people. Staff perceive health education and promotion as a high priority. Cross-curricular experiences ensure that learners develop a broad understanding of personal health and safety and are confident in their own knowledge, skills and emerging values. Learners are given responsibility for planning and evaluating aspects of the programme.

I wouldn't want to be simply 'tolerated'. We develop 'empathy'. (headteacher)

DIMENSION 9
Promotes well-being and respect

Providing the whole school community with positive experiences that promote and protect their health *(continued)*

A school is good to the extent that...

External specialists contribute to learning and teaching in some aspects of the health curriculum. Parents are informed and consulted on health education, particularly with regard to positive relationships and sexual health.

Staff participate in health and well-being activities.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

A wide range of other agencies is engaged in delivering aspects of the health curriculum. Across agencies, staff are involved in productive teamwork to ensure positive outcomes for learners. Staff work closely with parents and other partners, engaging families in improving the well-being of their children.

Staff are actively encouraged to improve their own health and well-being, by a planned programme of activities for all staff. The school as a whole is committed to meeting the standards of Scotland's Health at Work (SHAW) or equivalent. Staff have access to regular health checks.

Encouragement of healthy lifestyles is often effectively done through topic work, where fun activities carry a clear message. (teacher)

Promoting positive healthy attitudes and behaviours.

Helping all members of the school community to develop values, attitudes and skills that will enable them to make well-informed choices; promoting healthy habits and linking learning and teaching in the classroom to wider health issues; recognising the links between healthy habits and successful learning.

A school is good to the extent that...

Most young people feel safe, secure and valued. The school promotes their self-esteem and encourages them to express their views within clear boundaries. They are given sound models for developing their work.

It encourages young people and provides them with sufficient and relevant knowledge to develop responsibility for their personal actions, health-related behaviour and lifestyle choices.

Young people have access to accurate, relevant, up-to-date information and advice about future learning opportunities and career choices, as appropriate to their age and stage.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Through experiencing regular success, young people become confident individuals developing self-respect and physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being. They hold well-grounded and secure beliefs and values and can clearly express their ambitions for the future. They have planned opportunities and experiences to develop decision-making skills based on sound and valid evidence.

The whole school community takes an active role in promoting the care and welfare of others. There is a planned approach to the integration of positive health choices within the curriculum. All young people are encouraged to develop healthy habits, laying the foundation for lifelong participation in health promoting communities. Staff demonstrate positive attitudes and make positive health choices.

Young people are proactive in developing ideas about their future and have acquired the skills and knowledge to plan their careers effectively.

The whole school community believes that each young person should be treated with dignity and respect and should be supported to keep on achieving new targets. (headteacher)



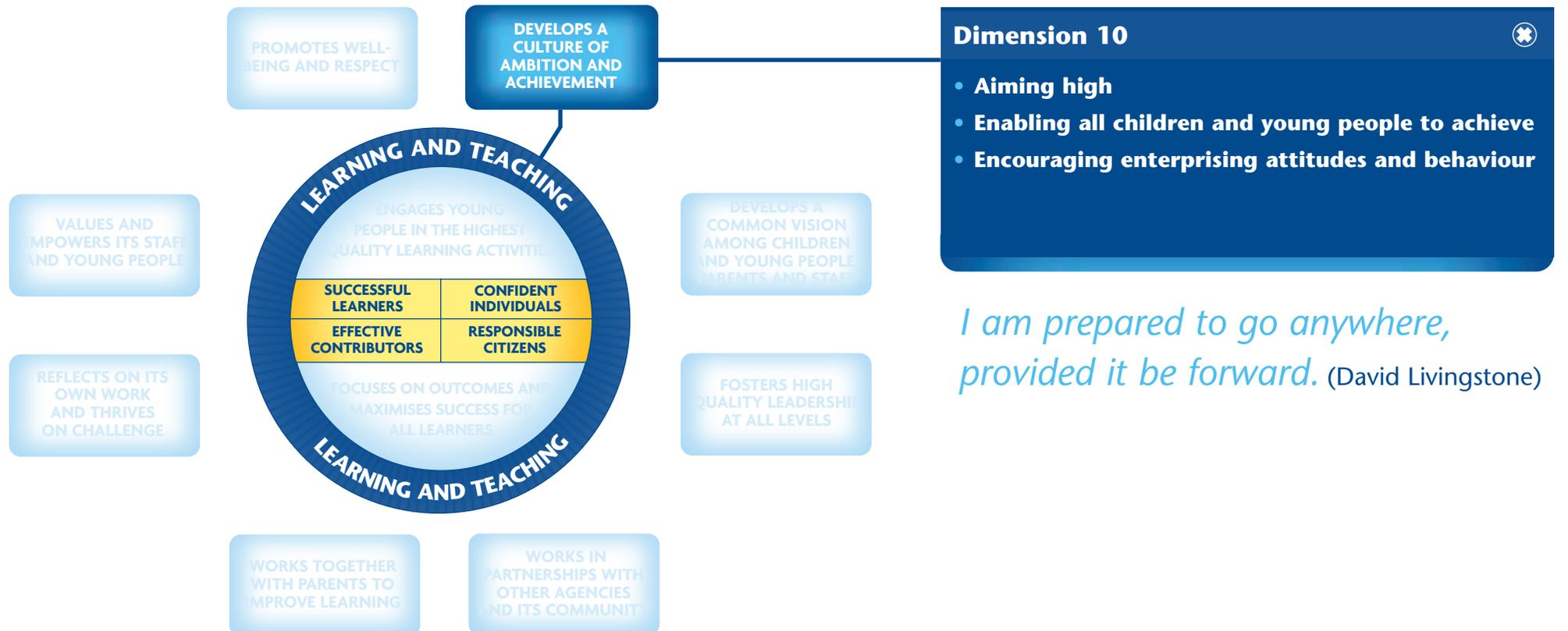
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Dimension 10

Develops a culture of ambition and achievement

Dimension 10

Develops a culture of ambition and achievement



DIMENSION 10

Develops a culture of ambition and achievement

Learners with visual impairments are fully integrated and confident learners. Where appropriate, they work in mainstream classes without support or supervision. Their time in the Resource Location is devoted to acquiring skills for coping with mainstream classes, for example in Braille, information and communications technology, mobility, the use of tactile diagrams and large print and taped materials. Reinforcement of class lessons is also done in the Resource Location using differentiated and adapted materials. Located at the centre of the building it is seen as an integral part of the school.

Support is targeted to S1/S2 pupils across the school. Additional Support for Learning staff provide emotional, curricular, behavioural, administrative, physical and language support. Some staff support specific individuals for the whole day. Others support a number of young people in classes. Two primary teachers are working within the English and mathematics departments. They support the learning of S1 pupils and work with P7 pupils in the associated primaries. To raise attainment in S1/S2, every department has to include primary links and S1/S2 curriculum development within its development plan. They also have to identify young people who need support, develop a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils and support them more effectively within their classes. S1/S2 pupils are able to access the curriculum better. They remain motivated within the class, work more productively with their peers and achieve success in their learning. This, in turn, has led to less disruption in class, more time on task, and fewer behaviour referrals. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, have very positive roles in supporting every child.

Ideas are encouraged and risk taking is OK!

(acting headteacher)

The boxes on these pages contain snapshots from schools.

Key features

Dimension 10: Develops a culture of ambition and achievement

In building an excellent school, as with the ten dimensions, focusing on learning and successful outcomes are both starting and endpoints. Nurturing and rewarding success, therefore, are among the most important activities of an excellent school.

Why should it be OK in socially challenged areas to have lower expectations?

(headteacher)

It's teaching the children about not being happy with less than the best. (teacher)

All the children learn how to make an impression and be confident in the real world. I demand the best and I always get it. If you don't – you're doing the child a disservice. (headteacher)



The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather they make all the difference. (Aristotle)

There is a strong commitment to giving children all the opportunities possible. Children have as many different experiences as the school can provide, 'so they can find what they are good at and become the best young people they can'. Staff believe that this not only improves children's self-esteem, but encourages them to see learning as lifelong and to be healthy and fit. Children become more open to trying things, more positive and gain wider experience and, hence, confidence to meet any challenges. There is a huge menu of both after-school clubs and enrichment opportunities within the curriculum. All staff and other community members are involved. The school's work with minority language groups helps children and young people to develop an understanding of their responsibility for inclusion.

The school works closely with a local denominational school and a special school to hold joint religious observance and excursions. Parents build up strong relationships with each other and so do children. The school tries to promote empathy.

The ethos of achievement extends to staff as well as pupils. A feature of the school is that so many of the teachers aspire to be headteachers.

One young person who attended a residential special school was working on his Standard Grade art folio. He was very well supported by his key worker who arranged for him to visit art galleries for research in evenings and at the weekend. He had benefited from this experience and talked very positively about it. This activity also enhanced the pupil's level of knowledge about the local environment and facilities.

DIMENSION 10

Develops a culture of ambition and achievement

Aiming high

Recognising, rewarding and communicating the successes of all children and staff; developing a culture of achievement; a 'can-do' attitude; opportunities for every individual to be successful and to attain to his or her fullest potential; seeking and building upon the views and evaluations of partner professionals.

A school is good to the extent that...

All children, young people and their parents are aware of the school's expectations. The criteria for rewards are fair and clear.

Staff recognise the links between relationships, good behaviour and learning.

Staff are conscious of the need to encourage young people by praising them, and do this frequently.

Staff expect young people to do well. Pupils have goals and ambitions, often derived from parents or friends. Most young people want to do well. The school learns from examples of good practice in other schools in developing ambition and high aspirations amongst learners. It regularly liaises with the local media to support the reporting of the successes of members of the school community.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Rewards for learning and for social and behavioural achievements are attainable by everyone, reinforcing a "can-do" culture.

All staff share a common understanding of their collective responsibility for promoting positive relationships and behaviour, so that all children can learn. Teachers anticipate and manage problems to avoid disruption to learning. Momentum is maintained through clear rules and procedures. Staff have a range of strategies and are successful in maintaining and raising pupils' motivation.

The use of praise is well judged and discriminating. It targets the personal achievements of individual children and groups of children. Children value this well-earned praise and are motivated by it.

Staff have the highest expectations of learners. Learners have high aspirations and concrete goals and are clear about what they have to do to improve. The school is outward looking and staff are continually seeking examples of the very best practice to help it to improve further. It uses a wide range of imaginative approaches for reporting on and celebrating the success of individuals, groups of young people, staff and the school community as a whole.

I like to make the teacher and my Mum and Dad proud of me. (P3 child)

Aiming high *(continued)***A school is good to the extent that...**

Staff refer to a range of evidence of young people's achievements in school to come to a balanced judgement of their potential and what they should aim for.

Staff have a broad understanding of the strengths and needs of individual pupils. They review their progress at regular intervals, usually when they report to parents.

Specialist provision, where available, is used to develop learners' talents and interests. Staff expect most children to find something to be 'good at'. A programme of additional activities, drawing upon skills available locally, encourages them to develop new skills and interests. They celebrate their achievements outwith school.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff take on board the views of partners working in other settings and agencies who observe young people in contexts away from school and who believe that they can succeed beyond the school's expectations.

Staff are alert to any unexpected slowing of the progress of individual pupils. Well-developed approaches to tracking enable them to identify dips in pupils' performance as soon as they occur so that they can intervene promptly.

Staff selectively deploy opportunities for curriculum enrichment to develop the learning of individuals and to enable all children to find and develop their own talents and interests. Young people are confident that their own skills are being identified and optimised. They are keen to succeed. Expectations of the performance of all staff and learners are very high.

We are constantly trying to improve the school. It would be easy to sit back ... We finish a job and say 'now what?'. (teacher)
I want to do really well so I can be an actress. (P2 child)

DIMENSION 10

Develops a culture of ambition and achievement

Enabling all children and young people to achieve

Involving children in deciding what success is; caring for one another and supporting all learners; providing individualised support to all children and young people; consistent and fair approaches to behaviour; promoting positive attitudes; commitment to turning around the disaffected.

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff take account of the social and environmental backgrounds of learners.

The performance of young people who are “looked after” or from particular ethnic and language backgrounds is monitored.

Staff recognise that some children have additional needs that require to be supported at times.

Staff take steps to prevent exclusion and reintegrate learners who have experienced difficulties accessing the curriculum, because of their learning or their behaviour.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

All staff believe that all young people can learn and improve and that it is possible to improve the performance of the lowest attaining learners. They demonstrate this belief in their attitudes and work. They do all they can to ensure that young people are not at risk of missing out on educational opportunities.

Staff take prompt and well-focused action to address any under-achievement identified, drawing on advice and expertise from outwith the school as appropriate.

Staff recognise that ability and achievement are not pre-determined. They monitor young people’s readiness to be included in more challenging tasks continuously. Staff use flexible approaches to the curriculum and teaching to meet the needs and learning styles of all learners.

Staff provide specific support, and nurturing, for vulnerable learners and those at risk of exclusion or under-achievement. Exclusion from school is rare and seen as a measure of last resort. Staff work to avoid any gaps whatsoever in support and provision, particularly of education for all pupils. Relationships between staff and challenging children are characterised by patient and determined professionalism.

All pupils are different and if teachers recognise this then they will adapt their teaching styles to meet different needs. (parent)

Encouraging enterprising attitudes and behaviour

Nurturing and encouraging creative, innovative and enterprising behaviour and action in all areas of the work of the school; creating successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens and confident individuals through enterprise in education; exploiting the relationships between enterprise, creativity and citizenship.

A school is good to the extent that...

The curriculum provides a range of opportunities for all children to undertake enterprise activities. Staff regularly discuss, implement and evaluate new approaches to learning, teaching and meeting needs.

Enterprising behaviour is evident in important aspects of the school's work. Some staff are innovative in their teaching. Technological solutions are applied in situations where other schools have shown them to be successful.

Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility and to build their leadership and team-working skills through the formal curriculum and out-of-school hours learning.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

Staff are enterprising and think creatively about ways of achieving the school's aims. They are willing and have the ability to work in fluid and flexible teams that cut across stages and curricular areas. Staff are innovative in their approaches to learning, teaching and meeting needs. They take calculated risks and monitor and evaluate and improve on developments. They model a culture of enterprise.

Enterprise and flexibility are evident in all areas of the school's work, including its management, the structure of the curriculum, quality assurance and processes of continuous improvement. Staff carefully and critically consider the contributions of technology and alternative approaches to learning. Strong links with local businesses, Careers Scotland and further and higher education help to develop a spirit and the practice of enterprise among both staff and learners.

All pupils engage in enterprise in education that extends their confidence as learners and contributors to society. The vocational and enterprise curriculum meets the needs of learners and the community. It is progressive and continuous, motivates learners, promotes a sense of achievement and adds relevance to learning. Creativity, experimentation and imagination are nurtured through open-ended learning experiences.

Staff tend to be more flexible, less defensive, more willing to tackle what is new. (nursery teacher)

DIMENSION 10

Develops a culture of ambition and achievement

Encouraging enterprising attitudes and behaviour *(continued)*

A school is good to the extent that...

Staff recognise enterprise as an important purpose and outcome. The school provides pupils with positive experiences in enterprise in education, both in terms of the curriculum and learning and teaching. Pupils have a range of opportunities for expressive activity and performance. Situations are created that allow pupils to develop and practise a range of citizenship skills and abilities.

Staff and pupils work in high quality teaching areas and have access to a range of resources appropriate to their stage and needs.

A school is excellent to the extent that...

A coherent relationship between enterprise, creativity and citizenship has been established and is being fully exploited. Citizenship and creativity are embedded in school, stage and departmental development/improvement plans. Learning and teaching approaches are creative and creativity can be observed in all areas of the curriculum. School organisation and curriculum structure reflect creative thinking at all levels including the provision of a wide range of artistic and cultural opportunities.

Staff and pupils access, use and evaluate a range of resources to support innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Creativity is built in. We're never satisfied. We are ambitious; we always want to do better. (headteacher)

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All other quotations come from a consultation exercise undertaken by HM Inspectorate of Education in preparation for this publication.

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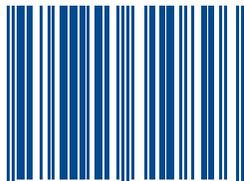
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