

Self-evaluation for Self and School Improvement: The Development of a Self-Evaluation Strategy Enabling All Staff to Engage with Consistency and Rigour, Bringing a Genuine Basis for Self and School Improvement

Ali Preston, Depute Headteacher, King's Park Secondary School, Glasgow

APreston@kingspark-sec.glasgow.sch.uk

Cite this article

Preston, A. (2025). Self-evaluation for self and school improvement: The development of a self-evaluation strategy enabling all staff to engage with consistency and rigour, bringing a genuine basis for self and school improvement. *Journal of Leadership, Scholarship and Praxis in Education*, 1(1), 1, 153–164. <https://doi.org/10.36399/72d8a296>

Abstract

The National Improvement Framework (NIF)¹ (Scottish Government, 2023) sets out a clear vision for Scottish education based on delivering excellence and equity. Two of the six key drivers identified as being critical for ensuring both individual pupil achievement and whole school improvement are the quality of teaching and the quality of leadership in schools. (Mincu, 2015). Through the researcher's personal school experience, backed by an understanding of professional literature (Hopkins, 2001) it is clear that a central factor for sustaining change that genuinely achieves teacher and school improvement is a consistent approach to self-evaluation. Effective self-evaluation is fundamental for both the professional development of individual teachers and the improvement of schools (MacBeath & McGlynn, 2002). Recognising this fundamental element of school excellence and coupled with the clear mandate for all staff to engage in self-evaluation (GTCS, 2021) this article outlines a strategic change initiative (SCI)² which sought to develop a strategy to enable all staff to engage in self-evaluation with consistency and rigour, bringing a genuine basis for self and school improvement. At an individual level, critical competence in a teacher's role is being able to scrutinise their own abilities against the requirements outlined in the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) professional standards (2021)³, making evidence-based judgements on what to develop. To deliver this effectively, self-evaluation needs to be part of a structured framework and established in school practice. Furthermore, assessment needs to lead to action to ensure improvement happens (Stoll, 2009), making evidence-based judgements on how to develop. Overall, development of a structured, timetabled framework for effective self-evaluation provides the basis for meaningful school improvement that delivers for young people.

¹ The National Improvement Framework (NIF) summarises the vision and priorities for Scottish education that have been agreed across the system, and the national improvement activity that needs to be undertaken to help deliver those key priorities.

² The Strategic Change Initiative (SCI) is the process undertaken by participants of the National Into Headship programme in Scotland to develop strategic leadership for change.

³ The GTCS Standard for Full Registration is the benchmark of competence required of all registered teachers in Scotland. This Professional Standard encompasses what it is to be a teacher in Scotland.

Keywords: self-evaluation, self-improvement, school improvement, strategic change initiative (SCI), structured framework

Introduction

Scottish education, with an all-graduate intake, clearly defined standards outlined by the professional body (GTCS, 2021) and a robust induction programme for newly qualified teachers, is in a favourable position internationally (Donaldson, 2010) and plays a critical role within Scotland's economic, political and sociocultural landscape (Scottish Government, 2022). Following an unprecedented period of challenging disruptions and restrictions due to Covid 19, teachers and school leaders have demonstrated great creativity and commitment to meet not only the educational needs, but also the increasingly complex and growing physical, social and emotional needs of individual learners, whilst working within the context of an ever-changing national narrative. Recent evidence suggests Scottish attainment continues to fall, and the gap between the most and least socially and economically advantaged continues to grow (OECD, 2021). Whilst holding to the hope that the Scottish Government will respond suitably to the concerns raised in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that our education system was in urgent need of reform (OECD, 2021), schools must respond to this "once-in-a-generation" opportunity of shaping the vision, purpose and direction of Scottish Education, whilst balancing the need to address the daily challenge of how to effectively deliver the purpose of Curriculum for Excellence; ensuring young people have the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for a successful future (Education Scotland, 2019), in an unpredictable and ever-changing landscape.

As Depute Head Teacher in a medium-sized, urban secondary school in Glasgow with whole school responsibility for self-evaluation and improvement, consideration of how to bridge the aims of the education system to the experience in our classroom was an important aspect of my role as a senior leader. With recognition that the quality of teaching and learning has the biggest impact on pupil outcomes (Bush & Glover, 2014), it is critical to implement systems which intentionally develop teacher capacity, thereby improving our schools. This, together with self-evaluation being recognised as a key requirement for effective school improvement (Education Scotland, 2015), makes a convincing argument for reviewing our self-evaluation strategies to improve outcomes for all.

The GTCS Standards (2021) place a clear mandate on all teachers to engage with self-evaluation:

As a registered teacher ... you are required to:

- use self-evaluation and professional learning to support and improve practice.
- reflect and engage critically in self-evaluation using the relevant professional standard.
- actively engage in professional learning to support school improvement.

(GTCS, 2021, p. 9-11).

This requirement aims to ensure self-evaluation and Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) are key elements of a teacher's practice; however, there is no absolute process or approach outlined for how this should be worked out. Whilst there has been a wide and active offer of CLPL across Scotland, through for example Regional Improvement Collaboratives, professional associations and other bodies, as Staff Development Coordinator it became apparent to me that there was a need for a strategic approach to self-evaluation which includes a robust process to deliver self-improvement. The practitioner has a target, but no route-map to achieve this effectively. In contrast, the approach

at school level outlined in *How Good Is Our School? (4th ed.)* (HGIOS) (Education Scotland, 2015) suggests excellent schools have robust self-evaluation for improvement approaches to evaluate their practice and intentionally plan for school improvement.

Literature Review

The purpose of this strategic change was to create a system that works for individual teachers to support their professional development, but also supports whole school improvement through structured, consistent self-evaluation and directed development. The OECD report (OECD, 2021) recognises teachers in Scotland are not given sufficient time for planning, reviewing and implementing improvements, as well as recommending a streamlining of the vast number of policies and initiatives currently being addressed within the Scottish education system. Within this context of limited time and numerous priorities, it is essential to have a system which supports individuals and schools to use self-evaluation in a structured and meaningful way to ensure improvement. Through personal experience, and discussion with colleagues, it is clear that prioritising self-evaluation, collaborative working and professional learning opportunities is becoming increasingly difficult on top of the day-to-day demands on teachers. However, it is also clear that only by prioritising these three critical areas, is improvement possible. (MacBeath & McGlynn, 2022). For this reason, a structured and focused self-evaluation system, which is embedded across the annual routine of a school, is crucial to identify and implement improvement based on effective evaluation.

At a national level, three fundamental publications, *HGIOS4* (Education Scotland, 2015), *Standard for Full Registration* (GTCS, 2021), and *Achieving Excellence and Equity: National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Improvement Plan* (Scottish Government, 2022), have clearly outlined the regulations and requirements for schools to take responsibility for self-evaluation to deliver improvement. A concern raised in the NIF (Scottish Government, 2022) confirms that there has been either no change or a widening of the attainment gap since the previous NIF published in 2015, across six of the 11 original measures. Perhaps in a bid to address this, the Scottish Attainment Challenge introduced stretch aims in 2022 which has required schools to provide data on key measurements. As an experienced senior leader, it is clear to me that this has resulted in schools requiring a stronger self-evaluative approach to identify aspirational yet achievable targets for raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap (Scottish Government, 2022).

Opinion can be divided over the core purpose of self-evaluation for improvement: an extrinsic regulation of the teaching profession as “a benchmark for professional competency” (GTCS, 2021) or an intrinsic motivator to encourage growth and development through professional learning of practitioners to deliver school improvement (Forde et al., 2015). Perhaps the perceived purpose depends on the lens of the one evaluating and their reason for measuring; for example, a young learner or an HMI inspector. This tension is recognised by MacBeath (2005) in his surmise that whilst school inspection often drives schools and practitioners to engage in self-evaluation, giving schools autonomy for quality assurance distinct from the process of school inspection leads to greater improvement. Fundamentally, it is recognised that these twin drives create ambition and energy which can be harnessed and used purposefully within a school. Within a specific school context there is potential to tailor a self-evaluation agenda to reflect local needs and priorities, however this could be difficult to dovetail with the national inspection regime. Through my experience, when learners’ needs are placed at the heart of decision making, school improvement becomes focused on what matters most.

The benefits of excellent teachers are clear and high-quality learning and teaching in the classroom makes the greatest difference to student learning and success (Bush & Glover, 2014). Unless teachers are intentional in planning for and prioritising self-evaluation, in particular due to the challenges for teachers to make sense of and deliver the varied developing priority policy areas in

the classroom (Humes & Priestley, 2021), improvement is unlikely (Breakspear & Jones, 2021). Placing teachers at the forefront of decisions identifying areas for improvement encourages them to lead and promote change, increasing the likelihood of improvement (Chapman et al., 2016). Therefore, ensuring staff are well supported to develop as reflective practitioners will increase their ability to deliver an equitable education to all young people.

School leaders have a responsibility to improve outcomes for young people through increasing staff performance (Mowat & McMahan, 2019) and ultimately improvement for learners should therefore be the central purpose for self-evaluation against the professional standards (OECD, 2015). Using this as an evidence base, schools must develop systems for evaluating current performance to be able to develop teacher capacity in the classroom and leadership at all levels across the school. Although the responsibility for improvement is placed on individual teachers (GTCS, 2021), professional collaboration is an essential aspect of staff development (Hargreaves, 2010). Working collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal through strong relationships, effective communication and learning from each other is essential for driving personal and corporate improvement (Quong & Walker, 2010). Experience has shown that ensuring all staff share a collective understanding of the importance of collaboration to support and challenge one another to improve in order to meet learners' needs, is essential to make a difference in the quality of learning and teaching and the experience for young people.

Methodology

Kotter (1996) describes the importance of developing a vision showing "how the future will be different from the past" as a critical step in leading change. At the heart of this strategic change initiative was the vision for a better school in every way, achieved through a rigorous self-evaluation strategy as a genuine basis for self and school improvement. To be able to share this target successfully, it was important to develop a sound and secure knowledge and understanding of self-evaluation through extensive reading of national policies and professional literature - GTCS standards, 2021; HGIOS4, 2015; MacBeath & McGlynn, 2002; and Stoll, 2007. It is important to be able to place professional reading within a practical context so meeting with partners, such as the Local Authority Career-Long Professional Learning lead, proved invaluable to deepen understanding of the strategic role of self-evaluation, alongside being made aware of best practice across Glasgow to further enhance knowledge and influence potential change.

With a clear understanding of the purpose of this strategic change and building on established strong relationships with colleagues, establishing a working group with representatives across the school was important to build and grow a vision which inspires the school community. Identifying colleagues who believed in the vision, wanted to be involved and could use their influence across the school to translate the vision into action was essential. The ability to build trusting relationships, communicate effectively and value the contribution of others is essential to leading with credibility and strategic leadership requires the ability to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve a common goal. Enabling staff to do their job most effectively by removing barriers was a key theme within professional literature on improvement (Quong & Walker, 2010) that influenced how to support staff throughout this process. Managing resources such as protecting time for staff collaboration and enabling them to prioritise their role in delivering this strategic change initiative, ensured they felt their contributions were appreciated.

Increasing evidence suggests professional learning which "incorporates collaborative inquiry is an effective process for supporting change and improvement" (Ainscow, 2016, p. 5). The school had recently launched Professional Enquiry working groups, so constructing a group with the directive of developing an approach to self-evaluation for self and school improvement, was an appropriate and beneficial next step. Creating space for colleagues to work collaboratively to share ideas and reflect

on experiences rather than working in isolation was important to improve outcomes for young people (Cheminais, 2009). Furthermore, the benefit of ensuring ownership of the vision and methods used, meant teachers were more likely to buy into change when they “own it” (Hargreaves, 2004). The positive impact of involving a wide range of staff in terms of experience and expertise was noticeable, with almost all areas of the school having a “change champion” who could help to overcome potential resistance by sharing their own experiences, answering questions and driving change within their department.

As a Rights Respecting School, pupil voice is embedded across decision making and there is an understanding that increasing pupil voice enables teachers to increase their understanding of how young people learn, thereby improving outcomes for all (Flutter, 2007). An important part of the research stage was focus groups with young people, with the purpose of gaining insight into pupils’ understanding of effective learning and teaching. A key aspect the professional enquiry group decided to develop was using pupil feedback for improvement. An online questionnaire with a bank of questions was created for staff to use to gather pupil feedback on the learning context and learning content. This was effective in creating an initial model for delivery and generated feedback from trials in the classroom with staff and young people. More opportunities for pupils and staff to work together not only benefits the specific project, but also improves relationships and ethos across the school.

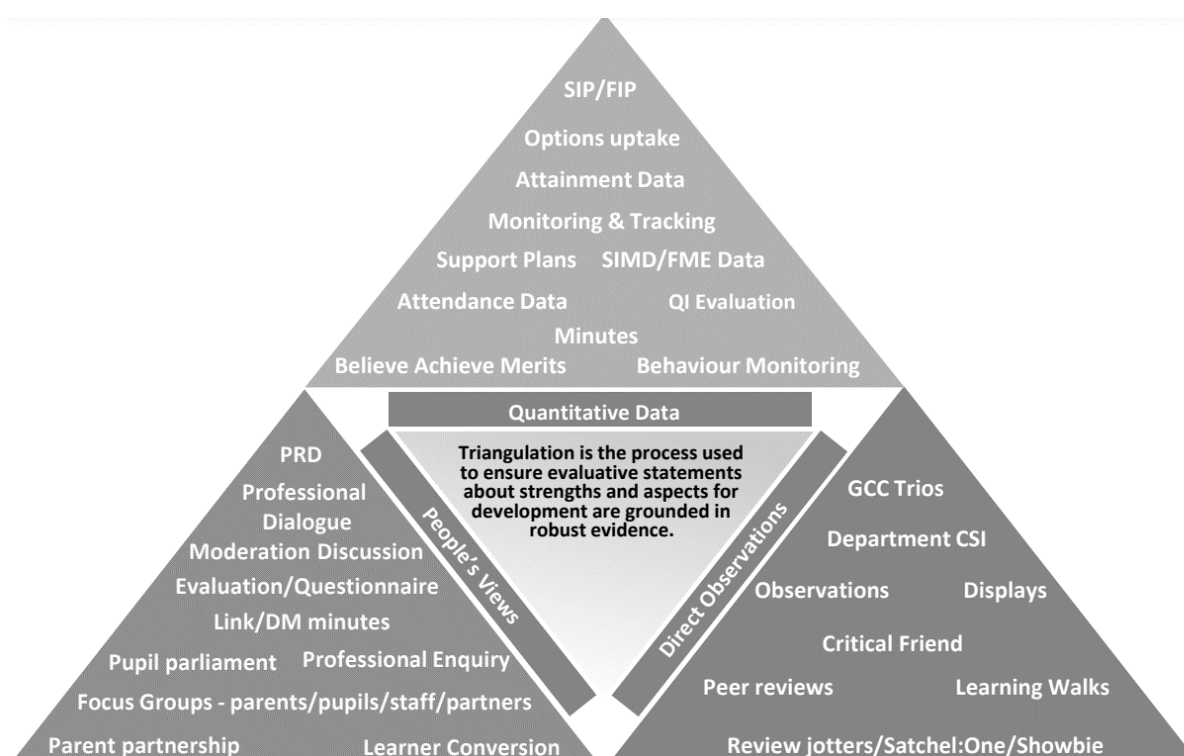
Ensuring consistent and robust self-evaluation to deliver improvements was a critical element in implementing this strategic change initiative. Departments were asked to provide an evaluative analysis of QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Education Scotland, 2015) which was a helpful exercise and revealed the need for a more consistent approach to evaluating with an evidence-based approach to ensure triangulation of findings. Using a combination of Mentimeter (an online interactive site to pose questions and gather feedback) and professional discussion, the Middle Leadership Team undertook a session focusing on improving self-evaluation approaches reflecting on key questions; “How are we doing?; How do we know?; What are we going to do now?” (Education Scotland, 2015, p. 9), which enabled rich discussion on evidence to support delivery of self-evaluation.

Findings and Discussion

Through the research and design stage, feedback was captured from pupils and staff on how schools can use evidence to triangulate their self-evaluative statements. Middle leaders engaged in discussion around their use of evidence when evaluating against QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment and also QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement. A key finding identified through this work was that in order to engage effectively in self-evaluation middle leaders required robust and consistent guidance. Careful investigation, involving staff, concluded that using a bank of information sources provided a structured basis for objective evaluation that could be repeated with rigour over time. These reference points were used to create a graphic (Figure 1) to support staff with their self-evaluation, acting as a prompt to ensure reflections are triangulated using quantitative data, people’s views and direct observation, as outlined in HGIOS4.

Figure 1

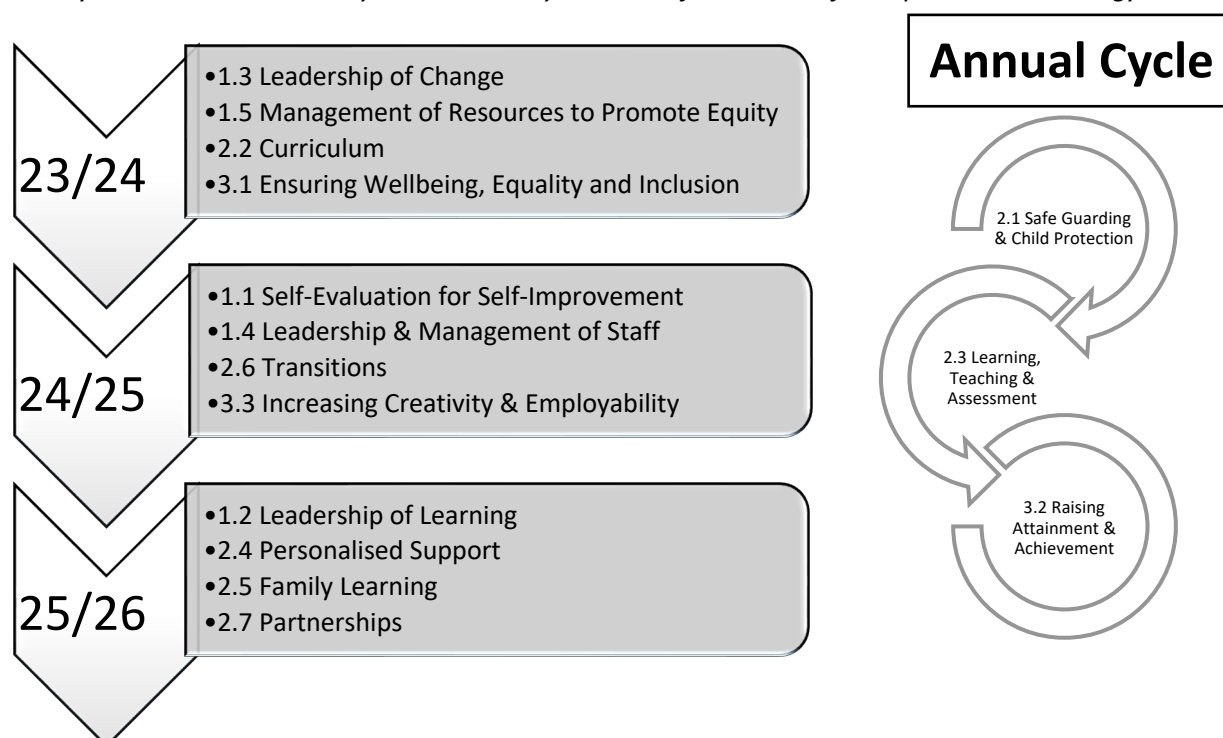
Triangulation Evidence - Secondary School Self-Evaluation for Improvement Strategy



It became apparent that to sustain school improvement across the spectrum of Quality Indicators (HGIOS4) it was necessary to integrate a systematic approach with strong routine. Changing culture is “more important than simply changing structures” (Humes, 2023, p. 25), therefore, reflective practice needs to be embedded within the ethos of the school for it to be meaningful and effective for change. Although everyone who engaged in this topic was enthusiastic, continued effort was difficult to sustain within a busy school environment. Recognising this challenge, a whole school 3-year calendar prioritising a structured approach to self-evaluating the quality indicators provided the strategic process for the school to commit to placing self-evaluation at the heart of improvement. To ensure confidence that key aspects of our school are routinely being evaluated key personnel were identified to lead each QI (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Quality Indicator Evaluation Cycle – Secondary School Self-Evaluation for Improvement Strategy



Improvement processes are often founded on national themes and strategic priorities and these can be hard to translate into department and classroom practice. This work found that it is essential for self-evaluation to be intentionally planned into the day-to-day life of a school to have a significant impact. Breakspear & Jones (2021) and Lucas (2012) discuss the idea that unless teachers deliberately plan and prioritise opportunities for self-evaluation in a structured approach, improvement progress is unlikely. Having had monthly learning walks built into our school calendar for several years, and classroom observations an important part of sharing good practice and developing teacher capacity, there was a firm foundation for embarking on a more rigorous observation model to assess the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom.

A fundamental challenge to effective self-evaluation is a willingness to be open to identify and discuss areas for personal development. In defining the process that recognised this challenge, it was important to provide staff with a comprehensive and objective basis for self-evaluation and also a method that could be applied across the whole school. As part of the school's continued commitment to self-evaluation and based on feedback from staff for a more consistent approach, the Collaborative Self-evaluation for Improvement (CSI) model was developed to validate departmental self-evaluation. CSIs for each department take place during a scheduled week in the school calendar, with the aim of reviewing 6 departments per school year (Table 1). To support collaboration, each CSI involves the Principal Teacher (PT) of the Faculty/Department, Link Depute Head Teacher, Head Teacher, one additional Curricular PT, one Pupil Support PT, one classroom teacher and a group of learners. In advance of the two-day spotlight, a briefing paper is prepared by the PT outlining the departmental areas of strength and areas for improvement. This is introduced to the CSI team and then a series of self-evaluative activities, including learning walks, classroom observations and pupil and staff focus groups, takes place which feeds into a finding report.

Following the CSI, an action plan is created by the PT outlining next steps which will be reviewed at various points across the session through Departmental Improvement Plan review and link meetings in collaboration with the peer PT to also enhance collegiate working.

Table 1

Collaborative Self-evaluation for Improvement (CSI) Calendar - Secondary School Self-Evaluation for Improvement Strategy

CSI – Collaborative Self-evaluation for Improvement	
23/24 – Term 1A	Modern Languages, Art & Design
23/24 – Term 1B	Maths, Caledonia Centre (ASN)
23/24 – Term 2/3	Science, Performing Arts
24/25 – Term 1A	English, Pupil Support/PSE
24/25 – Term 1B	Social Subjects, Design and Technology
24/25 –Term 2/3	Health and Wellbeing, Business & Computing

Although in its early days, feedback from those involved in the CSIs to date shows it is evident that building in time for critical reflection against the Quality Indicators is important to ensure evaluative comments are based on robust feedback. This approach is a clear expectation within our School Improvement Plan, backed up by practical resourcing, with time prioritised through the school calendar. Furthermore, the development of the CSI strategy brings confidence that we can support, monitor and review a consistent and robust approach to self-evaluation across the school.

Leading a strategic change initiative requires strength in developing a shared vision and an ability to build capacity in staff to enable them to lead and implement change in a sustainable manner resulting in a positive impact across a school community. Strategic leaders “are futures oriented and have a futures strategy” says Quong & Walker (2010, p. 23), when discussing the seven principles of strategic leadership. It was therefore important that the fundamental purpose of creating a self-evaluation strategy, improving outcomes for learners thereby improving our school, was embedded throughout the research, design and delivery stage of this strategic change. The importance of holding tight to that goal, whilst collaboratively creating a shared vision across the school community to make it happen was critical. Ensuring all staff had a collective understanding of our context was essential to developing a system that makes a tangible difference in the quality of learning and teaching and the experience for our young people.

Learning to lead with drive and determination but balancing that energy with the ability to set, and therefore achieve, realistic targets and moving at a pace appropriate for the school community, was

important to bring colleagues on board. Quong and Walker outline a significant principle of strategic leadership as the capacity to “get things done” (2010, p. 26). Being able to “translate strategy into action” (Davies & Davies, 2004, p. 30) helps to ensure strategic change is sustainable, solidifying the link between theory and practice. Removing barriers, such as protecting time for staff collaboration and building self-evaluation into the Working Time Agreement, supported staff by enabling them to build self-evaluation into their day-to-day job.

Through delivering this strategic change, it became clear that school improvement across all areas necessitates all practitioners to have a genuine desire to improve (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), and demonstrate an active and intentional commitment to achieve this improvement. This intrinsic motivator, supported by robust systems and processes, ensures all participants are responsible for improvement across the school. Additionally, recognising the importance of including pupil voice and building in time for collegiate working, creates a culture of whole school community which helps to drive the shared vision for improvement model.

Another important dimension which has been identified as critical to enabling and driving forward sustainable change is the benefit of a strong extended leadership team. Rincón-Gallardo (2023) describes leadership as more than merely navigating change; effective leadership supports and encourages others to work collaboratively in order to generate more ideas and make greater improvements. Hence by establishing a strategy for self-evaluation, leaders at all levels are enabled to support staff collectively to identify the key strengths and improvement areas in both their individual competences and departmental performance.

Conclusion

Policy governs the teaching profession. As teachers, our role is to translate policy into action, balancing the need to remain true to the national goals and covering the curriculum to prepare learners for qualification assessments, whilst also ensuring we are delivering learning and teaching in a way which is relevant to everyone in our school context. Even within the ever-changing context and challenges we currently face post-Covid, this is not a new requirement, nor an easy one to fulfil – indeed it is over two decades since Paterson (2003) argued that one of the biggest challenges to the Scottish education system is equipping all young people, no matter their circumstances, for both their future role within the workforce, and at the same time, their role as a responsible citizen, able to contribute effectively to the community in which they will live and work.

Translating Policy into Practice

Although embodying commendable aims, there remains a significant gap between political policy and the teacher experience at the chalk face, for example the tension in the translation of the Learning for Sustainability agenda from theoretical conception to classroom working (Christie et al., 2019). Crucially, deployment of policy into action has to be bridged through a shared understanding of both the thinking behind policy development and the practical reality of day-to-day school life. Improvement plans to address teaching challenges might reach for the stars but they need to be built from the classroom up (Humes, 2022).

Structured School Framework

Therefore, to support these national goals, a structured system of self-evaluation for self and school improvement is essential. This strategic change initiative has created a manageable approach within the school context, addressing the National Policy Quality Indicators. Through creating a persuasive vision, involving all practitioners in the development of the action steps and implementing a three-year plan, a sustainable basis for school improvement has been designed.

Self-evaluation which is based on triangulated evidence is at the heart of our improvement planning. This enables us to work collaboratively to identify areas of best practice and areas which we recognise through quantitative and qualitative feedback require further focus and attention. This, supported by an ever-growing culture of staff committed to doing their best for young people and a strong extended leadership team, enables us to see continuous improvement.

Improvement Focused on Young People

Reflecting on relevant policy and practice, the development of a self-evaluation school strategy was rightly identified as an improvement requirement. This approach goes beyond a box-ticking exercise to meet government regulation as defined in HGIOS4 and the GTCS Standards, but addresses the tangible demand for schools to meet the needs of all learners to improve outcomes for young people. This strategy has enabled us to move forward as a school with a more rigorous approach towards self-evaluation using a comprehensive and structured approach to improvement. The commitment to creating a system designed by staff and young people, which is embedded into our School Improvement Plan, supported by the working time agreement, not only prioritises the importance of self-evaluation but provides an effective mechanism for delivery within the school environment. Ultimately, the implementation of an objective, scheduled system for effective self-evaluation provides the basis for purposeful school improvement which enables the best possible outcomes for young people.

References

- Ainscow, M. (2016). Collaboration as a strategy for promoting equity in education: Possibilities and barriers. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 1(2), 159–172. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPC-12-2015-0013>
- Breakspear, S., & Jones, B. (2021). *Teaching sprints: How overloaded education can keep getting better*. Corwin.
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership and Management*, 34(5), 553–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.928680>
- Chapman, C., Chestnutt, H., Friel, N., Hall, S., & Lowden, K. (2016). Professional capital and collaborative inquiry networks for education equity and improvement? *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 1(3), 178–97. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPC-03-2016-0007>
- Cheminais, R. (2009). *Effective multi-agency partnerships: Putting Every Child Matters into practice*. Sage Publications.
- Christie, B., Higgins, P., King, B., Collacott, M., Kirk, K., & Smith, H. (2019). From rhetoric to reality: Examining the policy vision and the professional process of enacting Learning for Sustainability in Scottish schools. *Scottish Educational Review*, 51(1), 44–56.
- Davies, B. J., & Davies, B. (2004). Strategic Leadership. *School. Leadership and Management*, 24(1), 29–38.
- Donaldson, G. (2010). *Teaching Scotland's Future*. Scottish Government.
- Education Scotland. (2015). *How good is our school?* (4th ed.). https://education.gov.scot/media/2swimnbs/frwk2_hgios4.pdf
- Education Scotland. (2019). *Curriculum for excellence refreshed narrative*. https://education.gov.scot/media/lmybjidt/cferefresh_a5booklet.pdf
- Flutter, J. (2007). Teacher development and pupil voice. *The Curriculum Journal*, 18(3), 343–354.

- Forde, C., McMahon, M., Hamilton, G., & Murray, R. (2015). Rethinking professional standard to promote professional learning. *Professional Development in Education*, 42(1), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.999288>
- General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). (2021). *The standard for full registration*.
- Hargreaves, A. (2004). Inclusive and exclusive educational change: Emotional responses of teachers and implications for leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 24(3), 287–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1363243042000266936>
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital transforming learning in every school*. Teachers' College Press.
- Hargreaves, D. (2010). *Creating a self-improving school system*. National College.
- Hopkins, D. (2001). *School improvement for real*. Routledge.
- Humes, W. (2022). The 'iron cage' of educational bureaucracy. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 70(2), pp. 235–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2021.1899129>
- Humes, W. (2023). Scottish education. A crisis of confidence and trust. *FORUM*, 65(1), 19–29.
- Humes, W., & Priestley, M. (2021). Curriculum reform in Scottish education: Discourse, narrative and enactment. In M. Priestley, D. Alvunger, S. Philippou, & T. Soini. (Eds.), *Curriculum making in Europe: Policy and practice within and across diverse contexts*. Emerald Publishing Limited
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Lucas, P. (2012). Critical reflection. What do we really mean? *Australian Collaborative Education*. www.kenniscentrumtoerisme.nl/images/2/26/92_Critical-reflection.pdf
- MacBeath, J. (2005). Leadership as distributed: A matter of practice. *School Leadership and Management*, 25(4), 349–366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13634230500197165>
- MacBeath, J. & McGlynn, A. (2002). *Self-evaluation: What's in it for schools?* Routledge Falmer.
- Mincu, M. E. (2015). Teacher quality and school improvement: What is the role of research? *Oxford Review of Education*, 41(2), 253–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2015.1023013>
- Mowat, J. G. and McMahon, M., (2019). Interrogating the concept of 'leadership at all levels': A Scottish perspective. *Professional Development in Education*, 45(2), 173–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2018.1511452>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2015). *Improving schools in Scotland: An OECD perspective*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264249443-en>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2021). *Scotland's curriculum for excellence: Into the future, implementing education policies*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/bf624417-en>
- Paterson, L., (2003). *Scottish education in the twentieth century*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Quong, T., & Walker, A. (2010). Seven principles of strategic leadership. *International Studies in Educational Administration (ISEA)*, 38(1), 22–34.
- Ricón-Gallardo, S. (2023). *Leadership to liberate learning seminar*, In Headship Programme, University of Glasgow School of Education, delivered 11 May 2023.
- Scottish Government. (2022). *Achieving excellence and equity: National Improvement Framework and improvement plan*.
- Scottish Government (2023). *National Improvement Framework*. <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/>

Stoll, L. (2007). School culture and improvement. In M. Preedy, R. Glatter, & C. Wise. (Eds.), *Strategic leadership and educational improvement*. SAGE (in conjunction with Open University).

Stoll, L. (2009). Capacity building for school improvement or creating capacity for learning? A changing landscape. *Journal of Educational Change*, 10, 115–127, Springer.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-009-9104-3>

Author Biography

Ali Preston

APreston@kingspark-sec.glasgow.sch.uk



Ali Preston has been Depute Head Teacher at King’s Park Secondary School in Glasgow City Council for the past five years. Ali currently leads on Pupil Support, Child Protection and Safeguarding, Support for Learning, Wellbeing and Inclusion. Ali has 19 years’ professional experience in education, originally as a Music teacher in East Renfrewshire Council then taking up a position of Principal Teacher of Performing Arts within Glasgow City Council. Ali completed her Into Headship Qualification in July 2023 through the University of Glasgow School of Education.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges support and mentorship from Mrs Kirsty Ayed, Head Teacher at King’s Park Secondary School. The author also acknowledges and thanks members of the *Education Leadership and Policy* department at the University of Glasgow School of Education for their critical perspectives on the final draft.