

IMPROVEMENT

To what extent do local authorities empower headteachers and schools to lead change and improvement, making decisions in partnership with their learning community within their schools?

Recent changes in approaches to developing strategic Local Authority plans and decision making have the potential to promote autonomy and improvement. Some Staff report that they feel more engaged in decision making although this does not extend beyond school senior leaders. School Improvement Plans are aligned with Local Authority Plans in almost all cases although the impact of this alignment is not consistently maximised.

Ineffective communication hampers empowerment. The Service have developed a SharePoint site for the education service. The site acts as a single point of contact for almost all communication from the central team, for agreed policy and guidance. This also offers an opportunity to utilise Microsoft TEAMS, part of the Office 365 package to support collaborative working practices. The Sharepoint site is currently being rolled out and initial feedback is positive.

Local Authority improvement is now led by 5 leadership groups predominantly comprised of senior school leaders and focused on the improvements contained in the ACC National Improvement Framework Plan. There is clear evidence that this approach has quickened decision making and is leading to an improvement in performance and culture.

The School Improvement Planning format is overly bureaucratic and hampers effective self-evaluation for improvement. An agreed refreshed and streamlined format focused on a realistic number of improvements, improved collaborative quality assurance processes and sharing of best practice will help us build greater consistency of practice.

Some schools effectively utilise all of the capacity for improvement through the use of staff working groups, very real pupil participation and positive engagement with parents and community to drive improvement and take decisions. Governance arrangements around school improvement plans will be clarified further to maximise capacity for improvement and subsequent impact on outcomes for children and young people.

Some schools confidently use self-evaluation to effectively drive improvement across their learning community but not all. In the best cases, all stakeholders are engaged in planning for improvement but this is not consistently in place in every community.

There is a need to further clarify expectations with regard to working with stakeholders to ensure that the capacity of pupils, parents and community is fully utilised to support improvement. This has been hampered by shortages in staffing levels but should now be driven to ensure the collective capacity for improvement in a school community is harnessed.

Some schools use quantitative and qualitative data to inform improvement plans although schools can find the volume of data difficult to navigate. The lack of minimum expectations in terms of tracking and monitoring is negatively impacting on the measurement of improvement and this will be addressed early in 2020. Use of Power BI and SEEMiS BI will support senior leaders to effectively identify emerging trends, this will be taken forward from January 2020.

Approaches to Local Authority professional learning have been refreshed in collaboration with school leaders. Evaluations evidence the positive impact of these changes on classroom practice.

The ACC National Improvement Framework Plan has a clear focus on tackling bureaucracy. Two colleagues in schools have worked with Microsoft to improve approaches to planning for children and this will be launched in early 2020 and we anticipate a positive response.

The Local Authority empowers school leaders to make an active contribution to local, regional and national education policy to support improvement. Contributions to our Regional Improvement Collaborative are limited due in part to school teams seeing limited impact on their children and young

people. The refined Regional Improvement Collaborative Plan and drive to digitise support whenever possible should help address this area. Approaches will continue to be kept under review to inform next steps.

Some Associated Schools Groups already work very effectively together as part of a wider Partnership Forum and this approach is being used well by Early Learning and Childcare Locality Leads. There is a need to share best practice to ensure that school staff see local colleagues as a source of support. This will be supported through our refreshed approach to quality improvement which utilises peers to support evaluation.

All Senior Leaders have had the opportunity to participate in professional learning activities related to Coaching with a focus on Professional Review and Development. 2 Improvement events, led by GTCS has provided Senior Leaders with a consistent understanding of coaching conversations and how to support staff through coaching approaches to identify next steps in professional learning and leadership. This approach has been encouraged for all staff including support staff through the use of the Local Authority Continual Review and Development Process.

CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

To what extent do Local Authorities empower headteachers and schools to lead collaborative work to co-design and develop the curriculum and learner pathways, including transitions, which best meet the needs of all children and young people within their local context?

Our headteachers and schools have the autonomy to design and deliver a curriculum which meets their own school's context. In some cases a very good and impactful curriculum has been put in place. The flexibility that exists has not been fully utilised in all cases and is an indication that guidance has been unclear and inconsistent. Very few schools have worked with their local communities and with key partners such as SDS to help develop their curriculum and Local Authority expectation has not been explicitly clear. A recent workshop on the refreshed narrative has been well received and will now be rolled out more fully across the system and be accompanied with clear guidance for staff. Work will continue to refresh our Senior Phase offering to ensure that it effectively feeds the local employability pipeline.

Low staff confidence levels can limit creative and innovative practice. As an agreed learning and teaching standard is put in place there is an opportunity to exemplify innovative practice to ensure that strength across the system supports the development of strength in others, this will be complemented by continuing to provide high quality professional learning for practitioners. This standard will help to clarify expectations and empower practitioners to delivery consistent learning, teaching and assessment practices and will help determine how best to utilise the skills of our assessment leaders.

There is some evidence of recent collaboration across schools, helping to drive improved practice. This will be further developed over coming years.

Strengthening partnerships are evident with key partners to the Senior Phase offering and these will enable schools to offer greater breadth of offering from August 2020. At times, support for those in need of a very different learning pathway can be complex to source and this will be addressed as we review our provision of serves for those with additional support and wellbeing needs. Work being undertaken as part of the LOIP will support our development of more consistently strong transition arrangements.

Existing networks were not effective in driving improvement. The use of networks is currently under review to ensure that subject specialists help drive a strong curricular offering. Work is currently progressing on a strategy to support leadership development more effectively. We anticipate that this work will be concluded...

STAFFING

To what extent do Local Authorities provide schools with flexibility to make decisions about staffing and leadership structures in their schools to best support improving outcomes for learners?

Our head teachers have the flexibility to design structures to meet the needs of their local community within their delegated staffing budget and supported by SCNT/SNCT agreements and guidance. This flexibility has been limited by how Devolved School Management (DSM) allocations have been made but this will be rectified as new DSM guidance is agreed in May. Our recruitment and appointment processes are clear and the process to advertise has been recently improved resulting in posts being advertised more swiftly and reducing unnecessary workload to free up head teacher time to prioritise improving their school.

The level of vacancy has been dramatically reduced over the last year and work continues to focus on how best to attract hard to fill posts such as leadership posts and some particular subject specialisms in secondary schools. Data is collected on a monthly basis to inform next steps and allow us to be proactive in approach.

We have a range of effective policies and supportive guidance in place that clearly outlines roles and responsibilities in relation to developing and sustaining a professional school team to meet the needs of the learning community. Head teachers are supported by the central team and by HT professionals.

Head teachers are fully responsible for the recruitment of staff and can appoint those with the skills most likely to support the school community. They do this with due regard to employment law and Local Authority contractual obligations.

Together with head teachers, we have regard to supporting guidance developed by SNCT and LNCT on the processes that should be observed when resolving disagreements about staffing matters between headteacher and the local authority.

FUNDING

To what extent do Local Authorities support and challenge schools to manage their delegated budgets in a fair, transparent and equitable way to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

The education service is responsible for the devolved local authority education budget to our schools and for the delegation of funding to schools in line with statutory guidance. A refreshed DSM scheme, anticipated to be approved by Committee in May, will clarify expectations of head teachers, be fair and equitable whilst clarifying the level of flexibility within the scheme.

As well as being monitored by head teachers, Quality Improvement Officers have access to school budgets to enable any concerns with spending to be discussed with budget holders. This approach is helping the service track the use of some grants, such as Pupil Equity Funding, more effectively.

From May 2020, appropriate support and guidance will be available to aid staff to understand expectations around best value and local authority procurement regulations. Regular opportunities for training will also be available. It is thought that the new DSM scheme will help ensure that headteachers can prioritise their focus on leading school improvement, and being leaders of learning and the curriculum. We encourage and support schools in engaging with staff, learners, parents and partners in decisions about how funding is used.

Decisions about education spending at local authority are made in an increasingly collegiate way and most schools involve staff in taking decisions on budget. Budgets across Integrated Children and Family Services are currently being aligned to ensure that we are better able to fulfil our commitments in terms of Getting it right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the local authority's role as Corporate Parents.

We support elected members so that they are well informed about education policy and practice. Elected members provide appropriate support and challenge on decisions about education spend to ensure that these decisions are democratically accountable.

PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To what extent do local authorities support and promote parental and community engagement?

PUPIL PARTICIPATION

To what extent do local authorities promote and support pupil participation?

DRAFT