

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 June 2018
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	School Improvement Update
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on the progress of the work of the Curriculum and Quality Improvement Service with regards to School Improvement session 2017/2018
- ◆ advise of future developments for 2018/2019

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

(1) that current and planned work relating to School Improvement be noted

3. Background

3.1 The aim of the Curriculum and Quality Improvement Service (CQIS) is to provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge for schools in South Lanarkshire in an effort to ensure that the best possible outcomes for children and young people are achieved. The CQIS is comprised of two main workstreams linked to "Curriculum and Attainment" and "School Improvement". Each is led by a Head of Service and supported by a senior officer.

3.2. Following the re-structuring of the CQIS service in August 2017, a revised approach to supporting schools with improvement was introduced in response to changes in national policy, legislation and expectations.

4. Progress to Date

4.1 Role of Quality Link Officers

Central to the aim of the CQIS, is the role which Quality Link Officers (QLOs) play in the provision of this support and challenge. The role and remit of these officers has been revised this year in order to ensure that the support which is provided is focused on what schools need to keep up with and changing expectations at a national level. Each QLO is linked to two Learning Communities, each comprising one secondary school and the primary schools which are associated with it.

4.2. QLOs aim to provide a minimum of three visits per session to each establishment. The number of visits that each establishment receives is proportionate, based on a number of factors including the level of establishment need, the proximity of the establishment to inspection, the length of service of the Headteacher and any other exceptional circumstances which are deemed to require an additional level of support. Each visit is focused on a specific aspect of school improvement e.g. teaching and learning, attainment.

- 4.3. As a result of this revised activity, central staff report that they know the schools better and are thus able to provide more tailored support to those that require it. In addition, a recent CQIS audit found that Headteachers value the support provided through the Link Officer role.

5. Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE)

- 5.1. The progress on the implementation of VSE for securing improvement was noted by the Education Resources Committee in September 2017. A progress update on establishments involved in the VSE programme has been prepared. Results from the most recent analysis show that 100% of establishments strongly agreed that overall, the VSE process was a valuable experience and has helped their school to improve.

6. Support for Self-Evaluation

- 6.1. In September 2016, Education Scotland produced an updated version of the “How Good is our School” (HGIOS) self-evaluation tool, HGIOS4. This is the tool that schools nationally are expected to use to evaluate their work and help improve experiences for children and young people. This also is the measure that inspectors use when evaluating schools. The School Improvement team within SLC has produced a “toolkit” for schools to use which makes this document more practical, accessible and user-friendly. This toolkit translates the key messages for schools and helps them to audit current practice and plan new developments.

7. Professional Learning Trios

- 7.1. This is a programme designed to enhance the learning and development of Headteachers and help them think beyond the boundaries of their school by learning from others. Headteachers are “matched” with others within the authority, where possible beyond the area in which they work. A series of structured meetings are then arranged. In an effort to reflect the national agenda, these are focused on one key driver from the National Improvement Framework. At the launch of the programme in 2016/2017, over forty establishments signed up to be involved. During this session, this increased to over one hundred establishments. Feedback from those involved in Year 1 and Year 2 of the programme has been extremely positive:-

“Trios have given me time to reflect with my colleagues and share good practice, whilst at the same time challenging me to think of new improved ways of thinking.”

“This was particularly useful and supportive in my first year as Acting HT.”

8. Attainment Families

- 8.1. A pilot initiative was introduced this year which involved schools volunteering to be part of an “Attainment Family” with schools in North Lanarkshire. Twelve schools across South Lanarkshire volunteered and became part of this programme. The programme focused on research and strategies around raising attainment for all and was facilitated jointly with officers from South and North Lanarkshire Councils. Again, positive feedback has been received.

- 8.2. Almost all colleagues are very positive about the Family Group partnership with North Lanarkshire. They feel it has been excellent to have the opportunity to share practice, strengths, opportunities and challenges with each other. New Head Teachers have noted that they have particularly benefited from the professional learning opportunities which have arisen from working with more experienced colleagues. Visiting other schools has also been highlighted as particularly beneficial alongside the opportunity to share quality assurance approaches, monitoring and tracking.

This initiative has been an important part of preparing for our work with Regional Collaboratives.

9. School Improvement Planning and Reporting

- 9.1. Following on from national legislation around planning and reporting, South Lanarkshire Council recently introduced revised guidelines and templates for schools. These were fully implemented during session 2017/2018 and feedback was sought from Headteachers around these. The feedback was generally positive, although a couple of minor changes were incorporated into this year's guidelines to reflect the views of schools. As a result, we are confident that schools' planning and reporting fully meets the requirements of national guidance and provides useful information for parents, carers and other stakeholders. All School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Standards and Quality Reports (SQR's) are publicly accessible, usually through publication on the schools' websites. This also includes information around Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) spend.

10. Support for Inspection

- 10.1. As the expectations around inspection have changed and increased since August 2016, schools continue to report that they require support around this process. In response to this, the School Improvement Team established a series of training events that help prepare schools for inspection. Attendance at these events is entirely voluntary but uptake has been very high. Headteachers are able to hear from colleagues who have recently experienced inspection and are helped to engage in activities which will further support their self-evaluation journey. In addition, schools which are notified of forthcoming inspections are given a package of bespoke support by Lead Officers to help them prepare for the experience. This includes not only support for the Headteacher but also an opportunity for staff to meet with senior officers and ask questions.
- 10.2. Schools have reported that they have felt supported and much clearer about what to expect. There has been an upward trend in inspections results. The authority also offers a programme of support to schools post-inspection, based on any recommendations contained within the inspection report. A report will be provided on the outcome of inspection reports to a forthcoming Education Resources Committee.

11. Continued Lifelong Professional Learning

- 11.1 Each year, the CQIS provide an extensive range of learning and development opportunities for staff. This is based on needs identified through the national agenda (e.g. Standardised Testing) and through local demands which are identified through a survey of Headteachers in May of each year. During the 2018/2019, the CQIS has provided a wealth of training opportunities such as those on Active Literacy

approaches, Leadership and a range of network meetings. Professional Learning Coordinators from each school are brought together regularly and trained on aspects such as helping practitioners develop skills through professional enquiry. There is an extensive training and support programme designed to support our newly qualified teachers and retain them within South Lanarkshire Council as permanent staff members.

12. Leadership Development

- 12.1. Central to our school improvement strategy is the development of our school leaders at all levels. South Lanarkshire Council has a well-developed leadership programme which has been running for a number of years including opportunities for aspiring and current leaders. This has been revised and refined over 2017/2018 and a one-page graphic produced which illustrates the opportunities available to staff at all levels. In addition, to help address succession planning for promoted posts, a pool of potential “acting” Headteachers and Depute Heads has been identified through expressions of interest from staff. In addition, there has been a renewed focus on the leadership of classroom teachers through the involvement of 42 schools in the “Tapestry” initiative. South Lanarkshire Council encourages staff to take up external leadership opportunities such as those provided by the Scottish College of Educational Leadership (SCEL). This year we had 3 members of staff graduating from the “Into Headship” programme with a further 12 staff due to complete the course in September 2018 and graduate in May 2019. In addition to this, we had one Headteacher achieving the prestigious “SCEL fellowship” award. A copy of the Leadership Framework is attached at Appendix 1.

13. Tracking and Monitoring

- 13.1. Schools have been invited to adopt a revised “tracking and monitoring” tool developed centrally by SLC to help tackle bureaucracy and improve standards. This is designed to help schools record a child’s progress and evidence their learning journey. It is also a useful tool for helping staff report to parents on progress. This tool was developed in conjunction with Headteachers. 135 staff have opted to join in and have reported that this has reduced workload in this area and has provided a greater clarity on progress. HMI have commented on the positive use of this tool during recent inspections. CQIS have provided extensive training around this which has been well attended and very well received.

“Extremely helpful meetings. Changed how we track and monitor. Developed my own skills and confidence. Great use of time.”

“Training has been really beneficial. Can’t believe how far we’ve come over this year.”

14. Next Steps

- 14.1. All programmes will be revised as a result of feedback received and adjusted over the summer holiday period. Lead Officers will complete evaluations of work undertaken and write plans for taking the work forward.
- 14.2. The VSE programme for 2018/19 to support school improvement will be taken forward in partnership with schools.
- 14.3. The next cohort of schools which will be offered support for readiness for inspection has already been identified and a planned programme of events will get underway next session. Officers will continue to work with schools with the aim of maintaining and increasing our positive results in this area.

- 14.5. With the launch of a new HGIOS4 audit tool designed for children and young people, CQIS will support schools to use this in a planned and proportionate way by providing training, guidance and support.
- 14.6. Given the success of both the Professional Learning Trios and the Attainment Families initiative, CQIS have now blended the best of both these approaches and from session 2018/19 they will be called “Self-improving Attainment Families”. The expectation is that all establishments will be involved next session and an introductory information session has been arranged for early in the new term. There are also plans underway to introduce this approach to secondary schools.
- 14.7. A strategic School Improvement group has been set up with a selection of senior managers from across the authority. The purpose of this group is to continue to make sure that new initiatives are based on the needs of schools and that any feedback around issues or new ideas are brought to the attention of relevant officers.
- 14.8. In an effort to share effective practice identified through school improvement activities, it is proposed to hold a showcase event during session 2018/2019 for schools. In addition, Education Resources will publish a “Standards and Quality” report in autumn 2018 which will reflect successes and highlights across Education Resources.
- 14.9. The establishment of national Regional Improvement Collaboratives provides an opportunity to extend our work beyond South Lanarkshire Council to work in partnership with colleagues from other West Partnership local authorities. One of the three dedicated workstreams of the West Partnership lies under the banner of School Improvement. Other local authorities have been interested in adopting and sharing our approaches and there are also opportunities to learn from beyond South Lanarkshire. These opportunities will continue to be explored during session 2018/2019.
- 14.10. There has been a need identified to pull together all recent school improvement materials and create a “one stop shop” for schools which provides guidance, sources of support, appropriate templates and resources and a central point for gathering evidence. The School Improvement team is working on this project in consultation with Headteachers and it is anticipated that this will be ready to launch in September 2018.

15. Employee Implications

- 15.1. None

16. Financial Implications

- 16.1. Financial implications are met from within existing budgetary resources.

17. Other Implications

- 17.1. There are no implications for sustainability or risk in terms of the information contained in this report.

18. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 18.1. This report does not present a new strategy, policy or plan and is, therefore, not subject to equality impact assessment.
- 18.2. There was no requirement to undertake any formal consultation in terms of the information contained within this report.

Executive Director (Education Resources)

22 May 2018

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- Ensure schools and other places of learning are inspirational

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:

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