

Improving our curriculum through self-evaluation

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Improving our curriculum through self-evaluation



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FOREWORD

Curriculum for Excellence aims to transform the Scottish education system and to achieve better educational outcomes for all children and young people. Successful response to this challenging agenda requires all involved in Scottish education to show leadership for learning and an openness to change and innovation. As a key part of this leadership, effective self-evaluation enables schools and pre-school centres to identify the strengths of their curriculum and the changes needed to achieve better outcomes for learners.

Evaluating the quality of a curriculum which embraces all of the opportunities for learning organised by a school or pre-school centre is a highly complex task. This is particularly so in the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*, at a time of change to less prescriptive forms of curriculum guidance, with greater encouragement to the professional team to take responsibility for the curriculum in their school or centre, and to innovate actively to respond to the needs of their learners and communities.

This guide will help your staff team to evaluate and improve the quality of your curriculum. It will be useful to staff in education authorities and national agencies involved in supporting *Curriculum for Excellence* and improvement through self evaluation. It will be used by HMIE in evaluating the curriculum in all school and pre school inspections¹. The new inspections, commencing in September 2008, will build directly on the school or centre's self-evaluation as the starting point for inspection. The inspections will involve dialogue between inspectors and staff about their progress in improving their curriculum and the emerging benefits for learners.

This is an important guide in the most central aspect of a school or centre's work to improve outcomes for learners. I commend it to you.

Graham Donaldson

HM Senior Chief Inspector

September 2008

¹ This guide is a companion to *Improving outcomes for learners through self-evaluation*, HMIE, 2008, which provides advice on evaluating the QIs on Improvements in performance, Learners'/Children's experiences, Meeting learning needs and Improvement through self evaluation. Both documents should be used alongside *How good is our school?*, HMIE, 2007, and *The Child at the Centre*, HMIE, 2007.

1. INTRODUCTION

This document supplements the advice given in the third edition of *How good is our school?* (HMIE, 2007) and the second edition of *The Child at the Centre* (HMIE, 2007) which set out comprehensive quality frameworks and provide helpful advice on the process of improvement through self-evaluation.

It focuses on the use of Quality Indicator 5.1: The curriculum, to help schools and centres to evaluate and improve their curriculum. It has been written primarily for pre-school centres and primary, special and secondary schools. Colleges and other partner providers will also find it useful in evaluating their contributions to the curriculum for learners from 3 to 18.

It has been designed to support schools and centres by:

- ✦ encouraging a consistent approach to evaluating QI 5.1: The curriculum; and
- ✦ providing sets of questions and examples from schools that have engaged with *Curriculum for Excellence* which can be used to evaluate the quality of the curriculum.

The focus on QI 5.1: The curriculum, has particular significance as schools and centres take forward the challenging agenda of *Curriculum for Excellence. Building the curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching* further develops the advice in previous *Curriculum for Excellence* publications². It provides a framework for planning the curriculum in order to meet the needs of all children and young people from 3-18, ensuring a continuous focus on developing the four capacities at each stage. Annex 1 details the four capacities.

² *A Curriculum for Excellence*, The Scottish Executive, 2004; *A Curriculum for Excellence: Progress and Proposals*, The Scottish Executive, 2006; *Building the Curriculum 1 – the Contribution of Curriculum Areas*, The Scottish Executive, 2006; *Building the Curriculum 2 – Active Learning in the Early Years*, The Scottish Executive, 2007.

2. A BROADER DEFINITION OF THE CURRICULUM

Curriculum for Excellence aims to transform the Scottish education system and to achieve better educational outcomes for all young people. The curriculum aims to enable all young people to become *successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens* and *effective contributors*. The concept of the curriculum has been expanded to include the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated.³ It includes the ethos and life of the school as a community; curriculum areas and subjects; interdisciplinary learning; and opportunities for personal achievement.⁴ This new and all-embracing definition prompts us to expand our thinking about the totality of experiences that comprise a curriculum fit for the 21st century. It places demands on all of us to be innovative and creative in the way in which we envisage, plan and deliver an excellent curriculum.

Building the curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching summarises the curriculum framework as follows:

The purpose of the curriculum is to help children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors (the four capacities). The framework therefore puts the learner at the centre of the curriculum.

Experiences and outcomes⁵ describe the expectations for learning and progression in all areas of the curriculum.

Children and young people are entitled to a curriculum that includes a range of features at the different stages. The framework expands on these. In summary, children and young people are entitled to experience:

- ✦ a curriculum which is coherent from 3 to 18
- ✦ a broad general education, including the experiences and outcomes well planned across all the curriculum areas, from early years through to S3
- ✦ a senior phase of education after S3 which provides opportunity to obtain qualifications as well as to continue to develop the four capacities
- ✦ opportunities for developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work with a continuous focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing
- ✦ personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities which *Curriculum for Excellence* can provide
- ✦ support in moving into positive and sustained destinations beyond school.

³ *Building the curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching*, page 11.

⁴ *Building the curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching*, page 20.

⁵ The term 'experiences and outcomes' is used to refer to the 3-15 curriculum experiences and outcomes defined in each curriculum area together with the outcomes related to qualifications and learners' experiences in the senior phase.

Principles of curriculum design

Curriculum for Excellence allows both professional autonomy and responsibility when planning and delivering. Almost all areas of the curriculum no longer have specified time allocations. The seven principles of curriculum design are intended as features which apply at all stages of learning, with different emphases at different stages. These principles are:

- ✦ challenge and enjoyment
- ✦ breadth
- ✦ progression
- ✦ depth
- ✦ personalisation and choice
- ✦ coherence and
- ✦ relevance.

These principles apply to the curriculum at a strategic level, in the classroom and other settings where children and young people are learners. Annex 2 provides further details of the principles of curriculum design. The curriculum framework has to be flexible, dynamic and adaptable enough to meet the needs of all children and young people. *Building the curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching* provides more detailed advice and illustrations of the principles of curriculum design within the different stages of learning. Annex 3 provides the schematic guide for curriculum planners from *Building the curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching*.

3. LEADERSHIP OF CURRICULUM CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

As with all aspects of education, the planning and development of an excellent curriculum places a requirement on high quality leadership. *Leadership for Learning: the challenges of leading in a time of change* (HMIE, May 2007) and the related self-evaluation materials highlight the importance of leadership within education. The publication confirms that leadership at all levels from within and beyond the school or centre is essential in securing continuous improvement.

“In education, we have a highly skilled workforce that is engaged directly in delivery or as part of the support infrastructure. Their key focus is on adding value in ways that deliver maximum impact for learners.”

“For long-term projects we need drive which may come from the top or from the bottom, and accountability for the results.”

Leaders then, are not just at the top of an organisation or establishment. The most effective organisations have strong leaders at every level. Headteachers and senior staff play a key role in setting out the strategic direction of the curriculum. They make a significant difference to the work of the school or centre but they cannot make the necessary changes on their own. The professional duties of teachers as ‘leaders of learning’ in schools were brought to the forefront through the *Teachers’ Agreement for the Twenty-First Century* (TP21). The professional role of all teachers or staff working with children at the pre-school stage includes their role in developing the curriculum as well as contributing to school or centre planning, raising achievement and individual review. Curriculum leadership demands individuals and team members to collaborate and engage in purposeful conversations in order to make their contributions to coherent curriculum design. Developing the curriculum is everybody’s job.

Self-evaluation helps us to find out what works and what doesn’t and to absorb new knowledge in the process. We may have to sacrifice short-term efficiencies to gain insight into and respond to novel problems along the way. In this respect, leadership ‘from the top’ has to establish the climate and culture and create the collaborative and collegiate structures that encourage people to get involved. The signals sent are critical to staff’s ability and willingness to offer their ideas and observations. Successful curriculum development requires strong leadership, good relationships and openness to change and innovation. In this kind of environment, people are more willing to offer ideas, questions and concerns and most importantly, to learn.

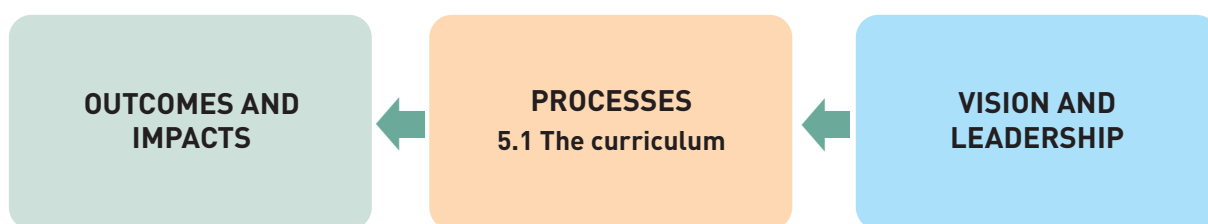
4. USING HOW GOOD IS OUR SCHOOL? AND THE CHILD AT THE CENTRE

The quality indicator framework

The framework of quality indicators in the newest editions of *How good is our school?* (HMIE, 2007) and *The Child at the Centre* (HMIE, 2007), is based on the key activities of a school or pre-school centre and what these activities achieve in terms of outcomes for learners. Quality indicators help to explore complex relationships of cause and effect, and assist in the identification of aspects that need to be improved. Indicators sit within different parts of the model: in vision and leadership; in the processes which underpin the work and life of the school or centre; and in outcomes and impacts which identify the school or centre's successes and achievements.

QI 5.1: The curriculum is located in the process part of the model as shown:

Figure 1



Key features, themes and illustrations

Key features indicate to the user what the QI is about. To help make judgements it is necessary to evaluate the available evidence from all the themes, using the illustrations at levels 5 and 2 to assist benchmarking. In addition, the generic six-point scale in Annex 4 will help to differentiate between levels by considering, for example, whether there are 'important strengths' or 'major strengths'.

Each QI has one or more themes. The themes are used to organise the evidence under different headings. They therefore serve as useful guides for collecting evidence.

The illustrations are statements on the quality of provision at two levels. They are not checklists. They need to be interpreted to take account of the context of the establishment. Establishments do not have to exhibit all of the features in an illustration at a particular level in order to achieve an evaluation at that level. The illustrations are not exhaustive and establishments may exhibit particular strengths or weaknesses which are not in the illustration.

Further information on using quality indicators can be found on pages 6 to 15 of *How good is our school?* and pages 8 to 12 of *The Child at the Centre*.

Evaluating the quality of your curriculum

The quality indicator QI 5.1 has four important themes which are used to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. These are:

- ✦ the rationale and design of the curriculum
- ✦ the development of the curriculum
- ✦ programmes and courses
- ✦ transitions.

This document looks at each theme in turn. It is important to remember that when you come to a judgement about your curriculum you should take a holistic view of the quality indicator as well as looking at individual themes. At different times, in different contexts and for the needs of individual learners, one theme might be more important than the others.

Curriculum for Excellence provides a framework which taken together are very powerful in evaluating the quality of a curriculum. These are:

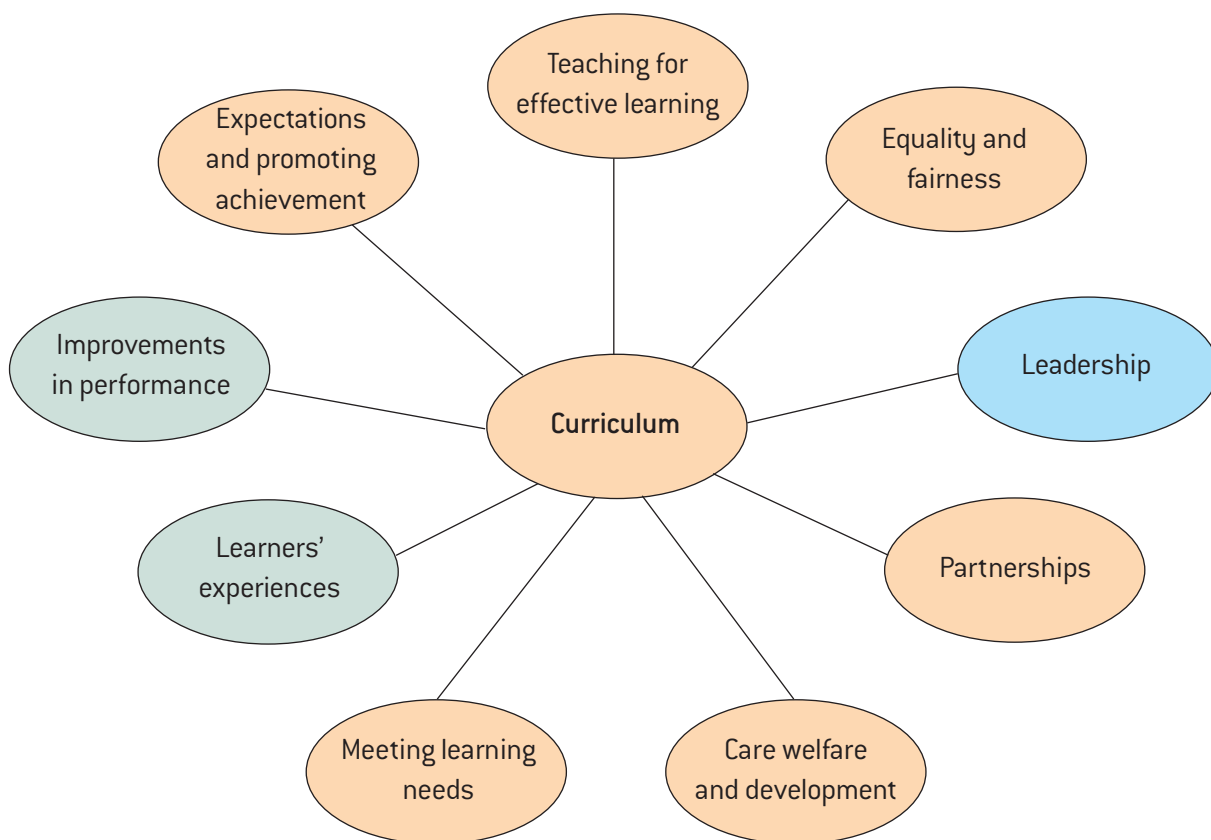
- ✦ Successful outcomes in achieving the **four capacities** are the ultimate test of a high quality curriculum. The capacities (with their contributory attributes and capabilities) are included in QI 1.1: Improvements in performance and QI 2.1: Learners' experiences as important aspects of the outcomes and impact of a school or centre.
- ✦ The **design principles** are intended to guide staff in building sets of learning experiences and the whole curriculum in a way that leads to high quality learning and achievement of the four capacities.
- ✦ The sets of **experiences and outcomes** provide guidance on the knowledge, understanding and skills children are expected to develop and provide more detail about the contribution of curriculum areas and permeating aspects of literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing to the development of the four capacities.
- ✦ **How the curriculum is put together** – the way that a school or centre provides opportunities for a blend of curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary projects and studies, personal achievement, and enrichment through the ethos and life of the establishment as a community will influence curriculum quality.

These sets of ideas need to be kept in mind when using the themes of quality indicator QI 5.1 to review and evaluate the effectiveness of your curriculum. They will be used particularly in evaluating the first and third theme but will feature in varying degrees to all of the themes.

Taking account of related QIs

The following diagram illustrates the relationship of other leadership and process QIs to the quality of the curriculum which will in turn affect the quality of the outcome and impact QIs. Section 5 highlights the related QIs against each theme of QI 5.1.

Figure 2



Using this guide will help to identify the strengths of your curriculum and areas for development as you implement *Curriculum for Excellence*. We have suggested questions to help you review your curriculum. These questions aim to encourage the exchange of ideas and, in doing so, to create a sense of collegiality among all those involved in curriculum review and development. The process of self-evaluation encourages us to aim to be objective enough to come to an evaluation of *'How good we are now?'* and to consider *'How good can we be?'*.

The examples in Section 6 of this document illustrate current and emerging practice as schools and centres implement *Curriculum for Excellence* and the expectations outlined within *Building the curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching*.

5. QI 5.1: THE CURRICULUM

This QI is located in the section of the model (shown on page 5) relating to 'delivery of educational processes'. It is one of a range of process QIs which relate to the overall outcomes for the school or centre and the impacts on learners.

Key features

In evaluating this QI a holistic, rounded judgement is made on the quality of the curriculum as experienced by the learners. The scope of the QI is given in the key features:

This indicator relates to the ways that curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary studies, the life of the school or other establishment as a community, and opportunities for personal achievement develop children and young people's capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It focuses on the quality of the curriculum across stages and transition points. It highlights the need for the curriculum to be dynamic, to take account of innovation and to be flexible to meet the needs and interests of all children and young people.

When applying this QI and making judgements on the quality of provision across schools and other establishments it is important to evaluate:

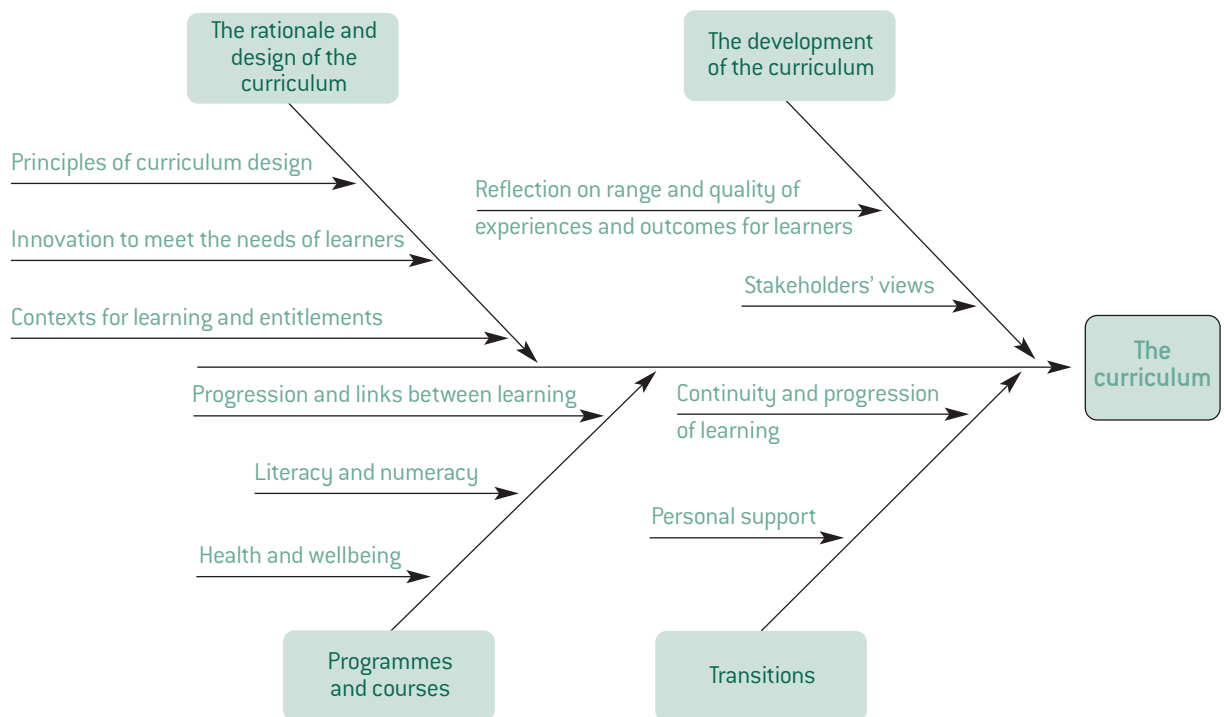
- ✦ the quality of the rationale and design of the curriculum to ensure that it is based on shared values, meets the needs of all learners and takes account of the principles of curriculum design within *Curriculum for Excellence*;
- ✦ the processes which the school or centre puts in place to develop the curriculum to improve the range and quality of experiences and outcomes for learners, taking account of stakeholders' views;
- ✦ how the school or centre plans to introduce the *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes in ways which will meet the needs of all learners by providing programmes and courses which support progression, help learners to make connections between different areas of their learning, develop literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills across the curriculum and provide planned opportunities for personal achievement; and
- ✦ how the arrangements for transitions ensure continuity and progression in learning and provide effective personal support for learners.

The following diagram shows that evidence from each of the four themes of the QI must be examined in order to make an evaluation. The diagram does not imply that a set order of evaluation must be followed.

The diagram does not imply that all themes are equally important. At different times, in different contexts and for the needs of individuals, one theme might be more important.

In addition, when making an evaluation, it is necessary to cross refer to the evidence for QI 2.1 and QI 1.1 to check whether the action taken was successful in having a positive impact on the learning experiences of, and outcomes for, children and young people.

The tables which follow illustrate in more detail factors which should be taken into account when making an evaluation of QI 5.1.



Theme 1: The rationale and design of the curriculum

This theme looks at the way the rationale and design of the curriculum takes account of shared values, meets the needs of all learners and takes account of the *Curriculum for Excellence* principles of curriculum design.

Key questions	Sources of evidence	Related impact, process and leadership QIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do we develop a vision and rationale for our curriculum which is based on our shared values and develops the four capacities of <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i>? • How well does our curriculum take account of the design principles of <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i> (challenge, enjoyment, breadth, depth, progression, relevance, coherence, personalisation and choice)? • How well do we design the curriculum with the needs of all including those children and young people with additional support needs? • How effectively do we put together our whole curriculum to use the following to promote the entitlements for all children and young people?: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the ethos and life of the school or centre as a community; – curriculum areas and subjects; – interdisciplinary learning; and – planned opportunities for personal achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on course structures and timetables • Sampling of pathways through the curriculum as experienced by groups/individual learners • Discussions with managers and cross section of staff, partners and other stakeholders • Discussions with groups of learners • Curriculum aims and policies • Analysis of stakeholder questionnaires and consultations on developing shared values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of the curriculum impacts upon learners' outcomes. (QI 1.1)⁶ • The vision, values and aims guide quality and drive improvement (QI 9.1)⁷, and policies for the curriculum provide a shared direction for improvement. (QI 6.1) • The design of the curriculum determines how well the needs of all learners are met (QI 5.3) and promotes equality and fairness. (QI 5.6) • Effective partnerships with learners and parents influence the design of the curriculum. (QI 5.7) • Effective partnerships with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers provide and support enriched learning experiences. (QI 8.1)

⁶ QIs in plain typeface indicate related process or leadership areas. This does not imply that they should be fully evaluated. The reference QIs are shown in bold.

⁷ Further advice on evaluating leadership can be found in 'Leadership for learning: The challenges of leading in a time of change', HMIE 2007.

Theme 2: The development of the curriculum

This theme looks at the processes which the school or centre puts in place to develop the curriculum to improve the range and quality of experiences and outcomes for learners.

Key questions	Sources of evidence	Related impact, process and leadership QIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do we develop and refresh our curriculum and manage curriculum change and innovation to implement <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i>? • How well do we involve partners and key stakeholders in curriculum change and innovation? • How well do we identify the benefits for learners from planned curriculum change and innovation? • How well do we monitor and evaluate the impact and outcomes of changes in our curriculum, including in areas delivered by partners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement plan and evidence of impact • Discussions with managers and cross section of staff, partners and other stakeholders • Minutes of meetings • Analysis of stakeholder questionnaires and consultations • Data on improvements in progress • Attainment and achievement data trends • Standards and quality report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders ensure that all staff and partners effectively contribute to curriculum change and innovation. (QI 9.3)⁸ • Partnerships with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers enhance the quality of the curriculum. (QI 8.1) • Curriculum change and innovation involves consulting and communicating with learners and parents. (QI 5.7) • Effective self-evaluation enables a school/centre to identify changes needed in the curriculum and the impact of new developments. (QI 5.9)

⁸ Further advice on evaluating the quality of partnerships can be found in *How good is our school?, Self evaluation series E: School-college Partnership*, HMIE 2005.

Theme 3: Programmes and courses

This theme looks at the quality of programmes and courses. These should take account of the experiences and outcomes to respond to the needs of all learners, supporting progression, providing links between learning, developing a range of skills including literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and skills for learning life and work, and providing planned opportunities for personal achievement.

Key questions	Sources of evidence	Related impact, process and leadership QIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well are we planning to adopt the sets of experiences and outcomes in designing and refreshing programmes and courses to ensure that they promote the four capacities and meet national expectations? • How successfully do our programmes and courses balance the progressive development of knowledge and skills with flexibility for staff in determining the content to be covered? • How successful is the use of interdisciplinary projects and studies in stimulating learners to make links across different aspects of learning? • How effectively do we offer planned opportunities for personalisation and choice, and for personal achievement? • How effectively are our programmes and courses matched to the needs of all learners so that they progress well from their prior learning? • How well do our programmes and courses develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work with a continuous focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of programmes and courses as experienced by learners in learning and teaching • Documentation about programmes and courses, departmental handbooks • Options and choices information • Staff plans and programmes • Minutes of planning meetings <p>Other evidence can be found from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners' profiles, assessment records, achievement records • Attainment data, eg school and education authority data, SQA data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of programmes and courses impact on learners' engagement with learning, their development as learners (QI 2.1) and their progress, attainment and achievements (QI 1.1) • The range of methods used by teachers influences the development of the four capacities and effectively involves learners. (QI 5.2) • Programmes and courses affect how well learners' needs are met. Tasks, activities and resources are appropriate and build on prior learning. (QI 5.3) • Teachers' high expectations ensure that learners follow appropriately demanding programmes and courses and learners have a sense of personal achievement. (QI 5.5)

Theme 4: Transitions

This theme looks at the arrangements for transitions⁹ the school or centre has in place to ensure continuity and progression in learning and wider achievement and to provide effective personal support for learners.

Key questions	Sources of evidence	Related impact, process and outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective are our transition procedures and programmes in meeting the needs of all learners including those with additional support needs¹⁰ to ensure continuity and progression in learning? • How effective are our arrangements for personal support and induction to the next phase of learning, including preparation for the world of work and future careers, to ensure positive and sustained destinations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with learners, parents, staff, managers and partners • Stakeholders' questionnaires • Observations of the impact of information transferred about prior learning on learning and teaching after transition. • Minutes of planning meetings to identify and assess learners' needs to prepare for transitions • Learner progress files focusing on progress, attainment and achievement data • Trend data on leavers' destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective transition arrangements lead to improvement in learners' engagement with learning (QI 2.1) and to improvements in learners' progress, attainment and achievement. (QI 1.1) • Effective identification, planning for, and meeting, the needs of learners ensure continuity and progression in learning. (QI 5.3) • Effective arrangements for personal support and induction meet learners' emotional, physical and social needs. (QI 5.8) • Effective partnerships with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers enhance transition arrangements. (QI 8.1)

⁹ Further advice on evaluating the quality of transitions can be found in *How good is our school?, Self evaluation series E: Ensuring effective transitions*, HMIE 2006.

¹⁰ *The Additional Support for Learning Act, 2004* sets out legal requirements which apply to transitional arrangements for children with additional support needs. The Act requires an education authority to seek and take account of relevant advice and information from other agencies no later than 12 months before a child who has additional support needs is expected to have a change in school education.

6. SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

When we self-evaluate, we look honestly and critically at our practice to bring about improvement. Put simply, self-evaluation for improvement broadly focuses on answering two key questions about our practice:

How good are we now?

This question helps us to identify our strengths and development needs in key aspects of our work and the impact our work has on learners.

and

How good can we be?

We ask this question to help us set priorities for improvement.

The following pages contain the themes from QI 5.1: The curriculum. This section repeats the earlier questions which can be used to evaluate the quality of the curriculum. Each page sets out the questions along with examples of good practice in relation to the quality indicator. Examples of forms have been provided for you to record strengths, areas for development and to set priorities for the future.

QUALITY INDICATOR 5.1: THE CURRICULUM

Theme 1: The rationale and design of the curriculum

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ How well does the vision and rationale for our curriculum derive from our shared values and develops the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence*?
- ✦ How well does our curriculum take account of the design principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* (challenge, enjoyment, breadth, depth, progression, relevance, coherence, personalisation and choice)?
- ✦ How well do we design the curriculum with the needs of all learners including those with additional support needs?
- ✦ How effectively do we put together our whole curriculum to use the ethos and life of the school/centre as a community; curriculum areas and subjects; interdisciplinary learning; and opportunities for personal achievement, and promote the entitlements for all children and young people?

Examples from engagement with *Curriculum for Excellence*

As a result of discussing *Curriculum for Excellence*, staff in a school revisited the statement of values and aims for the curriculum. The pupil council took the responsibility for gathering the views of all learners, and the Parent Council ran a similar exercise for all parents. Staff wanted to have a shared vision for how all our children and young people's learning needs are met. The resulting agreed vision, value and aims reflected the context and needs of the school and everyone agreed to review and refresh them as we develop the curriculum further and respond to the changing needs of community in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

In a primary school, staff wanted to ensure that the curriculum developed the four capacities including the attributes and capabilities in all of the children. Staff worked with learners to discuss the meanings of the capacities and how they could show that they were making progress in the four capacities in their regular classroom activities. They developed individual records for each pupil which demonstrated how learning activities helped them to develop features of the four capacities. Each pupil now keeps a record of their development in the four capacities within their personal learning planning folder. They add evidence to these records to show how they are developing.

<i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?	<i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?

QUALITY INDICATOR 5.1: THE CURRICULUM

Theme 2: The development of the curriculum

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ How well do we develop and refresh our curriculum, and manage curriculum change and innovation to implement *Curriculum for Excellence*?
- ✦ How well do we involve partners and key stakeholders in curriculum change and innovation?
- ✦ How well do we identify the educational gain for learners from planned curriculum change and innovation?
- ✦ How well do we monitor and evaluate the impact and outcomes of changes in our curriculum, including in areas delivered by partners?

Examples from engagement with *Curriculum for Excellence*

Staff in a school wanted to offer children more choice in their learning, particularly at the early stages. They organised discussions for staff and pupils and sent a questionnaire to parents asking their views. Teachers and pupils wanted to build on the work they had already done in developing the four capacities. They, therefore, looked more closely at applying the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Teachers introduced a menu of activities and allowed children to make choices from these activities. The curriculum programmes were linked carefully to the experiences in the nursery class, building progression and coherence. Following the implementation of the different approach, feedback from children and parents was positive. They highlighted the recent enterprise activities raising funds for charity which had developed children's numeracy skills across the curriculum very well in a real and enjoyable context.

At a meeting of faculty heads, teachers identified that some S3 pupils did not have enough planned opportunities for personal achievements. Staff linked with partner agencies, including a voluntary youth project, to develop a more innovative and relevant programme for these young people at risk of missing out. All pupils chose from a programme of activities which included The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Prince's Trust and work with the Forestry Commission. Teachers then tracked, monitored and evaluated the impact of these experiences, including those delivered by partners, and the outcomes the young people achieved. Staff now intend to review this programme using the framework of the *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes.

<i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?	<i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?

QUALITY INDICATOR 5.1: THE CURRICULUM

Theme 3: Programmes and courses

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✧ How well are we planning to adopt the sets of experiences and outcomes in designing and refreshing programmes and courses to ensure that they promote the four capacities and meet national expectations?
- ✧ How successfully do our courses balance the progressive development of knowledge and skills with flexibility for staff in content covered?
- ✧ How successful is the use of interdisciplinary projects and studies in stimulating learners to make links across different aspects of learning?
- ✧ How effectively do we offer planned opportunities for personalisation and choice and for personal achievement?
- ✧ How effectively are our programmes and courses matched to the needs of all learners so that they progress well from their prior learning?
- ✧ How well do our programmes and courses develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work with a continuous focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing?

Examples from engagement with *Curriculum for Excellence*

Staff in a special school worked together to review and improve approaches to developing citizenship skills. They wanted to ensure that there was a clear focus on the relationship between the school's statement of values and aims and the development of learners' citizenship skills. Staff used the draft experiences and outcomes to carry out a review of courses and programmes across both primary and secondary stages and identified where each subject and course provided opportunities for learners to develop their citizenship skills. Staff wanted to ensure that, as learners moved through the school and gained in maturity, they progressively developed their personal values and an awareness of widely held social values. In developing the citizenship programme, staff included opportunities for learners to be actively involved in decision making through the pupil council and the eco-council, and in charitable activities.

Staff in a primary school worked collaboratively to plan and deliver connected and coherent learning programmes. An interdisciplinary approach was already integral to the curriculum, alongside subject learning. Staff decided to use the draft experiences and outcomes to review the interdisciplinary programmes. Staff focused on their relevance to children and how well they built on prior learning. As a result, teachers were able to monitor progression in children's skills much more consistently and coherently.

A science department wanted to refresh the curriculum in S1 in the light of *Curriculum for Excellence* and the school's work on *Assessment is for Learning*. The focus was to consider learning and teaching approaches and build on the learning experience from primary school. Teachers collated feedback from learners and discussed their science programme with staff in local primary schools. They developed a range of engaging, enterprising and active learning and teaching approaches, which also provided progression to specialising in specific subject areas. The young people now have many more opportunities to be independent and responsible in their learning. In a recent investigation on bio fuels, learners demonstrated how well they were able to consolidate and deepen their learning through collaborative problem solving work. Learners also demonstrated their understanding of the ethical issues associated with the development of alternative sources of energy.

Teachers in a primary school wanted to ensure that programmes and courses offered progression in skills which developed the four capacities and added greater relevance to learning. Across the school, staff discussed and developed ideas for having a progressive approach to skills development. The starting point was to design and plan tasks to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum in a consistent and progressive manner for learners. Staff met regularly to discuss progress and share approaches as well as compare learners' work. As a result, teachers feel that they are developing a shared understanding of the standards required at each level.

<p><i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?</p>	<p><i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?</p>

QUALITY INDICATOR 5.1: THE CURRICULUM

Theme 4: Transitions

Questions you should ask in relation to this QI:

- ✦ How effective are our transition procedures and programmes in meeting the needs of all learners including those with additional support needs to ensure continuity and progression in learning?
- ✦ How effective are our arrangements for personal support and induction to the next phase of learning, including preparation for the world of work and future careers, to ensure positive and sustained destinations?

Examples from engagement with *Curriculum for Excellence*

Staff in a nursery were very aware of the care and support that very young children needed when they started nursery. There was a clear programme to support parents and children in the first few weeks at the nursery. Parents appreciated this sensitive support but some mentioned that they had anxieties about their children moving between stages within the nursery. Staff asked children about their feelings and found they too had worries about moving into the 'big room'. Staff involved parents and children in making the move to the 'big room' better. Children and parents now spend time with staff and children at the next stage before they make the move themselves. To support better continuity and progression, staff at both stages work together on a topic chosen by the children from the early level experiences. Parents enjoyed being involved in this.

A secondary school had developed close links with a local college to improve pupils' transitions to the world of work. There was a recognised need to extend these opportunities, so school and college staff considered carefully the needs of the learners and which courses would be most effective in supporting employability skills in the local community. Together, they introduced a new course on professional hospitality. Learners taking the course were then able to work in both school and college and develop relevant work-based skills. Learners' career aspirations increased and the success has opened up opportunities for further college links and vocational options to sustain their interest.

<i>How good are we now?</i> What evidence do we have of our strengths and areas for development?	<i>How good can we be?</i> What action will we take to improve current practice?

ANNEX 1: THE FOUR CAPACITIES

The four capacities, with the attributes and capabilities, are shown in the following diagram.



ANNEX 2: CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM DESIGN

Challenge and enjoyment

Children should find their learning challenging, engaging and motivating. The curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all. At all stages, learners of all aptitudes and abilities should experience an appropriate level of challenge, to enable each individual to achieve his or her potential. They should be active in their learning and have opportunities to develop and demonstrate their creativity. There should be support to enable children to sustain their effort.

Breadth

All children should have opportunities for a broad, suitably weighted range of experiences. The curriculum should be organised so that they will learn and develop through a variety of contexts within both the classroom and other aspects of school life.

Progression

Children and young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18 within a single curriculum framework. Each stage should build upon earlier knowledge and achievements. Children should be able to progress at a rate which meets their needs and aptitudes, and keep options open so that routes are not closed off too early.

Depth

There should be opportunities for children to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning. As they progress, they should develop and apply increasing intellectual rigour, drawing different strands of learning together, and exploring and achieving more advanced levels of understanding.

Personalisation and choice

The curriculum should respond to individual needs and support particular aptitudes and talents. It should give each child increasing opportunities for exercising responsible personal choice as they move through their school career. Once they have achieved suitable levels of attainment across a wide range of areas of learning the choice should become as open as possible. There should be safeguards to ensure that choices are soundly based and lead to successful outcomes.

Coherence

Taken as a whole, children's learning activities should combine to form a coherent experience. There should be clear links between the different aspects of children's learning, including opportunities for extended activities which draw different strands of learning together.

Relevance

Children should understand the purposes of their activities. They should see the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, present and future.

ANNEX 3: THE SCHEMATIC GUIDE FOR CURRICULUM PLANNERS (FROM *BUILDING THE CURRICULUM 3: A FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING*)

A curriculum framework to meet the needs of all learners 3 – 18
A schematic guide for curriculum planners

<p style="text-align: center;">Values</p> <p>Wisdom, justice, compassion, integrity</p> <p>The curriculum must be inclusive, be a stimulus for personal achievement and, through the broadening of experience of the world, be an encouragement towards informed and responsible citizenship.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The curriculum: ‘the totality of all that is planned for children and young people throughout their education’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethos and life of the school as a community • Curriculum areas and subjects • Interdisciplinary learning • Opportunities for personal achievement 	<p style="text-align: center;">Learning and teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging and active • Setting challenging goals • Shared expectations and standards • Timely, accurate feedback • Learning intentions, success criteria, personal learning planning • Collaborative • Reflecting the ways different learners progress
<p style="text-align: center;">Experiences and outcomes set out expectations for learning and development in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive arts • Languages and literacy • Health and wellbeing • Mathematics and numeracy • Religious and moral education • Sciences • Social studies • Technologies <p>Curriculum levels describe progression and development.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">All children and young people are entitled to experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a coherent curriculum from 3 to 18 • a broad general education, including well planned experiences and outcomes across all the curriculum areas. This should include understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it and understanding of the environment • a senior phase which provides opportunities for study for qualifications and other planned opportunities for developing the four capacities • opportunities for developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work • opportunities to achieve to the highest levels they can through appropriate personal support and challenge • Opportunities to move into positive and sustained destinations beyond school
<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review of learning and planning of next steps • gaining access to learning activities which will meet their needs • planning for opportunities for personal achievement • preparing for changes and choices and support through changes and choices • pre-school centres and schools working with partners 	<p style="text-align: center;">Principles of curriculum design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge and enjoyment • Breadth • Progression • Depth • Personalisation and choice • Coherence • Relevance 	<p style="text-align: center;">Arrangements for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment • Qualifications • Self-evaluation and accountability • Professional development <p style="text-align: center;">support the purposes of learning</p>

ANNEX 4: THE SIX-POINT SCALE

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to provision which is sector leading. Learners' experiences and achievements are of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the school or centre. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

An evaluation of **very good** applies to provision characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish learners' experiences. Whilst an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to make provision without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the school or centre will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

An evaluation of **good** applies to provision characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of good represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significantly positive impact. However, the quality of learners' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the school or centre should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.

An evaluation of **satisfactory** applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of satisfactory indicates that learners have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on learners' experiences. However, while the weaknesses are not important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of learners' experiences. It implies that the school or centre should take action to address areas of weakness by building on its strengths.

An evaluation of **weak** applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of weak may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish learners' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the school or centre.

An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in provision requiring immediate remedial action. Learners' experiences are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for provision evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the school or centre.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

A Curriculum for Excellence

Scottish Executive, 2004.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/26800/0023690.pdf>

A Curriculum for Excellence: Progress and Proposals

The Scottish Executive, 2006.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/98764/0023924.pdf>

Building the Curriculum 1 – the Contribution of Curriculum Areas

The Scottish Executive, 2006.

http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/images/building_curriculum1_tcm4-383389.pdf

Building the Curriculum 2 – Active Learning in the Early Years

The Scottish Executive, 2007.

http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/images/Building%20the%20Curriculum%202_tcm4-408069.pdf

Building the Curriculum 3 – A Framework for Learning and Teaching (Scottish Government, 2008)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/226155/0061245.pdf>

Literacy across the Curriculum

The Scottish Government and Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2008.

http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/Images/numeracy_across_the_curriculumv3_tcm4-443573.pdf

Numeracy across the Curriculum

The Scottish Government and Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007.

http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/Images/literacy_across_the_curriculum_tcm4-470951.pdf

The Child at the Centre: self-evaluation in the early years

HM Inspectorate of Education, 2007.

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/catcseey.pdf>

The Journey to Excellence

HM Inspectorate of Education, 2006.

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosjte.pdf>

The Journey to Excellence part 3: How good is our school?

HM Inspectorate of Education, 2007.

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosjte3.pdf>

Improving outcomes for learners through self-evaluation

HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008.

How good is our school?, Self evaluation Series E: Effective Transitions

HM Inspectorate of Education 2006

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgioseet.pdf>

How good is our school?, Self-evaluation Series E: School-college partnership

HM Inspectorate of Education, 2005

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosscp.pdf>

Leadership for learning: The challenges of leading in a time of change?

HM Inspectorate of Education, 2007

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/lfcltc.pdf>

A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century

The Scottish Executive, 2001.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resources/Doc/158413/0042924.pdf>

www.hmie.gov.uk

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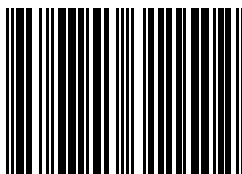
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