

## National Improvement Framework

### Report by Dr Grace Vickers – Head of Education

#### 1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Scottish Government's draft National Improvement Framework that is currently at the consultation stage. This Council report provides an overview of the framework and outlines Midlothian's response.

#### 2 Background

- 2.1 The draft National Improvement Framework, states that "Scotland's children and young people are our greatest asset and investing in their education is essential to achieving their aspirations and our ambitions as a country" (Scottish Government; 2015: 1). The purpose of the new framework is to make sure that education continually improves by ensuring that each and every child has the skills they require to enter a positive and sustained destination by closing the attainment gap. A copy of the draft framework is attached as appendix one.

Midlothian is fully committed to closing that attainment gap and improving positive destinations is a key priority for the whole council.

The draft Framework is based on best international practice on the use of data to improve education at each level. In particular the draft framework draws on the 2013 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research called *Synergies for Better Learning*: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/synergies-for-better-learning.htm> The key recommendations of this report are:

**To take a comprehensive approach:** All the components of assessment and evaluation – student assessment, teacher appraisal, school evaluation, school leader appraisal and education system evaluation - should form a coherent whole. This will generate synergies, avoid duplication and prevent inconsistency of objectives.

**Align evaluation and assessment with educational goals:** Evaluation and assessment should align with the principles embedded in educational goals.

**Focus on improving classroom practices:** To optimise the potential of evaluation and assessment to improve what is at the heart of education – student learning – policy makers should promote the regular use of evaluation and assessment results for improvements in the classroom.

**Carefully conceive the high-stakes uses of evaluation and assessment results.** The use of evaluation and assessment results should avoid distortions in the education process such as teaching-to-the-test and narrowing of the curriculum.

**Build consensus:** Ensure that all the stakeholders are involved early and understand the benefits.

**Place students at the centre:** Students should be fully engaged with their learning and empowered to assess their own progress. The development of critical thinking and social competencies should also be monitored.

- 2.2** To give the framework the appropriate status and to enhance transparency, accountability and consistency, the Scottish Government are proposing to look at amending the Education (Scotland) Bill to place the National Improvement Framework and the reporting arrangements on a statutory footing.

As outlined in the Midlothian Council Report on the Education (Scotland) Bill which was presented to Council in August, this Bill for the first time proposes to enshrine in primary legislation the need for education authorities to plan and report on steps to reduce inequalities of education outcome caused by socio-economic deprivation. Existing primary legislation requires that the improvement framework provided for under the 2000 Act be used for planning and reporting on matters including, for example, parental involvement, Gaelic provision, equal opportunities and health and nutrition in schools. However, there is currently no requirement to report on inequalities as a result of socio-economic disadvantage despite this being perhaps the single biggest challenge for our education system.

- 2.3** Midlothian recognising that being data rich is a key ingredient in the continuous improvement journey and diagnostic analysis is being undertaken at present on the robustness of CfE levels and we have taken a closer look at this data together with our standardised test data. However, we caution against the reliance of test scores and we are committed to using evidence to build our model of teaching and learning.

- 2.4** As a result of this, Midlothian is committed to Visible Learning. This approach is based on robust research undertaken by Professor John Hattie which draws on 800 Meta-analysis, the largest ever collection of evidence-based research into what actually works in schools to improve learning. In August 2015, over 520 Midlothian Teachers and Learning Assistants undertook the Visible Learning Foundation In-service training.

In addition, we are drawing on the 2007 and 2010 McKinsey Reports on the top performing school systems world-wide which state that they key levers for the creation of an excellent education system are three-fold:

- The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers
- The only way to improve outcomes is to improve pedagogy
- High performance requires every child to succeed.

In August 2015 we launched the draft *Good to Great* Improvement Strategy for Education in Midlothian with Head Teachers in order to begin to create a strategy which makes explicit our strategic direction to create a world-class education system here in Midlothian, committed to closing the attainment gap by placing high quality learning and teaching at the core of our work. The draft strategy is made up of three main ingredients:

- To adopt an evidence based practice approach to educational improvement based on the forensic use of data with clear improvements shared and understood by all
- To create a leadership culture of continuing professional development where systems thinking becomes a habit focussed on delivering improved outcomes for every child
- To embrace Jim Collin's *Good to Great* Strategy: keeping it simple through a commitment to continuous improvement delivering results that are always better than our previous best.

The theme of the Head Teacher Conference in Midlothian in October is *Closing the Gap* to ensure that we are all working together to deliver this key priority and this theme will be the continuous focus of our strategic direction as we move forward.

### **3 Report Implications: What the framework will mean**

- 3.1** The draft national improvement framework makes explicit stage one of the framework (2015-17) which aims to deliver a year on year improvement in attainment, specifically in reading, writing and numeracy; a year on year improvement in closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children; a year on year improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; and a year on year improvement in sustained school leaver destinations for all young people.
- 3.2** The role of standardised assessment for the framework is under review because there is not a common approach employed across the 32 local authorities in Scotland and the Scottish Government hope to commission a new Scottish Standardised Assessment that will be piloted in the seven challenge authorities from June – October 2016. For other local authorities the Scottish Government will collect teacher professional judgement for P1, P4, P7 and S3. In Midlothian we already use and report on Standardised Assessment through our Quarterly Reporting Framework and, now that Curriculum for Excellence is embedded, we will move to begin to report on Curriculum for Excellence levels from session 2016/17. This session we will continue to report on Standardised Assessment Data.
- 3.3** The draft framework will require all schools to self-evaluate and report annually on their work to raise attainment from 2016. In Midlothian schools already report on their work to raise attainment in their Standards and Quality Reports and through their work on creating a Self-improving System.

- 3.4** The draft framework also requires all education authorities to report annually on raising attainment, specifically in relation to the priorities of the National Improvement Framework. In Midlothian we currently report to Council on attainment measures and positive destinations through Council reports and the quarterly reporting framework.
- 3.5** The draft framework also aspires to realise a year on year increase in the proportion of schools evaluated as being “good” or “better” at “self-evaluation for self-improvement” and raising attainment and achievement”. In Midlothian this is already an indicator within our quarterly reporting framework and on 28<sup>th</sup> October all Head Teachers will undertake a seminar with the HMle on the new How Good is Our School 4? which was launched by Education Scotland in September <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/h/hgios4/introduction.asp>

The draft national improvement framework sets out clearly the roles and responsibilities of local authorities:

- To work in partnership with the Scottish Government to support the development and implementation of the National Improvement Framework
- To support and challenge schools to help all children to succeed and achieve the highest possible standards
- To support teachers to access high quality professional learning opportunities
- To make forensic use of school performance information to target support and intervention, fulfilling their statutory duties
- To provide strong leadership and direction to schools and teachers to continually improve children's attainment
- To ensure that the priorities are translated into local plans

### **3.6 Resource**

Midlothian is not one of the local authorities selected to be part of the challenge authorities or challenge schools due to the SIMD 1 or 2 primary school profile required for selection but we will benefit by being offered an element of an Attainment Advisor's time as part of the universal offer. Therefore the changes in practice, measuring, analysing and reporting will need to be met through existing resources.

### **3.7 Risk**

Drawing on the recommendations of the OECD 2013 report, Midlothian Council recognise the importance of using assessment data for diagnostic purposes and cautions against the use of this data to form a 'league table' approach to compare schools. We recommend that assessment data should be used to inform next steps for each individual child in order to deliver year on year sustained improvements thus avoiding distortions in the education process such as teaching-to-the-test and narrowing of the curriculum.

### 3.8 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

### 3.9 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Girfec 5: Our people will be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

### 3.10 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

To close the gap by improving 'attainment versus deprivation' and 'attainment for all' outcomes for children and young people.

### 3.11 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The draft National Improvement Framework aims to take diagnostic preventative action in order to deliver a year on year improvement towards closing the attainment versus deprivation gap by implementing key policies and programmes which are designed to target support to all children and young people with a particular focus on improving outcomes for children from disadvantaged communities.

### 3.12 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The draft National Improvement Framework sets out the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders on page 15. The stakeholders named are: teachers, Head Teachers, Parents and the Local Authority.

### 3.13 Ensuring Equalities

The draft National Improvement Framework aims to deliver a year on year improvement towards closing the attainment versus deprivation gap by implementing key policies designed to target support to all children and young people with a particular focus on improving outcomes for children from disadvantaged communities. As this Report is informing Members of the on-going consultation, an EQIA is not required.

### 3.14 IT Issues

There is currently no tracking and monitoring system for the Broad General Education in Midlothian and we will need to develop a similar tool to 'Insight' that is used in the Senior Phase. This is a national issue and we will draw on best practice that emerges from the Challenge authorities to help us to develop this new tool.

#### 4 Recommendations

- To acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of the local authority as set out in the draft national improvement framework and outlined on page 4 of this Report.
- To recognise and support the sector leading practice of Visible Learning in Midlothian.
- To report to Council on the 2015 Examination Results using the new Insight measures in December 2015.
- To deliver a seminar for Elected members on the draft *Good to Great* Strategy for Education in Midlothian before the end of March 2016.

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**Background Papers:**

**Draft National Improvement Framework (2015):**  
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/09/7802/0>

**Synergies for Better Learning (2013):**  
<http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/synergies-for-better-learning.htm>

**How Good is Our School 4?**  
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/h/hgios4/introduction.asp>

**How the World's best performing school come out on top (2007):**  
<http://mckinseysociety.com/how-the-worlds-best-performing-schools-come-out-on-top/>

**How the World's most improved school systems keep getting better (2010):**  
[http://www.mckinsey.com/client\\_service/social\\_sector/latest\\_thinking/worlds\\_most\\_improved\\_schools](http://www.mckinsey.com/client_service/social_sector/latest_thinking/worlds_most_improved_schools)