

How Good is Your School's Improvement Planning?



Guidance for school leaders on high quality strategic planning for school improvement.

Our ***Impact*** online school improvement planning module can be accessed at:

www.hashtag-learning.co.uk



School Improvement Planning

It's that time of year when you need to create your school improvement plan. Do you regard this as a time-consuming and bureaucratic chore, undertaken annually to satisfy local authority and statutory requirements? Or do you view improvement planning as a key component of school improvement and an opportunity to engage stakeholders meaningfully in the life and work of the school?

Whatever your view, here are some approaches to improvement planning which promote ownership, engagement, and innovation, and which reduce unnecessary bureaucracy.

School Self-evaluation

School improvement plans should reflect a commitment to continuous improvement, based on a rigorous and honest approach to self-evaluation. The national framework, *How Good is Our School 4?* provides a good basis for our self-evaluation through an emphasis on looking inward, outward and forward. Effective self-evaluation enables schools to make sound judgements about the priorities and challenges that will have greatest impact on improving outcomes for all learners. So, the stronger your school's self-evaluation processes, the better your improvement plan will be.



One of the most common flaws with school improvement plans is that they contain way too much detail. Breaking each priority down to detailed operational tasks typically results in 30-page plus documents which are cumbersome to work with and off-putting for staff, parents and learners.

The SIP should be a high level document which highlights strategic priorities and outcomes. Operational aspects and tasks associated with each priority should be contained in a separate document.

The school improvement plan should contain 2 separate sections.

- 1 *Background to the plan and the context of the school.*
- 2 *Priorities for school improvement, together with key outcomes and evidence.*

Background to the Plan and School Context

This section should begin with general information about the school, for example, it's geographical location, current pupil roll, staffing FTE, composition of the leadership team, SIMD profile, and any other important information about the school context. For example:

School Context

Duncastle Primary is located on the west of the city of Abercastle. Our current roll is 260 pupils and our staffing comprises 18 FTE and 6 learning assistants. We are part of the Abercastle school group cluster. Our leadership team comprises head teacher, depute, principal teacher and business manager.

This should be followed by a vision statement which reflects values and moral purpose and the agreed aims of the school. For example:

Our Vision and Values:

Our school is a community where children will feel happy, healthy, safe and valued and will develop into active and responsible citizens.

Our Aims:

- To foster a welcoming ethos of effective partnership working with school, home, partner agencies and the wider community.
- To create a safe, healthy and valued learning environment where children and staff can thrive and succeed.
- To develop a progressive and challenging curriculum, which develops skills and attitude for life-long learning.
- To ensure the best possible outcomes for all our learners.

Next, the plan should highlight the nature of consultation with stakeholders and collaborative approaches which have underpinned the development of the SIP. For example:

Consultation and Collaboration

- Pupils were consulted through the use of Impact and through a HGOURS survey.
- Parents were consulted through the Parent Council Staff and Impact surveys.
- Staff were consulted through Impact surveys and through collaborative CPD focus groups.
- Our Strategy and Development Group reviewed and evaluated the 2017-18 SIP and constructed the new SIP for 2018-19.

This Background section of the plan should also identify the tools that will be used to measure progress with implementation of the plan, for example:

Tools for Measuring Progress

- Teacher professional judgement
- Standardised assessment data
- Impact evaluations
- Inspection findings
- Changing trends and SIMD profiles
- Feedback from parents and children and young people
- Pupil learning plans and achievement
- Collaborative action research models
- Exclusions and attendance data
- Classroom observation

Finally, the background section of the plan should highlight the school, local and national factors which have influenced the development of the plan. For example:

Factors Influencing the Plan

School factors

Actions arising from our school's self-evaluation procedures
Actions arising from Council school review
Our cluster improvement plan
Increasing school roll due to new housing
Flexible early learning and childcare implementation
Increased entitlement to early years' provision

Local authority factors

Raising attainment, including Closing the Gap
Single Outcome agreement
Corporate Plan
Integrated Children's Services Plan
Education Services Management Plan
Council Early Years' Framework

National factors

National Improvement Framework
Scottish Attainment Challenge and Raising Attainment for All
How Good is Our School 4 and *How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare*
Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
Developing Scotland's Young Workforce
Building Ambition
Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

Improvement Priorities

Although the local education authority may encourage schools to address particular educational priorities, it should ultimately be for the school to decide which priorities will form the basis of the improvement plan. It is important that these priorities have been identified through a process of self-evaluation and consultation with stakeholders.

Plans should focus on 3-5 key priorities which are targeted on improving outcomes for learners. They should also take account of key educational initiatives such as the National Improvement Framework, for example:

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

Here is a menu of potential priorities for school improvement.

School Improvement

Improving our self-evaluation processes
Increasing stakeholder engagement
Increasing professional engagement and collegiate working
Improving career-long professional learning
Developing our staff team
Increasing pupil leadership of learning
Developing our shared vision, values and aims
Improving management of change
Improving resources and environment for learning
Improving partnership working

Learning, Teaching & Curriculum

Improving our curriculum framework and rationale
Developing our curriculum
Developing learning pathways
Improving pupils' learning and engagement
Improving the quality of teaching
Improving assessment systems and processes
Improving planning, tracking and monitoring

Raising Attainment

Improving attainment in literacy
Improving attainment in numeracy
Improving attainment over time
Improving the quality of learners' achievements

Equity and Closing the Gap

Promoting inclusion and equality
Ensuring equity and closing the attainment gap
Developing GIRFEC and children's rights
Improving family learning

Health & Wellbeing and Personal Support

Improving the wellbeing of our learners
Improving safeguarding, including child protection
Improving universal support for learners
Improving targeted support for learners
Removing barriers to learning
Improving transition

Employability and Skills

Developing skills for learning, life and work
Improving digital learning
Developing creativity
Increasing employability skills

Planning a Priority

When you have agreed a priority, for example, *Improving Digital Learning*, the next step is to identify **outcomes**.

Schools sometimes use alternative terminology for 'outcomes', for example 'targets,' or 'primary drivers' . . . but *outcomes* simply mean key aspects of implementation, or the planned results of development work associated with the priority. So, if the priority is to *Improve Digital Learning*, the expected outcomes might be:

- The infrastructure is in place to deliver high quality digital learning
- Innovative digital technologies are part of learning and teaching
- Staff have the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality digital learning

Next, we need to determine how we will know that each of these outcomes has been achieved successfully, in other words establish what we understand will be the impact of this work. Again, schools sometimes use different terms for this, for example, 'evidence of impact', 'success criteria', but the simplest term is 'How we will know'.

We need, therefore, to identify the kinds of things that will be in place in a year's time that will show evidence of successful implementation of digital learning.

The following illustration shows the 3 digital learning outcomes broken down into *How We Will Know* statements.

Outcome 1 The infrastructure is in place to deliver high quality digital learning

We will know through successful implementation of the following:

- The bandwidth to our establishment is adequate for delivering web-based learning
- The WI-FI provision across the school meets the digital learning requirements for all staff and learners
- Systems are in place to connect the personal technologies of teachers and learners to school networks
- Services are in place to manage and provide technical support for the school's digital technologies

Outcome 2: Innovative digital technologies are part of learning and teaching

We will know through evidence of embedded use of the following:

- Mobile technology, including netbooks and tablets
- Video capture and editing
- Working with digital images
- Audio-visual presentations
- Animation
- Robots and drones
- Coding and programming
- Electronic learning diaries
- Web-based services to support learning
- Collaborative technologies

Outcome 3: Staff have the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality digital learning

We will know through embedded use of the following:

- Professional learning/training ensures staff have the skills to use digital learning technologies effectively.
- Use of technology is an ongoing aspect of teachers' career-long professional learning and practitioner enquiry.
- Teachers understand the benefits of using technology to improve pupil learning.
- Staff keep up to date with new and emerging digital technologies and their application.
- Teachers' skills are informed by the expertise of learners, and other sources.
- We use a 'digital by default' approach (ie, the use of digital rather than paper-based resources).
- Staff use online collaborative tools to share knowledge and skills.

Finally, the Priority can be planned in more detail. . . including the person with responsibility for the Priority, links to the appropriate National Improvement Framework and the quality indicator from How Good is our School 4.

Here is how the completed Priority might appear.

Improving digital learning	
Overall Responsibility:	Curriculum Leader (Technology)
NIF Priority:	Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people
NIF Driver:	None
QI:	3.3 - Creativity and employability
Theme:	Digital innovation
Outcomes	
Outcomes	How we will know
1. Our school has in place the infrastructure to deliver high quality digital learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bandwidth to our establishment is adequate for delivering web-based learning. Wi-Fi provision across the school meets digital learning requirements for all staff and learners. Systems are in place to connect the personal technologies of teachers and learners to school networks. Services are in place to manage and provide technical support for the school's digital technologies.
2. Emerging and innovative digital technologies are part of day-to-day learning and teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile technology, including netbooks and tablets. Video capture and editing. Working with digital images. Audio-visual presentations. Animation. Robots and drones. Coding and programming. Collaborative technologies. Casting technology.
3. Our staff have the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality digital learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional learning/training ensures staff have the skills to use digital learning technologies effectively. Use of technology is an ongoing aspect of teachers' career-long professional learning and practitioner enquiry. Teachers understand the benefits of using technology to improve pupil learning. Staff keep up to date with new and emerging digital technologies and their application. Teachers' skills are informed by the expertise of learners, and other sources. We use a 'digital by default' approach (ie, the use of digital rather than paper-based resources). Staff use online collaborative tools to share knowledge and skills.

So, the plan for this Priority is concise and clearly states the kinds of things will expect to be in place after implementation. It provides a clear framework for evaluating work associated with digital learning, and gathering evidence of impact.

Task Planning

The school improvement plan should be a high level document, but it is important to plan these outcomes in more detail, including the staff responsible for each outcome, allocated resources, timescale, etc. Task planning should be kept separate from the SIP.

Here are some examples of how we might approach task planning associated with the implementation of Digital Learning in our school.

Improving digital learning

Task 1

Carry out a school technology audit

By whom: Curriculum Leader (Technology)

Time: 3 month(s) in total

By when: June 15, 2019

Actions:

- Create a short life working party
- Present project at staff a meeting
- Create database/spreadsheet
- Establish audit criteria
- Set deadline for responses
- Collate returns
- Present audit to Senior Leadership Team

Resources:

- £350
- 2 hours per week support from school admin

Progress: Started

Edit

Task 2

Survey staff and learners

By whom: Depute Head (Learning and Teaching)

Time: 2 day(s) in total

By when: May 10, 2019

Actions:

- Prepare staff survey using Impact online tool
- Prepare learner survey using Impact online tool
- Share survey url and password
- Assess results/identify priorities
- Hold staff meeting to share results

Resources:

- Impact online survey tool
- Half day DHT and PTC management time

Progress: None

Edit

Task 3

Staff development and training

By whom: Depute Head (Learning and Teaching)

Time: 9 month(s) in total

By when: April 10, 2020

Actions:

- Identify and agree 6 sessions for CLPL
- Build into CPD calendar
- Share information with staff
- Organise tutors for each session
- Book rooms in ICT suite
- Share background training materials with staff
- Create format for evaluation of sessions

Resources:

- £1,500 budget for training sessions and tutors
- Access to all rooms in ICT suite
- Digital technology, including laptops, robotics, drones

Progress: None

Edit

Notes