

BEST PRACTICE IN SELF-EVALUATION A SURVEY OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

A Summary of the Ofsted report - Ref. HMI 2533, July 2006

Introduction

Although it is not a recent initiative, self-evaluation is becoming more important in the work of schools, colleges and local authorities. Increasingly, inspection has required institutions to show how they use it to improve provision. Since the Children Act 2005, institutions have been expected to evaluate the extent to which their provision leads to improved outcomes for children and young people under the five areas of the Every Child Matters agenda: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.

The report presents the results of a survey conducted in the **autumn term 2005** and the **spring term 2006**. It aimed to identify the common features of best practice in self-evaluation, as well as investigating those aspects that are weaker, together with the reasons for this. It includes case studies illustrating effective practice, with the aim of bringing about improvement. Inspectors visited 12 schools, 7 further education (FE) colleges and 3 local authorities, selected from those where previous inspections had reported positively on self-evaluation and quality assurance.

The report complements *Improving performance through school self-evaluation and improvement planning*, published jointly by the DfES and Ofsted in June 2006 [DSS Summary 54/06, July 2006].

Key findings

At the time of the survey, institutions were at very different stages of development. All, however, were revising their self-evaluation systems to cope with change.

Best Practice

- Headteachers, principals and council leaders gave priority to and led self-evaluation personally. They had a clear overview of their institutions, based on an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses.
- Self-evaluation was integral to the culture of the organisations. People at all levels were committed to it and fully involved.
- Self-evaluation was a continuous process, governed by the needs of the institution rather than the requirements of external bodies.
- Self-evaluation was clearly built into management systems. External inspection supported but did not replace internal review. It provided, however, the main external source of validation.
- An increasingly sophisticated use of a widening range of performance indicators enhanced the quality of self-evaluation.
- Rigorous analysis of strengths and weaknesses, particularly of teaching and learning, led to the clear identification of priorities and strategies for improvement.

- Sharply focused monitoring, based on clear indicators, helped institutions to measure the extent to which their work improved outcomes for pupils and young people.
- The views of those who received services, particularly learners but also parents and carers, were actively sought and influenced decision making.

Weaker Practice

- In schools and colleges, indicators to identify the personal development and well-being of young people and the outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda were at a very early stage of development.
- Schools, colleges and local authorities were only beginning to solicit the views of external partners and peers to inform their self-evaluation.
- The lack of detailed information on pupils' progress in the foundation subjects in primary schools detracted from the rigour and quality of schools' self-evaluation.

Recommendations

To extend the best practice in self-evaluation, schools, colleges and local authorities should:

- take account of the views of a wide range of stakeholders to inform self-evaluation;
- use the findings from self-evaluation to inform the priorities in planning for development;
- focus self-evaluation specifically on the impact of provision on the outcomes for children and young people.

Primary schools should:

- extend their self-evaluation to reflect the whole curriculum.

Further Information

A new relationship with schools: improving performance through school self-evaluation (DfES - 1290-2005DOC-EN, ISBN 1-84478-429-0), DfES/Ofsted, 2005:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3862

Improving performance through school self-evaluation and improvement planning (HMI 2646), Ofsted, 2006:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=4213>

Ofsted's website contains details about self-evaluation for all types of institutions at:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/sef.cfm

The full report can be viewed/downloaded at:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=4222>