

Self-evaluation summary paper

Please return the completed paper within six working days before the inspection visit

Please use this document to highlight progress with the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection letter. You are asked to focus on the three key self-evaluation questions from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#) p.9 and/or How good is our early learning and childcare? P.3. Please consider how you triangulate your evidence to ensure your evaluative judgments are robust. Please keep the information as clear and concise as possible using bullet points to indicate high level evaluative messages. These can be teased out during discussion at the start of the inspection. You may wish to share the self-evaluation summary paper with staff so that they are aware of what has submitted.

Area for improvement 1

Streamline approaches to improvement so that self-evaluation activities clearly identify priorities which will make the biggest difference to outcomes for young people.

How are we doing? (What has improved since the last inspection?)

Our refreshed Senior Leadership Team remits have allowed us to create a series of coherent links between school improvement priorities. This places learning, teaching and assessment as our clear priority.

We now have in place a range of evaluative activities as part of our Quality Assurance (QA) calendars both at whole school and faculty level. These include;

- Annual attainment meeting with faculty Principal Teachers (PTs)
- Annual Faculty Health check self-evaluation
- Annual HMiE questionnaire to all stakeholders
- Termly evaluation of predicted pupil attainment
- Termly review of pupil attendance
- Termly review of pupil progress (protected characteristics)
- Bi-weekly Depute Headteacher/Principal Teacher Guidance key case tracking meetings for pupils at risk
- Termly Open Doors validated self-evaluation process (one faculty per term)
- Bi-annual Local Authority Quality Improvement team Quality Indicator 2.3 visit (November/April)

Data collected through a range of discussions, focus groups and questionnaires as well as information gleaned from a range of data analysis tools is now more routinely interrogated by all staff to identify the priorities which will have the biggest impact.

This past year, staff and stakeholder engagement around the construction of our school improvement plan progressed with increased collegiate consultation, discussion and consensus. Parents, pupils, partner agencies and local business were all involved in this process. This approach was replicated when refreshing our school vision and values.

A refreshed approach to our Professional Review and Development (PR&D) practice has put self-evaluation at the heart of developing professional learning priorities for staff both individually and as a whole school. Identified priorities are being addressed through a range of methods including professional learning and the adoption of practitioner enquiry. Staff are then using a range of self-evaluation techniques to measure the impact of improvement from their enquiries.

Staff engagement in delivery of training at Collegiate Activity Time (CAT) sessions, PR&D meetings and Practitioner Enquiry activity has begun to develop with a recognition that professional learning and reflection is central to all improvement priorities. We now have a professional reading group where colleagues have been reading and reviewing The Teaching Delusion series.

How do we know? (What is our evidence of improvement?)

Feedback from staff and stakeholders is now routinely sought. Responses to staff surveys relating to self-evaluation activity and improvement priorities have confirmed that there is an increase in stakeholder engagement in this process. In the 2019 HMiE survey, 75% of staff stated they had opportunities to be involved in agreeing priorities for the school. In our more recent survey following our School Improvement Plan (SIP) development work, the percentage rose to 81% and critically, staff can now describe how they have been involved and consulted.

Recent discussion (October '23) of improvement priorities relating to the school's values and core skills showed positive responses relating to engagement and understanding across our body of teaching staff. 90% of staff agreed that they had a "clear understanding of the consultation process which selected the core values" and further to this 97% of respondents stated they agreed they had "the opportunity to discuss and were able to contribute their opinion to the selection of core skills" for Harlaw Academy's skills leaver profile.

What are we going to do now? (How are we building on our work to ensure positive impact on learners?)

Our strategic planning for 2024-25 and beyond ensures Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LT&A) remains a clear priority in relation to whole school CAT sessions, in-service inputs and wider Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) opportunities led by PTs LT&A.

We will continue to build further on access to high quality learning opportunities through our Excelerate School Status. We have recruited a further cohort of Oracy leads to build on the evidenced success of our previous training and sharing of good practice with colleagues. Further training will take place in February and May '23 with additional cohorts of Project Based Learning teachers. This links to our provision for Learner Pathways moving forward into session 24-25 and 25-26. The support provided through these professional learning opportunities are intended to build leadership and capacity to influence change across the full range of teaching staff in order to see leadership as a responsibility for all.

High level data around identified CLPL requirements gleaned from this year's PR&D process will be shared with staff. Collectively, we will work to identify future training needs that will have the biggest impact for learners.

Practitioner Enquiry – DHT Professional Learning to lead ongoing modelling and support for all teaching staff relating to Practitioner Enquiry. Links have been established with Excelerate partner schools (in neighbouring local authority) to support and model this to Harlaw Academy staff.

There has been progress in increasing engagement and involvement of staff at all levels in improvement planning. Our next step is to increase teacher leadership and delivery of whole school professional learning sessions building on examples this year which have been well received by colleagues.

Area for improvement 2

Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment so that young people's experiences engage them and meet their needs. Develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.

How are we doing? (What has improved since the last inspection?)

In early 2021, we embarked on a review of our Learning, Teaching and Assessment following the HMiE inspection. One member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT) took responsibility for QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment with a focus on improving consistency of practice across the school.

In collaboration with our PT's LT&A, a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) was created consisting of teachers from across the school. The SLWG identified the specific areas we required to develop and created our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy alongside an LT&A QA calendar. We now have a broad range of self-evaluation procedures in place involving internal faculty and peer to peer observation cycles.

Utilising the principles of metacognition, our working group designed our learning framework in order to develop a consistent approach to the delivery of high quality learning, teaching and assessment.

As part of our self-evaluation for continuous improvement we initiated a process of validated self-evaluation we call 'Open Doors'. This involves termly faculty observations and includes inviting subject specialists from other schools to help validate our judgements. These observations, focus groups and surveys were based around our Harlaw Learning Framework.

PTs faculty use their 'Open Doors self-evaluation, post process report (created by DHT L&T) and associated feedback - from focus groups and surveys - to create an impact and action plan, setting targets to improve. The collation of feedback from all Open Doors reports are used as part of our whole school self-evaluation to target priorities for INSET and whole staff training sessions.

Our in-school approaches are also evaluated and validated by a series of local authority led QI 2.3 themed 2-day visits.

From 2020/2021, year on year we have increased our curriculum offer by increasing the range of subjects across all Faculty areas across SCQF* levels 3-7 including National Qualifications, and NPAs**. Our timetable is also aligned with NESCol and LA schools to ensure pupils also have access to a range of qualifications we do not currently offer including Foundation Apprenticeships.

**SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework – how we measure the level of qualifications.*

*** NPA – National Progression award – a type of qualification.*

How do we know? (What is our evidence of improvement?)

- In November 2019, Education Scotland evaluated QI 2.3 as satisfactory.
- In November 2022, our Local Authority QI2.3 Visit confirmed our self-evaluation of satisfactory.
- In November 2023, our Local Authority visit again confirmed our self-evaluation of satisfactory but that there was a “step change” towards an evaluation of good. We are on track to achieve this evaluation of good in our next observation cycle.

During the Local Authority (LA) visit during November 2023, 46% of observed lessons were regarded as examples of ‘good’ or ‘very good’ practice – an improvement compared to their last visit in November 2022 where this figure was 22% and contained no examples of ‘very good’. During the LA visit November 2023 observation cycle we had five lessons rated at ‘very good’ and three that were rated as ‘good’ but approaching ‘very good’.

Through our review of our LT&A practices we have created a staff observation tracker to allow us to track progress across the school and highlight areas of good practice. In between observation cycles, we have seen improvement in lesson observation evaluations in half of our observations.

Questionnaires from young people about their learning suggest an improving picture of learning and teaching with almost 90% of pupils in the Science Faculty and 91% in the Social Subjects Faculty in recent surveys strongly agreed or agreed that they are “happy with the quality of learning and teaching”.

Almost 85% of pupils in the Science Faculty and 86% in the Social Subjects Faculty strongly agreed or agreed that they “enjoy their learning”.

What are we going to do now? (How are we building on our work to ensure positive impact on learners?)

Through the Open Doors reports, CAT session surveys and pupil surveys we have established our LT&A priorities for this academic year as Success Criteria and Learning Intentions being fully embedded into lessons, questioning and feedback. Improving these areas will also help drive pace and challenge in lessons. Suggested next steps from the November 2023 LA visit indicated:

*“While work in **most** of classes appeared to be pitched at the appropriate level there was a sense that in the **majority** of the classes there were groups of learners who could have been moved on to the next task or an extension activity. This is an area that should be considered to raise the expectations of pace and challenge more consistently”*

“Teachers must plan effective questions and embed questioning routines which support retrieval practice. A mixture of ‘what’ (content based) and ‘How’ (deeper understanding) questions will ensure learners are challenged to think hard when retrieving”

“Faculties should be encouraged to explore the different ways to check for understanding throughout the course of each unit of learning when reviewing schemes of work” We will work with teachers to ensure that feedback is of higher quality and that young people clearly understand their next steps in learning.”

Going forward, these priorities will be linked to themes for each term alongside inputs on theory, sharing and celebrating good practice and an evaluation of progress.

We will continue to develop our 'Open Doors' process to allow Faculty PT's to learn from one another and to highlight and then share areas of good practice across the school. We will continue to use our learning and teaching framework to help staff analyse what is going well and what needs to improve through our Quality Assurance procedures. We will ensure these standards apply in all classroom practice across all departments.

Consistent attendance at high quality 'Lunch & Learn' sessions relating to LT&A priorities led by our PTs LT&A has provided evidence of improved teaching and pedagogy including dialogic teaching, AifL* strategies, oracy skills and higher order questioning. These sessions are opt in, our next step in the process involves spreading this impact beyond the group of volunteers.

**AifL – Assessment is for Learning – National approach for improving use of assessment practice*

Area for improvement 3

Strengthen approaches to monitoring young people's progress across all subject areas so that staff at all levels have a clear overview of learners' progress. Continue to raise the attainment of young people at all stages.

How are we doing? (What has improved since the last inspection?)

Glossary of acronyms used in this section

- **VC** - Virtual comparator – a statistical value the school uses to measure how well it is doing compared to national standards derived measure of how it should be doing.
- **L4/5/6/7** – Level 4, Level 5, Level 6 or Level 7.
- **1@, 3@ or 5@** - this mean one, three or five qualifications at a given level. E.g. 5@5 would signify five qualifications at level 5.

Literacy and Numeracy

- Performance in L4 Literacy has improved from 88.64% in 2019, significantly behind our VC to 95.29% in 2023. Performance in L4 numeracy has also improved from 91.48% in 2019 to 94.76%. In both measures we now sit ahead of our VC.
- Performance in L5 Literacy has significantly improved from 64.77% in 2019 to 86.91% in 2023 and we now sit ahead of our VC. Performance in L5 numeracy has improved from 60.23% in 2019 to 65.97% in 2023. Despite this improvement, we remain just behind our VC.
- Performance in L6 numeracy has significantly improved from 39.20% in 2019, significantly behind our VC, to 57.59% in 2023. Performance in L6 numeracy has also improved from 25% in 2019 to 29.84%. We now sit ahead of our VC in both measures.

Breadth and Depth

S4 - Relative to 2019

- We have increased the percentage of S4 pupils gaining 5@3 and 5@4 . We are ahead of our VC in these measures.
- We have increased the percentage of pupils attaining 1@5, 3@5 and 5@5, but frustratingly, as the VC has also increased, we remain behind our VC in all three of these measures.

S5 Relative to 2019

- We have increased the percentage of pupils attaining 1, 3 & 5 @5. We are above our VC for 1@5, inline for 3@5 and below for 5@5.
- We have increased the percentage of pupils attaining 1, 3 & 5 @ 6. We are below our VC in all three measures although are closing the gap to VC in all three measures.

S6 Relative to 2019

- We have increased the percentage of pupils attaining 5@5. Whilst still behind our VC, we have nearly halved the gap to our VC.
- We have increased the percentage of pupils attaining 1, 3 & 5 @6. Whilst still behind our VC, we have reduced the gap to VC significantly in all three measures.
- We have increased the percentage of pupils attaining 1@7. We are still behind the VC and have actually seen a small increase by 1% point.

Improving Attainment for All

S4 Relative to 2019

- We have increased the number of tariff points achieved by our lowest performing 20%. We remain ahead of our VC in this area although the gap has reduced owing to a substantial increase in the VC.
- The number of tariff points achieved by our middle performing 60% is largely the same. We have slipped behind our VC in this area following an increase in the VC of 10%.
- The number of tariff points achieved by our upper performing 20% is the same. We remain behind the VC in this measure, and the gap has also remained static.

S5 Relative to 2019

- The number of tariff points achieved by all pupils irrespective of group has increased. However, other than in the lowest performing 20% where we have overtaken the VC, the gap to the VC has remained largely static.

S6 Relative to 2019

- We have increased the number of tariff points achieved by our lowest performing 20%. We are now ahead of our VC in this area.
- The number of tariff points achieved by our middle performing 60% has increased. We have reduced the gap to our VC by 143 tariff points.
- The number of tariff points achieved by our highest performing 20% has decreased. We are below our VC in this area and the gap has increased by 86 tariff points.

Whilst we have seen some improvement in aspects of our S4-S6 attainment. There is still much to do to ensure we are ahead of our VC in all areas.

Whilst we are now ensuring more pupils achieve more qualifications (Quantity) in all year groups relative to 2019, we are still not where we want to be with regards to the quality of pass, particularly at SCQF 5 and 6.

This is particularly true in S5 and S6 where we recognise it will take a little longer for our targeted improvements in LT&A and tracking practices to take effect.

How do we know? (What is our evidence of improvement?)

In the junior years (S1-3), Faculty PTs have worked collaboratively with DHT Raising Attainment and Achievement to create live tracking sheets. All staff now have easy access to core identifying data, protected characteristics, levels achieved and initial baseline assessment data. Sheets are populated with termly prognostications based on summative and formative assessment, professional judgement and baseline assessment data.

Across Senior years (S4-6), we have improved our approach to whole school tracking and monitoring. We have:

- Reviewed our presentation policy with a specific focus on building aspiration, accountability and quality assurance into our change of level procedures
- Led whole staff CAT sessions where we have upskilled the staff team in the use of baseline assessment data to inform more aspirational prognostications

- Added two extra tracking periods to our calendar to support monitoring of pupil progress and interventions
- Collated whole school tracking sheets where progress across subjects can be measured on a pupil-by-pupil basis. This has allowed faculty PTs staff to look for patterns of underachievement and intervene.
- Created an S4 predicted attainment tracker so we have a clear overview of predicted attainment across all subject areas

In focus groups, promoted and non-promoted staff vocalise how the introduction of whole school tracking data in the BGE and Senior Phase has given them access to a range of data which supports the planning of teaching and learning, interventions and formulation of prognostications and target grades. During our recent LA QI 2.3 visit, staff focus groups described a welcome and collegiate approach to developing our tracking systems as a whole school to ensure understanding, and buy in from colleagues. This approach is allowing us to increase accountability at all levels while also improving attainment for pupils.

Our tracking systems have allowed us to target improvement in S3 and S4. Work has been done to identify our learners who are most at risk of not achieving. These learners have benefitted from focused interventions by class teachers in partnership with PTGs and SfL to ensure learners leave with a minimum of 5 qualifications at Level 3 or better. This work has had impact as evidenced by insight figures particularly in S4.

What are we going to do now? (How are we building on our work to ensure positive impact on learners?)

Although our attainment data points towards some improving trends, we are not complacent and are aware there is still a long way to go to ensure every pupil leaves Harlaw Academy having achieved their full potential.

We are also aware that during the pandemic when the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) was in use, our attainment picture improved quite substantially but in some measures, has fallen back post ACM. This has highlighted the importance of teachers really knowing their learners. In addition to ensuring our systems of tracking and monitoring are used consistently by all staff, this needs to be further supported by robust learning conversations, feedback and appropriate interventions. This remains a focus of whole staff development and is a key area in our improvement plan. This must involve leadership at all levels as this will build further capacity among our staff team.

We continue to expand our curriculum offer and engagement with 'ABZ campus'*. This will allow learners to follow a suitable pathway to achieve their full potential. We are also exploring a wider range of Level 5 and 6 qualifications aside from the traditional path of N5/Higher.

We need to make sure we continue to develop our highly effective Learning, Teaching and Assessment practice. This combined approach will continue to increase pupil engagement and motivation.

**ABZ Campus – all eleven high schools in Aberdeen have a common timetable in senior school that allows pupils to choose subjects in other schools and attend that school in order to be taught by the teacher of that school.*