The Scottish Office
Education and Industry Department

How good is our school?

TAKING A CLOSER
LOOK AT GUIDANCE

Self-evaluation using
performance indicators

In-service activities for guidance teachers, managers in schools
and education authority officers and advisers

Contents

Foreword

In 1996, we published *How good is our school?: Self-evaluation using performance indicators*. Education officers, advisers and teachers have welcomed its approach and have been working together to consider how they might use performance indicators within their own areas of expertise. *How good is our school? Taking a Closer Look at Specialist Services*, for example, considered the particular needs of visiting specialist teachers working within primary schools and in support for learning services.

The recent publication of *Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: Guidance* has encouraged education officers, teachers and managers to evaluate the quality of guidance provision in schools. *Taking a Closer Look at Guidance* builds on and complements the advice given in *How good is our school?* and was developed in partnership with HM Inspectors of Schools. The materials:

- are based on staff development activities currently going on in education authorities;

- are designed to encourage the use of performance indicators to improve pupils' achievement; and

- are for use alongside *How good is our school?* and specialist advice on guidance.

Guidance teachers in schools monitor assessment information and help pupils to review their own progress and to set personal targets in areas such as homework, study skills, attendance and behaviour. They are therefore well placed to develop and take forward strategies to raise standards and improve attainment.

These materials are designed to help you:

- to evaluate and improve the quality of support you offer to pupils, parents and colleagues;

- to assess the contribution you make to pupils' learning and to raising pupils' attainment; and

- to identify and take forward improvements to the quality of guidance provision in your school.

Collaboration between HM Inspectors, education authorities and schools is at the heart of *The Quality Initiative in Scottish Schools* and has resulted in the development of a coherent and shared national approach. This places schools at the centre of the drive to improve pupils' performance and to achieve realistic and demanding targets.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Taking a closer look at guidance is designed for use by education authority officers and advisers, school managers and guidance teachers. In addition to the guidance team, others may be involved at various stages in the process, for example:

- pupils;
- parents;
- the senior management team, particularly the member with overall responsibility for guidance;
- the school's careers adviser;
- the school librarian;
- other school staff involved in guidance (e.g. first level guidance teachers);
- subject teachers;
- learning support staff; and
- staff from support agencies (e.g. psychological services, social work department).

The process of self-evaluation is part of the wider process of development planning designed:

- to raise attainment; and
- to improve the quality of experience of young people in schools.

The 5-14 *Guidelines* and recent publications such as *Achievement for All* and *Achieving Success in S1/S2* emphasise the importance of identifying the strengths and needs of individual pupils in order:

- to consider appropriate expectations;
- to agree Next Steps; and
- to set targets for improvement.

The *Higher Still Programme* in particular highlights the role of guidance teachers in monitoring attainment. Concerns about performance at earlier stages suggest that this role is important throughout pupils' school careers. Guidance teachers have a key role to play in evaluating the degree of challenge and level of support which each pupil needs. They are able to take an overall view of pupils' achievements across a number of curricular areas and to bring together information from a number of different sources. *Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: Guidance* gives advice about how you might do this.

When you are evaluating guidance provision, you will be doing so within the structure for self-evaluation established within the school as a whole. The headteacher and management team have responsibility for overseeing the process and for checking that over time all key areas of school activity are evaluated. Individual schools will address particular issues which relate to their own priorities: your evaluation of guidance will be undertaken within this context. Attainment and the quality of pupil experience are at the heart of school development planning. The results of your evaluation will therefore make a valuable contribution to the development of a shared strategy to raise standards.

Taking a closer look at guidance is designed to be used alongside *How good is our school?*, *Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: Guidance* and other specialist advice (see *Useful Sources*). The materials:

- suggest practical activities for use during team meetings or in-service sessions; and
- can be used as they stand or edited and adapted to suit the needs of your own school, the way your team is organised or the way you prefer to work.

They use the structure of the three questions from *How good is our school?*:

- **How are we doing?**
- **How do we know?**
- **What are we going to do now?**

To answer these questions, you are encouraged to take **a broad view** across a number of areas and then a closer look at some of these, using performance indicators to help you.

Before starting the activities, you should be fully acquainted with the approach of *How good is our school?* You may wish to photocopy pages 19 and 20, *Taking a closer look at support for pupils: Guidance*, *A step-by-step guide for guidance teachers and senior managers*, to use in conjunction with selected pages from this publication. You could do the same with individual performance indicators from Part 3 of *How good is our school?*

When you first start using performance indicators, you may find it easier to concentrate on one indicator or even one theme; however, as you become more experienced, you will find it helps if you use several indicators in combination. This enables you to find more information and to use time more efficiently. Selecting groups of performance indicators helps you to plan a coherent, systematic and manageable approach to evaluation. Groups may come from more than one key area and emphasise specific issues. The senior management team member with overall responsibility for guidance will wish to ensure that the evaluation carried out by the guidance team is integrated with the approach taken by the whole school within the development planning process.

You can use pages 34 and 35 of *How good is our school?* to keep a track of evaluation over time and to make sure that you are covering the main areas of guidance activity in sufficient detail.

Activity 1

Purpose: To gain a quick impression of the effectiveness with which the various elements of guidance are being addressed.

Time: 30-60 minutes

Task: Activity 1 comprises three parts: Activities 1a, 1b and 1c. While you can complete all three, you might wish to choose one or two of them according to the amount of time available.

Most of the performance indicators published in *How good is our school?* are relevant to guidance, and may be used when evaluating specific issues. However, there are four performance indicators (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4) which are fundamental to guidance, and which can be the starting point for taking **a broad view**. If the school decides to work on the area of PSE, then all of the performance indicators relating to learning and teaching will be relevant.

- Consider the themes and illustrations of each of these performance indicators in turn (*How good is our school?*, pp 47-50)

- Assign an overall level of performance to each indicator

  Level 4: very good - major strengths

  Level 3: good - strengths outweigh weaknesses

  Level 2: fair - some important weaknesses

  Level 1: unsatisfactory - major weaknesses

Do not try to apply a level of performance to each theme of these performance indicators. This would be very complicated and time-consuming. It may be helpful, however, to note any areas or aspects of guidance for development as your discussion progresses.

No	Performance indicator	Themes	4	3	2	1
4.1	Pastoral care	• provision for the emotional, physical and social needs of individual pupils				
		• provision of support for pupils				
4.2	Personal and social	• development in pupils of				

| development | positive attitudes and personal and social skills |
| | |

| | • contribution of extra-curricular activities, syllabus inserts and special courses |

4.3 Quality of curricular and vocational guidance	• the quality of guidance in preparation for choice in education, training or employment
	• the accuracy and relevance of the information and advice
	• the extent to which guidance is founded on appropriate consultation

| 4.4 Guidance role in monitoring progress and attainment | • effectiveness of the monitoring process quality of the profiles of pupils' progress and development |
| | • effectiveness of uses of acquired information |

Aspects of guidance which may be possible areas for development

Activity 1 (continued)

From activity 1a you are likely to get an indication of aspects of guidance which would benefit from more detailed consideration. You can proceed directly from this point to activity 2 if you feel you are ready.

However, before you decide which aspects to examine further, you may also wish to consider:

- any expression of the guidance entitlement of students in the school's guidance policies or handbook;

- advice from other publications, such as *Effective Learning and Teaching: Guidance, More than Feelings of Concern* and your local authority guidance policy.

The concept of a guidance entitlement, which sets out the elements of a guidance programme to which all students have access, has been documented in the *Higher Still Guidance Arrangements*, although the concept is equally applicable to other stages such as S1/2 and S3/4.

You can assign an overall level of performance to each aspect of the guidance entitlement or to elements of good guidance practice identified by other documents in the same way as in the previous activity. The following example relates to the guidance entitlement from the *Higher Still Guidance Arrangements*.

Remember that activities 1a and 1b (overleaf) are two complementary ways of taking a broad view of guidance in order to focus on more specific areas for evaluation and development. You may wish to use only one of these approaches.

Guidance entitlement	Features	4	3	2	1
Preparation for entry to the post-16 curriculum	• opportunities for self-assessment of interests, aptitudes and abilities				
	• access to information about programmes of study				
	• access to support needed to choose courses and units and to plan a programme of study which meets individual needs				
Familiarisation/induction into programmes of study	• familiarisation with other students and relevant staff				
	• familiarisation with aims and structure of the curriculum, courses/units chosen and the				

	establishment
	• understanding the nature of personal responsibility and action planning
Systematic ongoing support	• regular feedback to students about performance, and opportunities for review and planning
	• participation in a programme of careers guidance and careers education to consider longer term planning
Planning for progression beyond *Higher Still* programmes of study	• opportunities for reviewing overall progress across the curriculum
	• information, guidance and support in exploring future goals, pathways and action
	• documentation describing qualification, achievements and attainments

Aspects of guidance which may be possible areas for development

It might be appropriate to proceed from this point to Activity 2.

However, if your school has its own statement of guidance entitlement, you might wish to try Activity 1c. This provides a blank grid on which you can enter your school's own statement.

Guidance entitlement	Features	4	3	2	1

Aspects of guidance which may be possible areas for development

Activity 2

Purpose: To choose one area of guidance at which to take a closer look, using the information gained by taking a broad view.

Time: 20-40 minutes

Task: You have taken a broad view of guidance in your school and assigned overall levels of performance to various aspects of guidance. Discuss which area of guidance you should now look at more closely. There are a number of possible reasons for choosing this. It might be an area:

- in which performance seems to be at level 1 or 2;
- which relates to other current developments in the school;
- which has not been looked at closely for some time;
- in which evaluation can be accomplished in the time available;
- in which strategies for improvement can be easily identified;
- in which performance is at level 3 or 4, but there are relatively straightforward ways in which a significant difference could be made for pupils;
- which is a local authority priority area; or
- which is an important national priority area.

If there is more than one aspect of guidance which might merit a closer look, then you will need to weigh up the relative importance of the above factors before coming to a decision.

Here is an example of the kind of discussion your team might have when making a decision. The school in Example 2 (below) has identified four possible areas from their broad look at guidance, and weighed up the considerations indicated before reaching a decision. You will notice that two of them arise from taking a broad view of guidance using performance indicators 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, as in Activity 1a, while the other two arise from consideration of a guidance entitlement.

Area of guidance	Considerations
1 Pastoral care	Despite the fact that our guidance handbook states that we aim to see each student individually at least twice a year, we do not manage to see all our students for a structured interview even once during a session. This means that we do not know them as well as we would like and it makes helping them with subject and career choice difficult. We seem to spend too much time on administrative procedures and too little in positive and supportive contact with students.
2 Guidance role in monitoring progress and attainment	We do not use the full potential of reports and work on records of achievement to assist our students to assess their own learning. Even when we receive feedback from subject staff (e.g. through reports) we do not receive it frequently or early enough to assist students to plan for improvement. Improvement here is a matter of central concern and urgency, bearing in mind the potential benefits to students, *Higher Still* developments and target-setting which will make it even more important.
3 Planning for progression beyond *Higher Still* programmes of study	While we think we help potential university students to plan beyond S6, we have recently realised that we do not give enough support to those likely to follow other pathways. We have an increasing number of students staying at school post-16 and need to find ways of assisting the whole ability range. Developments in this area require good monitoring of progress, and so

Area 2 above might be a higher priority in the immediate future.

| 4 Familiarisation/induction into programmes of study at S5/S6 | Subject staff work well in helping students to understand the structure of S5/S6 courses and how they will be assessed. Through the S5 induction conference, guidance staff assist students to understand the extent of their responsibilities, both generally and for their own learning, and help them to become familiar with the different approaches to learning. Students do not seem to be sufficiently aware of how core skills will be developed and assessed, and they feel that they do not have sufficient opportunity to modify the composition of their programmes of study. |

Area of guidance chosen for a closer look

Guidance role in supporting and monitoring attainment

Activity 2 (continued)

Following the above example, analyse the broad view you have taken in your own school to choose one area of guidance at which to take a closer look.

Area of guidance   **Considerations**

Area of guidance chosen for a closer look

Activity 3

Purpose: To decide which group of performance indicators which will help you evaluate the area of guidance chosen and to select the relevant themes.

Time: 40-80 minutes

Task: It is important to select only those performance indicators and themes which are most relevant, otherwise the task will become too unwieldy and time-consuming.

Example 3 (below) shows the performance indicators and themes judged to be relevant to the area chosen for evaluation: guidance role in monitoring progress and attainment. In compiling this table, reference was made to the summary of performance indicators and themes on pages 33-34 of *How good is our school?* and to the illustrations of the performance indicators on pages 36-68.

Area of guidance chosen for further consideration:	Guidance role in supporting and monitoring attainment
No. Performance indicator	**Relevant themes**
3.1 Quality of the teaching process	• range and appropriateness of teaching processes, including the use of homework
	• clarity and purposefulness of teachers' expositions and explanations
	• quality of teacher-pupil dialogue
3.2 Quality of pupils' learning	• personal responsibility in learning; independent thinking; and active involvement in learning
3.3 Meeting pupils' needs	• relevance of the purposes and contexts of teaching to pupils' experiences and interests
3.4 Assessment as part of teaching	• use of assessment information
3.5 Communication with parents	• quality of procedures for communicating with parents
	• quality of information given to parents about each pupil's progress
4.4 Guidance role in monitoring progress and attainment	• effectiveness of the monitoring process
	• quality of the profiles of pupils' progress and development
	• effectiveness of uses of acquired information
6.5 Effectiveness and deployment of staff	• provision of liaison to support pupils

Following the approach in the above example select the relevant themes from different performance indicators which will assist in evaluation of the area of guidance you have chosen.

Area of guidance chosen for further consideration:

No.	Performance indicator	Relevant themes

Activity 4

Purpose: To decide what to look for in evaluating present performance, now you have chosen the relevant performance indicators and associated themes.

In other words, if performance in the chosen area of guidance is "very good", what will it look like? What features might you look for?

Time: 40-80 minutes

Task: In the example below a school has chosen to evaluate the ways in which the guidance team support and monitor attainment. Each of the performance indicators and themes already identified as relevant through the process described in Activity 3 is considered in turn.

At this stage, it may be important to prioritise the themes, or indeed the performance indicators, which are going to be considered in more detail, bearing in mind that the task must be a manageable one within the time and resources available. The school in the example has omitted some themes related to a number of performance indicators which, while being relevant, are not as important as, or which are related to, other themes.

For each performance indicator or theme thus selected, identify a list of features of good practice. This can be done by consulting:

- the illustrations of the performance indicators in *How good is our school?* (pp 36-68);
- school and local authority documentation (e.g. the school guidance policies/handbook);
- *Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: Guidance;* and/or
- other relevant sources.

Chosen area of guidance: supporting and monitoring attainment

No.	Performance indicator or themes	Features of good practice which we would look for (what would "very good" look like?)
3.1	Quality of the teaching process	• pupil understanding of the purposes of support and monitoring activities • skilful listening, questioning, challenging and confidence-building in pupil interviews • involvement of all pupils
3.2	Quality of pupils' learning	• pupils reflecting on their performance and taking responsibility for implementing agreed action
3.3	Meeting pupils' needs	• individual pupil interviews for target setting which is relevant and meaningful to needs, aptitudes, experiences, >interests and future development
3.4	Assessment as part of teaching	• information about overall progress and attainment regularly transmitted by the guidance teachers to pupils

3.5	Communication with parents	• written reports to parents with a clear evaluation of how each pupil is progressing across all aspects of the curriculum and indication of the next stages in each pupil's learning structured and effective framework to enable parents to discuss pupils' progress with guidance staff
4.4	Guidance role in monitoring progress and attainment	• guidance staff scrutiny of subject reports, constructive developmental comments and discussion of the reports with pupils
		• structured programme of pupil interviews with guidance staff to discuss and assess progress and to set realistic targets for learning and to follow up anomalies between pupils' anticipated and actual progress
		• use of reports in PSE programme
		• liaison between guidance staff and subject teachers
		• structured referral system which is understood by all staff
		• structured and regular meetings between guidance staff and learning support staff
		• accurate system for recording each pupil's aptitudes, progress and attainment
		• system for frequent checking of pupil progress across subjects and for reviewing targets
6.5	Effectiveness and deployment of staff	• structure for time allocation for guidance staff to meet regularly with pupils

Activity 4 (continued)

Now consider the area of guidance you have chosen to evaluate. For each of the themes identified as relevant identify the elements of good practice. Refer to the above example as necessary.

Chosen area of guidance:

No.	Performance indicator or themes	Features of good practice which we would look for (what would "very good" look like?)

Activity 5

Purpose: To identify the methods which will be used for collecting evidence

Time: 60-80 minutes

Task: Once a description of "very good" (level 4) practice has been agreed, the next step is to identify which methods you will use to find out how good the practice in your own school is. There are a number of ways in which you might find evidence, for example:

- talking with individuals or groups;
- questionnaires;
- checklists;
- observation;
- looking at documentation;
- examining pupils' work;
- audio or video recordings; and
- shadowing pupils.

You will often be able to use one method (e.g. a questionnaire) to cover a number of different areas of practice, as the example shows. As far as possible you should try to save time by using existing evidence and procedures such as guidance meetings, pupil profiles, guidance teachers' own records, pupil questionnaires and worksheets used in PSE.

The example below shows what evidence the school in Example 4 might decide to look for.

Chosen area of guidance: supporting and monitoring attainment

No.	PIs or themes	Features of good practice	How would we find out?
3.1	Quality of the teaching process	• pupils' understanding of the purposes of support and monitoring activities	• talk to pupils; pupil questionnaire
		• skilful listening, questioning, challenging and confidence-building in pupil interviews	• observe pupil interviews
		• involvement of all pupils	• look at policy and pupil records
3.2	Quality of pupils' learning	• pupils reflecting on their performance and taking responsibility for implementing agreed action	• observe interviews; look at pupil diaries, profiles and reports; talk to pupils • review interviews
3.3	Meeting pupils' needs	• individual pupil interviews for target setting relevant and meaningful to needs, aptitudes, experiences, interests and future development	• compare targets with subject reports, pupil self-assessment and stated

			aspirations, pupil questionnaire

3.4	Assessment as part of teaching	• information about overall progress and attainment regularly transmitted by guidance teachers to pupils	• look at policy and documented practice; talk to guidance staff
3.5	Communication with parents	• written reports to parents giving clear evaluations of each pupil's progress across all aspects of the curriculum and indicating next stages in each pupil's learning	• look at reports; parent questionnaire
		• a structured and effective framework to enable parents to discuss pupils' progress with guidance staff	• look at school calendar; talk to parents
4.4	Guidance role in monitoring progress and attainment	• guidance staff scrutinise subject reports, make constructive developmental comments and discuss them with pupils	• talk to guidance staff; look at guidance reports
		• structured programme of pupil interviews with guidance staff to discuss and assess progress, set realistic targets for learning and investigate anomalies between expected and actual progress	• look at policy, school calendar and documented practice
		• PSE programme contains work on reports and how pupils can use them	• look at PSE programme; talk to pupils
		• liaison between guidance staff and subject teachers	• talk to subject teachers and guidance staff
		• a structured referral system which is understood by all staff	• look at policy; talk to staff
		• structure of regular meetings between guidance and learning support staff	• look at guidance calendar; talk to guidance and learning support staff
		• accurate system for recording each pupil's aptitudes, progress and attainment	• look at records
		• system for frequent checking of progress across subjects and reviewing of targets	• look at policy and practice
6.5	Effectiveness and deployment of staff	• time allocation for guidance staff to meet regularly with pupils	• look at policy and recorded practice; talk to guidance staff and senior management

Activity 5 (continued)

Now consider the themes you have chosen. For each of the themes and the associated description of good practice, identify possible sources of evidence for evaluation. Bear in mind that the same source of evidence will often yield information for a number of themes. At this stage, after considering the time available to you, you may decide to evaluate only some of the themes.

Chosen area of guidance:

No.	PIs or themes	Features of good practice (what would "very good" look like?)	How would we find out?

You will now need to carry out the evaluation and collect the evidence you have identified. Share the tasks among members of the guidance team as necessary, and use the 1 to 4 scale (see activity 1) to help you.

Activity 6

Purpose: To sum up your final evaluation and the evidence you have found so that you can plan what you are going to do next

Time: 60-80 minutes

Task: Example 6 shows an extract from a summary of the results. This should reflect both quality and quantity.

Chosen area of guidance: Supporting and monitoring attainment

Performance indicator 4.4: *Guidance role in monitoring progress and attainment*

.....Guidance staff scrutinise all subject reports and comments on progress on guidance reports are good. Comments are generally constructive, indicating strengths and possible areas for improvement. However, follow-up interview arrangements are only fair. Guidance staff only meet with a small proportion of pupils whose reports indicate under-achievement. Sometimes this meeting can be up to 6 weeks after the subject reports are written, which means a considerable delay for pupils who require urgent support.

A representative of the learning support staff attends guidance meetings once a month when pupils causing concern are discussed. Some guidance staff and some learning support staff believe this is not frequent enough to identify early signs of pupil need.....

.....About 50% of parents attend parents' evenings when reports are discussed, and some are accompanied by their sons/daughters. It was felt that this should be more actively encouraged. The time available to discuss pupil reports with parents and pupils is not sufficient and guidance staff felt that a way needs to be found to allocate more time to these discussions and to individual interviews with pupils. It was also felt that a more structured approach to both types of interviews would allow time to be used more effectively and would also encourage a more consistent approach.....

A performance broadly equivalent to the illustration above would merit an award at level 3 (strengths outweigh weaknesses).

Now prepare your own summary of results of your evaluation. Consider, too, with whom you would share this summary.

Activity 7

Purpose: To use the results of your evaluation in your development planning

Time: 60-80 minutes

Task: The main purpose of undertaking school self-evaluation is to improve the attainment, learning and development of pupils.

Once you have summed up the results of your evaluation, you will need to adjust the priorities in the guidance development plan. Within this plan, you will:

Identify one or two realistic targets

When considering targets it is important to consider the school development plan, and to ensure that targets for guidance are consistent with, and enhance, overall school priorities. Guidance targets should also be considered when the next school development plan is being compiled.

Remember that to be most useful, targets need to be

- specific;
- measurable;
- attainable;
- relevant; and
- time-limited.

Devise a plan for action

Your plan for action will show:

- the order in which things will be done;
- who will do them;
- the timescale for carrying them out;
- success criteria;
- resources; and
- how progress will be monitored and evaluated.

Useful Sources

More than Feelings of Concern: The report of the Scottish Central Committee on Guidance, SCCC 1986

Effective Secondary Schools, SOED, HMSO, 1988

5-14 Guidelines:

Assessment 5-14, SOED, HMSO, 1991

Reporting 5-14, SOED, HMSO, 1992

Personal and Social Development, SOED, HMSO 1993

The Role of School Development Plans in Managing School Effectiveness (MER 5), Second Edition, SOED, 1994

How good is our school? Self-evaluation using performance indicators, SOEID, 1996

How good is our school?: Taking a Closer Look at Specialist Services, Aberdeen City and South Lanarkshire Councils in partnership with the Audit Unit, HM Inspectors of Schools, SOEID, 1997

Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: Guidance, SOEID, HMSO 1996

Achievement for All, SOEID, 1996

Achieving Success in S1/S2, SOEID, 1997

Higher Still: Arrangements for Guidance, Higher Still Development Unit, Scottish CCC, 1995

Higher Still: Arrangements for Personal and Social Education, Higher Still Development Unit, Scottish CCC, 1997

Higher Still: Managing Guidance, Higher Still Development Unit, Scottish CCC, 1997

Higher Still: Managing Guidance Time, planning tool, Higher Still Development Unit, Scottish CCC, 1998

Higher Still: Plan-IT and *Progress* data bases, Higher Still Development Unit, Scottish CCC, 1998