



IMPROVING SCOTTISH EDUCATION

2009

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

In Perth and Kinross, we are well placed to address the agenda set out in *Improving Scottish Education*, a report on the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education's inspection and review programme for 2005-2008. However, whatever our strengths and areas for improvement, we must build on the progress we have made to date to ensure that Perth and Kinross has the creative and dynamic education system for learners of all ages aligned with the effective services for children it needs to meet the challenges of the 21st century successfully.

CONTENTS

Introduction

Pre-school

Primary

Secondary

Special Schools

Community Learning and Development

Child Protection Services

Education Psychological Services

The Impact of Local Authorities

Attainment and achievement of learners

Meeting the needs of all learners

Meeting the needs of parents, carers and families

Leadership

Way ahead

Achievement

Curriculum, learning and teaching

Vision and leadership

Partnerships

Professional freedom and responsibility

Success for all learners

INTRODUCTION

In January 2009, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the findings of the inspection and review programme for 2005-2008 entitled [Improving Scottish Education](#). The report recognises that Scotland's future economic prosperity requires an education system within which the population as a whole will develop the kind of knowledge, skills and attributes which will equip learners personally, socially and economically to thrive in the 21st century. It also demands standards of attainment and achievement which match these needs and strengthen Scotland's position internationally. The report identifies a range of vital strengths on which Scottish education can build. In the following pages, these key strengths are set out by sector. The report also makes very clear the areas where further significant improvement is needed. These areas are again summarised by sector in the following pages. For each sector, there are also a number of key questions for staff here in Perth and Kinross to consider in evaluating our current strengths and areas for improvement as we plan improvements over the next three years.

The final section of *Improving Scottish Education* sets a broad agenda for the way ahead for Scottish Education. In Perth and Kinross we are well placed to address this agenda. Our three key priorities are:

- Raising achievement for all
- Supporting vulnerable children and families
- Ensuring equality of access to community, leisure and cultural services

We are committed to [Achieving Excellence Together](#) and believe that staff, pupils, [parents](#) and the wider community all have a key role to play in working together to achieve excellence in our schools. Our vision is for Perth and Kinross to be the best environment in which to learn, work and live. We want all learners to achieve to their full potential by becoming responsible citizens, successful learners, effective contributors and confident individuals.

Over the last two years, we have structured our improvement plan in education around the key objectives of [Achievement, Learning and Leadership](#) and we have set clear standards that we expect all to aspire to meet. These key standards are set out in a range of easily accessible leaflets. The key standards are:

- [Setting the Standard for Learning: Realising Potential](#)
- [Setting the Standard for Leadership](#)
- [Setting the Standard for Working Together](#)

Each of the standards supports the delivery of the [policy framework](#) launched in January 2007. The core policies supported by the standards are those on [Learning: Realising Potential](#), [Leadership and Management](#) and [Communication and Consultation](#). Each standard has been mapped to the key features of very good practice set out in the revised version of [How Good is our School?](#) The standards leaflets also form the basis of the approach to school self-evaluation and improvement planning processes adopted here in Perth and Kinross.

The [Standard for Learning: Realising Potential](#) focuses on ensuring all learners have access to the highest quality learning experiences. We believe that we can achieve this by ensuring that the curriculum, teaching, learning and arrangements for [meeting learners' needs](#) are all of at least a very good quality.

We also believe that we all have a responsibility to provide appropriate levels of leadership. Everyone has a leadership role to play. For teaching staff this leadership role is undertaken principally in leading learning in the classroom and supporting whole school developments. However, promoted staff, pupils, [parents](#) and members of the community also have responsibilities and provide leadership in a range of contexts. The [Standard for Leadership](#) sets out the key components of very good practice.

The final standard relates to the importance of working together in partnership to secure improvement. The [Standard for Working Together](#) sets out the commitments of schools in Perth and Kinross to work together with staff, learners, parents, carers and the community.

We have also developed the [Raising Achievement Strategy](#) that clearly sets out our commitment to raising levels of attainment and achievement for all through the provision of high quality universal entitlement for all learners aligned with effective targeted support to potentially disadvantaged groups or individuals¹.

Overall, we are well placed to address the agenda set out in *Improving Scottish Education*. However, whatever our strengths and areas for improvement, we must build on the progress we have made to date to ensure that Perth and Kinross has the creative and dynamic education system for learners of all ages aligned with the effective services for children it needs to meet the challenges of the 21st century successfully.

[Return to contents](#)

¹ In Perth and Kinross, this term applies to different groups of learners or individuals such as: children with a range of additional support needs; children of different ethnic groups; refugees; Gypsy/Traveller children; looked after children; those for whom English is an additional language; pupils with disabilities; those with irregular attendance caused by illness, family circumstances or respite care; boys and girls at risk of underachieving; and any other potentially vulnerable groups.

[PRE-SCHOOL](#)

Strengths

- Consistently good curriculum and good progress made by children across key aspects of their learning.
- Confident children who enjoy their pre-school experiences and who are keen and motivated to learn.
- Supportive and caring relationships between children and staff, and parents and staff which ensure children's wellbeing.
- Welcoming and inclusive learning environments which help children to settle and take part enthusiastically in activities.

Aspects for improvement

- The variable quality of provision across sectors with the partnership private and voluntary centres.
- The quality of leadership in guiding educational developments and children's learning.
- The impact of self-evaluation in improving outcomes for children.
- Staff interactions which extend and challenge children's learning.
- Identification of children's individual learning needs, staff use of assessment information and staff intervention to ensure all children make appropriate progress.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths match the strengths in your pre-school centre and nursery?
- How well are you addressing the key national aspects for improvement in your pre-school centre and nursery?
- How well does your improvement plan reflect the key national strengths and aspects for development set out above?
- How do you plan to address these issues in you improvement planning processes from 2009-2012?
- How well does the service support improvement in these areas?

[Return to contents](#)

PRIMARY

Strengths

- Increasing opportunities for children to engage in a broad range of motivating learning experiences.
- Strong and productive partnerships with parents, the wider community and local clusters of schools.
- Warm and purposeful staff-children relationships, the quality of pastoral care for children, emotional wellbeing and education for personal and social development.
- The commitment and effective teamwork and collegiality of staff.
- Children's behaviour, their ability to work well with, and be considerate of, others and their readiness to accept responsibility.
- Achievements in talking, listening and reading in English language and in aspects of mathematics.
- Increasing opportunities for wider achievements, most notably in aspects of citizenship, health promotion, environmental and enterprise education.
- Effective leadership of the headteacher in most schools and improving shared leadership.

Aspects for improvement

- Closing the gap at the upper stages to ensure all children move on to secondary schooling as sufficiently skilled independent learners who are well equipped to make progress in their learning.
- Meeting the learning needs of all children, particularly challenging the most able children.
- Attainment and application of knowledge in writing in English language and Gaelic, in problem solving in mathematics and in science and the technologies.
- Promoting and monitoring progression in children's wider achievements in relation to the attributes, capabilities and skills underpinning the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Improvement through self-evaluation, including better use of the child's voice to inform more effectively their learning experiences in school.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths match the strengths in your school?
- How well are you addressing the key national aspects for improvement in your school?
- How well does your improvement plan reflect the key national strengths and aspects for development set out above?
- How do you plan to address these issues in you improvement planning processes from 2009-2012?
- How well does the service support improvement in these areas?

[Return to contents](#)

SECONDARY

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and staff commitment.
- Curriculum innovation focused on improving the quality of learners' experiences and meeting the learning needs of individuals.
- Pastoral care for young people, positive ethos, and staff and learner relationships.
- Recognising and promoting achievement.
- The performance of many young people at the point when they leave school.
- The quality of leadership of headteachers and increasingly of others in leadership roles.
- Levels of satisfaction of stakeholders, particularly parents.

Aspects for improvement

- Consistency in the quality of teaching and learning including building on good practice and focusing staff development on how young people learn and how they develop learning skills.
- Raising achievement particularly by building on prior learning and ensuring challenge for each individual young person, especially those at the early stages, boys and vulnerable groups such as children who are looked after at home.
- Meeting the learning needs of every young person, especially by monitoring and tracking progress and ensuring coherent programmes with skills-based and applied learning.
- Engaging all young people actively in learning, giving each a sense of personal responsibility for their own learning and encouraging them to think independently and creatively.
- Focusing self-evaluation on improving outcomes for young people, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability for innovation and improvement.
- Pursuing an ambitious, strategic vision for improvement including mobilising leadership at all levels.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths match the strengths in your school?
- How well are you addressing the key national aspects for improvement in your school?
- How well does your improvement plan reflect the key national strengths and aspects for development set out above?
- How do you plan to address these issues in you improvement planning processes from 2009-2012?
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[Return to contents](#)

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Strengths

- Staff's high expectations of young people's achievements and the quality of teaching in day special schools.
- The quality of young people's learning and their integrated learning experiences across care and education.
- Young people's achievements in a wide range of contexts.
- The quality of pastoral care in most schools.
- The quality of relationships among staff and young people.
- In secure care accommodation, specialised programmes to meet the needs of individual young people.
- Improvements in accommodation and facilities in residential special schools.
- Young people's engagement in learning with their mainstream peers.
- In residential special schools, preparation for the inclusion of young people within mainstream society.
- The quality of leadership of the headteacher in an increasing number of special schools.

Aspects for improvement

- Broadening the curriculum.
- Raising attainment in English language and mathematics in residential special schools and among young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- Ensuring greater attention to the learning needs of every young person.
- In residential special schools, extending productive links with similar centres, with education authorities and through sharing good practice.
- Continuing to develop facilities in day special schools.
- Focusing self-evaluation on improving achievement.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths match the strengths in your school?
- How well are you addressing the key national aspects for improvement in your school?
- How well does your improvement plan reflect the key national strengths and aspects for development set out above?
- How do you plan to address these issues in your improvement planning processes from 2009-2012?
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[Return to contents](#)

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (CLD)

Strengths

- Strong commitment to inclusion, equality and fairness with examples of innovative and effective work with disadvantaged individuals and groups.
- Learning programmes that are flexible and tailored to meet the needs of learners.
- Good quality of youth work and the relationships with young people.
- The high degree of responsiveness to the needs of adult learners.
- The improvements made in community capacity building.
- Partnership working.

Aspects for improvement

- Demonstrating the outcomes of CLD provision and tracking improvements over time.
- Ensuring that planning is needs-led and outcomes-focused.
- Leadership of people and partnerships in half of the authorities.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths match the strengths in your service?
- How well are you addressing the key national aspects for improvement in your service?
- How well does your improvement plan reflect the key national strengths and aspects for development set out above?
- How do you plan to address these issues in your improvement planning processes from 2009-2012?

[Return to contents](#)

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Strengths

- The help and initial support given to keep children safe.
- The involvement of children and families in key decision-making meetings.
- Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected.
- The promotion of public awareness of child protection.
- The range of policies and procedures linked to vision, values and aims.
- The clear vision, values and aims for child protection which have been communicated effectively to staff.
- Leadership of people and partnerships, including working with private and voluntary organisations.

Aspects for improvement

- Recognition and assessment of risk and needs.
- Planning to meet children's needs and taking account of changing circumstances.
- The participation of children and families in policy development and in planning and developing services.
- Operational planning, including performance management and the development and use of management information.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths match the strengths in your service?
- How well are you addressing the key national aspects for improvement in your service?
- How well does your improvement plan reflect the key national strengths and aspects for development set out above?
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[Return to contents](#)

EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (EPS)

EPS have the important responsibilities for developing services which reflect the priorities of the education authority and meet the needs of their local communities.

Key strengths:

- EPS have made a significant contribution to the implementation of The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.
- EPS play an important role in improving the quality of provision within their education authorities for specific groups of children and young people.
- Children, young people, parents, carers and families are satisfied with most aspects of the service.
- Team working and collaboration is a strong feature of EPS.
- EPS have developed effective working relationships with a range of partner agencies.

Aspects for improvement:

- Roles and remits of educational psychologists need to be more effectively communicated to partner agencies and education authority staff.
- Less than half of schools feel that the individual case work provided by the EPS is valued by staff and leads to better outcomes for children and young people.
- There is a need to improve record keeping to monitor more effectively the impact and outcomes for children and young people.
- In a number of services, leadership roles require to be further developed. Arrangements for managing change and improving service performance need to be further developed.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths match the strengths in your service?
- How well are you addressing the key national aspects for improvement in your service?
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Return to contents

THE IMPACT OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Attainment and achievement of learners

Key strengths:

In **pre-school** settings:

- the value accorded to early years provision by education authorities as part of a commitment to ensure equality for all children;
- partnerships across council services and with other organisations to make effective provision for pre-school children; and
- the quality of support and assistance provided by the authority and the quality of continuous professional development.

In **primary** schools:

- authorities continue to make raising attainment a priority, with particular success at the early stages;
- in a number of education authorities, an increasing number of pupils achieve appropriate national levels of attainment earlier than might normally be expected; and
- across authorities, there are improving approaches to monitoring and tracking pupils' performance.

In **secondary** schools:

- in some authorities, following a specific focus by the authority and schools, there has been considerable improvement in the level of young people's attainment in targeted areas; and
- almost all authorities offer an extensive and beneficial programme of achievement activities, such as sports, arts and cultural activities within and beyond school.

In **adult learning**:

- leading effective partnerships to meet the needs of adults with literacy and numeracy needs and migrant workers and their families who need support to learn English; and
- community learning and development approaches to building the confidence and wellbeing of parents and carers to equip them better for supporting their children's learning.

Aspects for improvement:

In **pre-school** settings:

- addressing variations in the quality of provision offered by partner providers
- ensuring high-quality curriculum advice is provided for staff
- ensuring there is continuity and progression in learning between nursery and P1.

In **primary**:

- improving the performance of the lowest-attaining pupils
- narrowing the gap in attainment outcomes between boys and girls.

In **secondary**:

- ensuring that all young people achieve to their full potential while in secondary education
- providing a sustained focus on improving performance at S1 and S2
- providing effective support for secondary schools

- ensuring the overall proportion of pupils leaving secondary schools for destinations in higher or further education, training or employment is high.

For **CLD**:

- greater integration of the work of community learning and development providers with aspects of formal education
- ensuring schools play important roles in the lives of the communities they serve and help build stronger, safer communities.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well are our approaches to raising attainment and achievement in Perth and Kinross schools focused on these key national areas for improvement?
- How well are our planning, support and resources aligned to meeting these challenges from 2009-2012?

[Return to contents](#)

Meeting the needs of all learners

Key strengths:

- the impact of education authorities on outcomes for pupils with additional support needs is generally positive
- in a number of authorities, a wide range of supportive approaches has been developed to meet the needs of pupils with additional support needs
- good support for parents and carers at important points of transition through often strong multi-agency working
- authorities' preparation for and implementation of The Education (Additional Support for learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
- significant progress in learning and teaching is being made through the development of the national *Assessment is for Learning* programme
- authorities have developed a large number of initiatives to improve pupils' learning experiences in schools and centres in all sectors
- authorities are committed to promoting pupils' understanding, and interest in, the development of sustainability and environmental awareness
- authorities have prioritised and developed a range of effective initiatives to promote pupils' achievements
- pupils in authorities across Scotland benefit from a wide range of cultural and sporting opportunities
- a wide variety of innovative approaches to enterprise education is being developed in authorities across Scotland
- young people have good opportunities to express their views through participation in other bodies and groups, including School Nutrition Action Groups and Eco Schools Groups and are often developing their levels of self-confidence.

Aspects for improvement:

- greater consistency in provision for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs
- the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* needs to be addressed with vigour
- although pupils are clearly motivated by more active approaches to learning, in particular, through improved opportunities to develop their skills in ICT this needs to be extended
- authorities do not make enough use of available national awards to recognise pupils' wider achievements
- further work is required in tracking pupils' involvement in initiatives designed to develop their achievements both within and outwith schools.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well are our approaches to meeting learners' needs in Perth and Kinross schools focused on these key national areas for improvement?
- How well are our planning, support and resources aligned to meeting these challenges from 2009-2012?

[Return to contents](#)

Meeting the needs of parents, carers and families

Key strengths:

- In best practice, parents are actively involved in authority decision-making, have purposeful opportunities to be involved in their children's learning, and have access to a range of opportunities for their own learning through volunteering and family learning.
- In some authorities, parents have access to a range of services and networks to support and encourage involvement in their children's learning. There are examples of good practice in supporting parents whose children have additional support needs.

Aspects for improvement:

- More work is required to engage all parents in supporting their children by working in partnership with schools, particularly in the secondary school sector.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well are our approaches to meeting the needs of parents, carers and families in Perth and Kinross matched to these key strengths?
- How well are our approaches focused on the areas for improvement?
- How well are our planning, support and resources aligned to meeting these challenges from 2009-2012?

[Return to contents](#)

Leadership – vision, partnership and managing change and improvement

Key strengths:

- a clear corporate vision and a strong sense of direction and purpose
- acceptance and promotion of leadership as the responsibility of staff at all levels
- a shared commitment to the common goal of raising attainment and achievement
- an increasing focus on learning and teaching and the developing impact of planned developments on improving children's learning
- effective multi-agency input across early years education and in relation to pupils with additional support needs
- local authority departments responsible for CLD have collaborated well with partners in delivering innovative learning programmes
- where they are well planned and implemented, strategic partnerships enable agencies and organisations to work together to maximise resources and increase levels of impact on participants
- authority staff who know their schools well and who can offer a robust level of support and challenge while retaining a relationship based on mutual respect, including senior officers setting challenging targets with schools, and headteachers having a clear understanding of their responsibilities for achieving these targets
- striking a clear balance between robust monitoring of progress towards the targets set and fostering a culture which encourages innovation and the sharing of good practice
- a commitment to enhance the quality of learning and teaching and the work of the service
- open encouragement of creativity and innovation within establishments while maintaining a key focus on effective learning and teaching approaches designed to meet the needs of all learners
- well-planned and appropriately-focused professional development opportunities for newly-qualified teachers.

Aspects for improvement:

- ensuring there is clear strategic leadership that has a positive impact on children and families
- in some authorities, partnerships are still at an early stage of development and the sustainability of these partnerships in the longer term is not yet secure
- ensuring that authority staff know their schools well and provide an appropriate mix of support and challenge while retaining a relationship based on mutual respect

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well do these key strengths reflect the leadership in our service?
- How well are we addressing the key national aspects for improvement in leadership in our service?
- How well are we planning to address these issues over the period 2009-2012?

[Return to contents](#)

WAY AHEAD

Achievement

Key national priorities are:

- recognising that achievement and attainment are not alternatives and that both are the outcome of a rich and challenging educational experience;
- using curriculum reform to find fresh ways of engaging learners in deep and challenging learning, to increase levels of achievement for all learners and in particular to improve standards in literacy, numeracy and science; and
- developing ways of recognising achievement, including formal qualifications, which reflect the purposes and expectations of the curriculum.

Curriculum, learning and teaching

Key national priorities are:

- ensuring challenge and progression in learning through imaginative, well-judged teaching, leading to the achievement of high levels of understanding and skill;
- devising curriculum structures which reflect the design principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* and enable all learners to benefit from the experiences and achieve the outcomes described in guidance on the curriculum;
- planning to ensure that all young people achieve the outcomes which comprise a broad general education and that they have suitable opportunities for choice and specialisation;
- working collectively to ensure that children, young people and adult learners make successful transitions between stages or establishments and from education to the world of work, building upon their prior learning;
- enabling all learners to apply learning in active and creative ways; and
- putting in place arrangements to support teachers in their assessment of learning, so that they and society can have confidence in their judgements and that assessment plays a central role in tracking and facilitating progress in learning.

Vision and leadership

Key national priorities are:

- establishing clear direction, securing commitment, fostering partnerships and encouraging initiative while constantly focusing on the impact on learners;
- tackling weak teaching and underachievement wherever it is found;
- ensuring that future leaders are identified and nurtured in their professional development;
- ensuring strategic planning and effective leadership by local authorities to bring about improvement; and
- establishing and sustaining a climate of high aspiration by putting *Curriculum for Excellence* into practice successfully.

Partnerships

Key national priorities are:

- strengthening partnerships across sectors and services in ways which create a unified learning and support system that eases progression for learners;
- ensuring that education plays its full part in taking forward the *GIRFEC* approach, actively seeking and embedding the behaviours which will sustain effective partnership working ; and
- enabling parents to play a stronger role as partners in their child's learning and development.

Professional freedom and responsibility

Key national priorities are:

- fostering a culture in which individuals see themselves as members of a professional community which takes responsibility for its own learning;
- making the best use of both time and expertise in planning for essential continuing professional development, including the sharing of good practice;
- adopting open and objective approaches to self-evaluation in establishments and services, taking full account of the views of learners, and planning and implementing improvements based directly on these approaches;
- engaging constructively with other professionals to ensure children and young people are supported to be successful; and
- increasing teachers' capacity to operate confidently and competently within a less directed environment.

Success for all learners

Key national priorities are:

- identifying and tackling barriers to learning before they become entrenched;
- finding new ways to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse population of learners, including newcomers to Scotland for whom English is an additional language; and
- personalising learning and support to take account of individual needs, choices and circumstances while relentlessly reinforcing high expectations.

Questions for staff in Perth and Kinross

- How well are we planning to address these issues over the period 2009-2012?
- In what ways do our current improvement plans require to be re-focused to meet the priorities set out in the Improving Scottish Education report of 2009?

Return to contents