



HMIe
improving Scottish education
leasachadh foghlam na h-Alba

Validated self-evaluation



Perth and Kinross Council
16 February 2010

Contents	Page
1. The aims, nature and scope of the validated self-evaluation	1
2. How has the validated self-evaluation contributed to Perth and Kinross Council's capacity to improve?	5
3. What did we find as a result of the validated self-evaluation?	6
Appendix: Perth and Kinross Council self-evaluation	8

1. The aims, nature and scope of the validated self-evaluation

Section 9 of the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000* charges HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, to provide an external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local authority in its quality assurance of educational provision within the Council and of its support to schools in improving quality. Evaluations are based upon a published framework of quality indicators (*Quality Management in Education 2*)¹ which embody the Government's policy on Best Value. The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000* provides a framework for improvement planning that requires education authorities to set out and report on improvement objectives related to the National Performance Framework (NPF), national priorities and associated measures of performance.

HMIE's mission is to work with others to secure improvements in the education and wellbeing of the people of Scotland. It promotes public accountability for the delivery of high quality education for all learners, and services for children. HMIE no longer operates a cycle of inspection of the education functions of local authorities (INEA) but is developing a more proportionate approach to evaluating and reporting on these functions in line with the drive to reduce external scrutiny at service level. Working in partnership with other agencies and organisations and building on the findings of inspection and review, HMIE aims to promote improvements for the benefit of all learners and service users. Validated self-evaluation (VSE) contributes to this aim.

What is validated self-evaluation?

VSE is a voluntary process which aims to support and challenge the work of education authorities to deliver and improve the quality of provision and outcomes they offer for learners. It involves a partnership between the education authority and HMIE in which HMIE apply their knowledge of educational delivery and expertise in evaluation in order to extend, challenge and support the education authority's own self-evaluation processes, and so affirm (or otherwise) and strengthen the outcomes. VSE acknowledges that the responsibility for improving services and outcomes lies with the education authority. It recognises that self-evaluation is increasingly well embedded across the Scottish educational landscape and that high quality self-evaluation can lead to continuous improvement for learners and the achievement of excellence in practice and provision. In summary, VSE seeks to:

- build the capacity of education authorities to evaluate their own performance and improve the quality of services and outcomes for learners;
- promote and develop good practice and best value in education authorities;

¹ *Quality Management in Education 2* (HM Inspectorate of Education 2006) is a framework of self-evaluation for Local Authority Education Services.

- provide information to Scottish Ministers and the public on the quality of provision in education authorities;
- offer independent evaluation and validation; and
- contribute to a reduction in external scrutiny at service level where possible, taking account of risk, and provide high quality and robust information for shared risk assessment.

The VSE process is designed to accord with the principles recommended by the Crerar 'Reducing the Burden' Action Group, in that it is:

- focused on outcomes;
- proportionate to need;
- owned by those carrying out the self-evaluation;
- flexible, with the scope to recognise differences in service levels and types;
- built on existing good practice and relevant existing standards;
- rigorous and transparent; and
- designed to secure continuous improvement.

Validated self-evaluation in Perth and Kinross Council

HMIE and Perth and Kinross Council agreed to evaluate, in partnership, aspects of Education and Children's Services (ECS) in Perth and Kinross. As part of the VSE process, HMIE were able to draw on what they already knew about the work of the Council. This included information gathered by the District Inspector, including attainment and achievement data, and evidence from HMIE inspections of pre-school centres, schools and learning communities. HMIE also used the findings of their inspection report on services to protect children in Perth and Kinross, published in June 2009. As part of the Council's cycle of evaluation, a number of self-evaluation processes were already underway. Perth and Kinross senior managers and elected members decided to extend and develop these processes. In doing so, they involved an appropriately wide range of partners, including staff from other services of the Council, parents, young people and staff from the voluntary sector. HMIE worked with service managers from Perth and Kinross ECS in undertaking these self-evaluation processes. HMIE also evaluated how rigorous and accurate the self-evaluation was in relation to each area.

Scope of the validated self-evaluation

The self-evaluation process set out to enable ECS staff to answer the following questions:

- What are our key strengths?
- What key outcomes have we achieved?
- How well do we meet the needs of stakeholders?
- How good is our leadership?
- What are our key priorities for improvement?
- What is our capacity to improve?

Perth and Kinross Council, in consultation with HMIE, identified six themed areas which they wanted to evaluate more closely to determine the impact for children and young people.

The six themed areas were:

- Early years provision.
- Services for children and young people with additional support needs (ASN).
- Effective learning and teaching.
- School self-evaluation.
- Secondary attainment and achievement.
- Wider achievement of young people.

Process of validated self-evaluation

HMIE worked alongside senior managers and elected members from Perth and Kinross Council to brief a wide range of staff and key stakeholders on the principles and processes of VSE. ECS service managers set up six groups to look at each of the themed areas which they had identified. Each group was led by a service manager and, prior to the start of the VSE process, had drawn up an initial evaluation statement. Each group then worked with a member of the HMIE team to gather and evaluate data and to examine further sources of evidence. HMIE checked the rigour of the processes and the robustness of the evidence, to evaluate the quality of the authority's processes for self-evaluation and improvement. HMIE scrutinised the Council's written plans, including the Single Outcome Agreement and the Business Management and Improvement Plan

(BMIP). As a result, HMIE determined that planning for VSE was well thought out and plans at all levels made clear to relevant stakeholders what their role was in bringing about improvements.

During the course of working together HMIE met with senior managers to discuss their initial findings. ECS then produced a full internal evaluation which forms the appendix to this joint report.

What did HMIE learn about the quality of self-evaluation in Perth and Kinross Council from this process?

Senior managers, elected members and ECS staff demonstrated strong commitment to improvement through self-evaluation. They worked closely with HMIE and their approach was responsive and appropriately thorough. HMIE found that relevant elected members worked effectively to support and challenge ECS staff and monitor the quality of provision. Elected members participated fully in a range of evaluative activities with ECS staff and members of the HMIE team. These included focus group discussions, formal scrutiny meetings, and meetings with teachers and parents. HMIE found the approaches of senior managers and ECS staff to the self-evaluation of important areas, including attainment and achievement, to be systematic, rigorous and suitably challenging. Senior managers drew on a wide range of data, which they used effectively to monitor how well the service was performing. They shared a clear sense of common purpose and were open to suggestions for improvements. For example, during engagement with HMIE, a number of ECS staff improved their questioning to focus more on outcomes, rather than on the processes used. Senior managers provided a full range of relevant evidence to HMIE, and selected appropriate areas in which to gather further information, which would help to improve provision for learners.

HMIE and ECS staff engaged in focused and purposeful discussions during the VSE process. They worked together to gather evidence in the six identified themed areas and joined activities that were part of the Council's normal cycle of evaluation. HMIE joined ECS staff on a school review. In scrutinising the results of school reviews, HMIE found a strong correlation between the findings of such reviews, in terms of strengths and areas for improvement, and those of HMIE inspections. HMIE and ECS staff met with focus groups of stakeholders including staff, parents, children and young people, and community groups. They also visited a range of provision including pre-school centres, schools and youth groups. As a result of working alongside service managers and group members, HMIE were confident that staff presented evidence accurately and evaluated the quality of provision rigorously. It was clear that participation in the VSE process prompted greater reflection on the part of ECS staff and enabled them to build on their already strong procedures for self-evaluation. ECS staff who engaged in the review groups were open, rigorous and responsive and reflected effectively on their work with HMIE as part of the VSE process. For example, as part of the review of early years provision, ECS staff worked alongside HMIE to seek the views of a range of stakeholders including early years staff, teachers and parents. HMIE also attended previously planned early years strategy meetings and visited

pre-school centres. ECS staff reviewing early years provision were thus able to identify with greater confidence appropriate strengths and strategic priorities for the service. As a result of this work, ECS staff identified further areas for ongoing development in relation to the authority provision for vulnerable children and families in the nursery 'hubs'. During the review of services for children and young people with ASN, HMIE and ECS staff engaged together in wide ranging strategic review which included discussions with educational psychologists, visits to schools and meetings with a range of agencies. As a result, ECS staff recognised additional strengths and areas for improvement, including the need to make greater use of the opportunities offered by the development of new Community Campuses.

Overall, HMIE supported and challenged Perth and Kinross staff through discussion and modelling of evaluative activities. As a result, Perth and Kinross staff were able to improve the quality of their evidence to identify more clearly strengths and areas for improvement.

2. How has the validated self-evaluation contributed to Perth and Kinross Council's capacity to improve?

What is the Council's capacity for improvement?

Capacity for improvement depends upon a range of factors, including:

- the overall impact and outcomes achieved by the education authority;
- its focus on improvement;
- its track record in bringing about improvement;
- the quality and accuracy of its self-evaluation; and
- how leadership and management of the Council results in improved outcomes for learners.

HMIE are confident that ECS staff have a very strong capacity to improve and are well placed to fulfil their ambition to deliver high quality services that meet the needs of all. Elected members, the Chief Executive, and the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services provide a very clear sense of direction with very effective support and challenge for staff. The Senior Management Team (SMT) are committed to delivering high quality services through highly effective integrated planning and working. The very strong leadership in Perth and Kinross Council has made a positive difference to outcomes for services and stakeholders. Evidence from the VSE exercise offers confidence that the Council has robust and rigorous systems in place to ensure continued improvement. Perth and Kinross Council have clearly identified the areas for improvement and how these improvements will be achieved.

3. What did we find as a result of the validated self-evaluation?

HMIE concurred with the range of strengths outlined by ECS and from these, jointly selected a number of key strengths.

These were:

- very effective and purposeful leadership, with a clear sense of direction and robust and comprehensive approaches to self-evaluation;
- the clear commitment of the Education and Children's Services Executive Director and his SMT to integrated working and ensuring sustainable improvement;
- strong partnership working at strategic and operational levels to support vulnerable children and their families;
- the overall quality of attainment and achievement in reading and mathematics in primary schools and S1/S2; and
- the range and quality of opportunities to enhance the wider achievements of young people in a variety of settings.

Perth and Kinross Council also recognised that there were important aspects of learners' achievements and outcomes where improvement was required and where further action was needed.

What does the Council plan to do next?

As a result of the work undertaken within the VSE process, Perth and Kinross Council and HMIE have agreed broad priorities for action. These are to continue to:

- focus on raising attainment and, in particular, improve consistency of performance at all levels of SQA examinations for S4 to S6 pupils;
- extend the range and quality of provision for children and young people with emotional, social and behavioural needs;
- develop more comprehensive and systematic approaches to monitoring, tracking and measuring outcomes for children and young people across all services, using information gathered from evaluative activities to achieve further improvement; and
- develop more systematic ways of gathering the views of service users and take account of these in the planning and delivery of services.

Further details of areas identified for improvement are given in the attached report prepared by Perth and Kinross Council as part of the VSE process.

Robert Barfoot
HM Inspector
Directorate 5
HM Inspectorate of Education

Bernadette Malone
Chief Executive
Perth and Kinross Council

16 February 2010

How can you contact us?

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of validated self-evaluation you should write to Gill Robinson, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. Alternatively, if your query is related to this report, you may also write to Bernadette Malone, Chief Executive, Perth and Kinross Council, 2 High Street, Perth, PH1 5PH.

Appendix : Perth and Kinross Self-Evaluation

The report below was produced by Perth and Kinross staff as part of the 2009 self-evaluation exercise, supported by VSE with HMIE.

The contents of this report will be used to support the development of the Standards and Quality Report and set the key improvement priorities for Perth and Kinross Council's BMIP for 2010/11.

Context: Perth and Kinross Council area

Perth and Kinross is a diverse geographical area, comprising many discrete communities, each with its own distinct challenges and opportunities. It is one of the least deprived local authorities in Scotland. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that around 5% of the population live in areas defined as being in the most deprived 20% in Scotland. However, there are particular challenges related to deprivation in these areas and it is estimated that 9.3% of children in Perth and Kinross (2,700) live in workless households.

A further key challenge relates to the continuing rise in parental substance misuse and domestic abuse, and their impact on children's development.

Providing access to, and delivery of, essential services to a dispersed population over a large geographic area presents different challenges to providing services to the residents of Perth City where approximately one third of the population live. For example there are 76 primary schools, two-thirds of which have a pupil roll of less than 150 pupils.

The Council and its partners have to deal effectively with population growth. The 2006 based population projections from GROS (General Registrar Office Scotland) indicate that the Council has the highest projected population growth rate in Scotland. In addition the projected age structure for Perth and Kinross displays different characteristics from the national picture with an expected increase in all ages. Although the 2006 based population projections were prepared prior to the full impact of the current downturn in the economy, it is anticipated that the population growth will continue although at a reduced rate initially.

The GROS projections suggest that there will be an average of 320 additional births per annum. At the same time, the introduction of the entitlement to pre-school education for all three and four year olds and the reducing class size agenda has had an impact on school capacity. Recent estimates suggest that around 30% of primary schools will require either replacement or extension to accommodate the projected primary and nursery demand in the longer term. The secondary school sector will also face greater pressure as the increased birth rate works through the primary schools.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the Council also anticipates an increase of those aged over 65. As the needs of these groups increase, there will be an increase in demand for services. There is also an increasing demand for services for migrant workers, for example, placing requests for primary school places, where English is not the first language have risen. Perth and Kinross has the third highest level of migrant workers in Scotland with many choosing to stay on a more permanent basis.

ECS has a key role in delivering a range of services to address these challenges across education, child protection and community learning and development (CLD).

Education and Children's Services profile

ECS deliver services in a range of ways through schools, community learning centres, family centres, libraries and museums. In addition, they commission provision through service level agreements, contracts, partnerships and agreements with other providers, agencies and services.

The Council's BMIP sets out the Service's main improvement actions. The BMIP sits within a suite of plans that have clear links to the Single Outcome Agreement, the Corporate Plan, individual Service Improvement Plans, Team Plans and individual staff members' Employee Review and Development meetings. Involvement with service users and stakeholders takes place at all levels within the Service in planning, developing and delivering services.

The Executive Director leads, manages and directs ECS within the framework of statutory responsibilities and regulations. As a member of Perth and Kinross Council's Executive Officer Team the Executive Director contributes to the corporate management of the Council. The Depute Director has a key role in the leadership and management of the Service and the Council. Key responsibilities include: operational management, the development of integrated working and responsibility for the Investment in Learning Programme. The Head of Children and Families' Services is Perth and Kinross Council's Chief Social Work Officer and reports directly to the Chief Executive in that capacity. The management of the service is organised into four service delivery areas each led by a Head of Service who provides the strategic leadership in their area of service.

What are the key strengths of the Perth and Kinross Education and Children's Services?

Leadership and improvement

Perth and Kinross ECS is an improving organisation with a clear focus on improving outcomes for all learners, participants, service users and communities. The Service has very effective and purposeful leadership with a clear sense of direction and robust and comprehensive approaches to self-evaluation. The Service has a very strong capacity to improve and is well placed to fulfil the ambition to deliver high quality services that meet the needs of all. The SMT, led very effectively by the Executive Director, has a clear focus on integrated working and is committed to bringing coherence to the Service through focussing on key priorities and ensuring sustainable improvement.

Raising achievement for all

Learners' overall levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in primary have been steadily improving in the last five years. Over the last five years, attainment by the end of P7 has improved.

Over the two years 2007/08 and 2008/09, there has been a significant improvement in learners' levels of attainment in reading and writing by the end of S2. By the end of S2, 96%² of learners have achieved functional levels of literacy³ and numeracy. In the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA), Perth and Kinross is one of the highest performers in science with strengths in numeracy and mathematics.

The Council has increased the proportion of learners achieving level 3 awards in English and mathematics by the end of S4, including learners for whom English is a second language. This exceeds the performance of comparator authorities.

At Higher in S5 in 2009, learners achieved the strongest results in the last five years and the authority performed above comparator authorities and the national average. SQA results continue to be in line with, or are above, the national average in almost all other measures.

The Council reduced exclusions further in primary and secondary schools in session 2008/09 leading to a cumulative reduction of 35% over the last two years. Recorded incidents of violence and aggression against staff in primary and secondary schools have reduced, with less than 1% of pupils in each sector being involved in such incidents.

The Council has made very good progress in taking forward the *Curriculum for Excellence* in schools. Young people's wider achievements are supported through very good partnership working, including the work of the Transition Partnership. The Council has continued to lower language barriers and to ease communication between the learners and their clients, colleagues, visitors and professionals through its work with migrant workers.

Supporting vulnerable children and families

HMIE published a very positive inspection report in June 2009 on the quality of the services to protect children in Perth and Kinross. It covered the range of services and staff working in the area who had a role in protecting children. These included services provided by health, the police, the local authority and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration as well as those provided by voluntary and independent organisations.

The Council has a consistent approach to childcare concerns and a collaborative approach to continuous improvement to protect children. Comprehensive and very

² These data are a percentage of the total pupil roll by the end of S2 and include those with a range of ASN including those for whom English is an additional or second language.

³ Functional literacy and numeracy are defined in the level C statements in the national 5-14 guidelines for English Language and mathematics. Reported figures for 2008 have been re-calculated based on this definition.

flexible services are available to children and their families offering a high level of direct support. The Children and Young Person's Strategic Partnership effectively promote better outcomes for children and young people. There is a relatively low percentage of looked after children. A high proportion of placements for looked after and accommodated children⁴ are in community rather than residential settings.

The joint planning arrangements for ECS are strongly linked to community planning structures. The Council have taken a lead role in adopting a Corporate Parenting Strategy, an innovative initiative which involves senior managers from across the Community Planning Partnership becoming corporate parents to a number of accommodated children. The Council continues to perform well nationally in Youth Justice Services, with a consistently low number of persistent offenders and a significant reduction in youth disturbance calls. Early Years, Residential, Throughcare and Fostering and Adoption Services receive very positive Care Commission inspections.

The very positive model of Community Link Workers has been expanded. Community Link Workers are based around school clusters and continue to support an increasing number of young people and their families.

There is a strong and appropriate presumption of mainstreaming. With the exception of 59 children attending Fairview School and those placed out with the authority, all children with ASN are in a mainstream setting or in a specialist provision within a mainstream school.

Providing equality of access to cultural, community, sport and leisure services

ECS have made significant progress in engaging young people in planning and delivering services. They are very effective in offering people, including marginalised groups, opportunities to express their views and influence the planning and delivery of services.

ECS continue to support the sustainability of communities through effective community engagement approaches to build capacity and address local needs and aspirations as appropriate.

ECS staff work in an integrated way which reflects the often complex needs of the individual, the family, and the wider community. They have further developed a range of high quality opportunities to support the wider achievement of young people in a variety of settings. There is a range of effective partnerships in place to maximise the impact of resources and ensure that the needs of service users are met effectively.

What key outcomes have Perth and Kinross Education and Children's Services achieved?

While the Council has made very good progress in improving performance in ECS across a range of measures as set out below, there remains a need to ensure that

⁴ The term 'looked after' in this report includes all children looked after or looked after and accommodated by the Council.

learners' performance in SQA examinations across S4 to S6 is more consistent at all levels. Linked to this is the need to recognise wider achievement.

HMIE inspections and school self-evaluations continue to be positive in pre-school, primary and secondary. In the period from September 2008 - September 2009 there have been seven inspections of early years settings, both local authority nurseries and partner provider centres. In addition there were four follow-through inspections. Most centres received positive inspections of improvements in performance, children's experiences, meeting learning needs, and improvement through self-evaluation and the majority received positive inspections of the curriculum⁵.

In the period from September 2008 - September 2009, 11 primary schools were inspected by HMIE. All primary schools received positive⁶ inspections of learners' experiences, almost all⁷ of improvements in performance and the curriculum and most of improvement through self-evaluation and meeting learning needs. In addition there were four follow-through inspections.

In the two inspections of secondary schools since September 2008, all five quality indicators were found to be either good or very good. Similarly, the inspection of Fairview School, found all the quality indicators were either good or very good with one excellent.

In addition to HMIE inspections, all schools have undertaken a self-evaluation using the School Improvement Framework. Almost all primary schools evaluated provision as positive. Most evaluated improvements in performance, meeting learning needs, curriculum and improvement through self-evaluation as good or better. Almost all evaluated learners' experiences as good or better. All secondary schools returned a positive evaluation. All evaluated the curriculum and almost all evaluated learners' experiences and improvement through self-evaluation as good or better.

Within Perth and Kinross there is a strong presumption of mainstreaming for learners with ASN.

Learners' overall levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in primary schools have been improving in the last five years, particularly at P7. In primary schools most⁸ children across P3, P4, P6 and P7 are achieving appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Eighty eight percent of primary children across P3, P4, P6 and P7 achieved or exceeded the appropriate national level in mathematics in 2008/9. There has been a consistent increase in the percentage of children achieving or exceeding the appropriate national level over the past five years, from 84% in 2005. In reading, 84% of primary children across P3, P4, P6 and P7

⁵ Perth and Kinross Council terminated the contract with one pre-school partner provider as a result of concerns about the quality of the provision on offer. This centre also received a very poor HMIE inspection report. This centre is included in this analysis.

⁶ Satisfactory or better in each of the core quality indicators.

⁷ Almost all = 90% or greater; most = 75% to 89%; majority = 50% to 74%. Please note, as the sample size each year of HMIE reports is small there may be significant year on year variations and care should be taken in interpreting these figures.

⁸ Almost all = 90% or greater; most = 75% to 89%; majority = 50% to 74%.

achieved or exceeded the appropriate national level in 2008/09. Most primary children have achieved or exceeded the appropriate national levels in reading over the past five years and these levels have remained relatively constant with an overall improvement from 83% in 2004/05. Seventy seven percent of primary children across P3, P4, P6 and P7 achieved or exceeded the appropriate national level in writing in 2008/09. Attainment in writing has increased from 75% in 2004/5.

By the end of P7 the proportion of children achieving the appropriate national level has risen in mathematics from 73% to 81%, in reading from 77% to 83% and in writing from 64% to 68% over the period 2004/05 to 2008/09.

Over the two years 2007/08 and 2008/09, there has been a significant improvement in learners' levels of attainment in reading and writing by the end of S2. Within secondary schools in Perth and Kinross, by the end of S2, most children are achieving appropriate national levels in reading and the majority in writing and mathematics. Overall, there has been an increase in the percentage of S2 children achieving or exceeding national levels during 2008/09 across reading, writing and mathematics.

Levels of achievement in reading by the end of S2 have increased since 2004/05. The percentage achieving or exceeding the appropriate national levels has risen from 68% to 76% over the period 2004/05-2008/09. Levels of achievement in writing by the end of S2 have increased since 2004/5. The percentage achieving or exceeding the appropriate national levels has risen from 56% to 64% over the period 2004/05-2008/09. Levels of achievement in mathematics by the end of S2 have increased since 2004/05. The percentage achieving or exceeding the appropriate national levels has risen from 66% to 70% over the period 2004/05-2008/09.

By the end of S2, 96%⁹ of learners have achieved functional levels of literacy¹⁰ and numeracy. Within Perth and Kinross in 2008/9, 95% of learners achieved this functional level in reading by the end of P7. Ninety six percent achieved this level by the end of S2. In 2008/9, 90% of learners achieved this functional level in writing by the end of P7. Ninety six percent achieved this level by the end of S2. In 2008/9, 96% of learners achieved this functional level in numeracy by the end of P7. Ninety seven percent achieved this level by the end of S2.

In the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) Perth and Kinross were one of the highest performers in Science and there were aspects of strengths in numeracy and mathematics. The SSA Science report published in 2008 showed that of the 21 education authorities taking part, Perth and Kinross was ranked first or second equal in almost all of the attainment categories used. A programme of Continued Professional Development for primary and early years science was then implemented to address issues highlighted as being of national concern. Evaluations of these courses were very positive. Science activities from schools have been included in a national HMIE best practice conference.

⁹ These data are a percentage of the total pupil roll by the end of S2 and include those with a range of ASN including those for whom English is an additional or second language.

¹⁰ Functional literacy and numeracy are defined in the level C statements in the national 5-14 guidelines for English language and mathematics. Reported figures for 2008 have re-calculated based on this definition.

By the end of S4, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of learners achieving level 3 (Access 3 or Standard Grade - Foundation) awards in English and mathematics. However, Perth and Kinross has not built on last year's improvement in the proportion of learners achieving 5 or more at level 5 (Standard Grade - Credit or Intermediate 2).

Perth and Kinross have increased the proportion of S4 learners achieving level 3 awards (Access 3 or Standard Grade - Foundation) in English and mathematics by the end of S4, to 94%. This includes the achievements of learners for whom English is a second language. Over the last five years, this figure has risen from 89% and performance now exceeds that of comparator authorities. The Council is continuing to work on developing online learning resources and broadening curriculum pathways, including vocational learning, to better meet the needs of learners to continue to improve performance in this area.

The proportion of S4 learners achieving five or more subjects at level 4 (Standard Grade - General or Intermediate 1) or above continue to remain stable. Seventy eight percent achieved five or more subjects at level 4 or better. This remains above the national average but below the performance of comparator authorities.

In 2008, the percentage of S4 learners achieving five or more awards at level 5 (Standard Grade – Credit or Intermediate 2) was the strongest performance for five years. However, in 2009 this figure has decreased to 35% as in 2007 and, while in line with the national average, is below that of comparator authorities.

Learners in S5 built on their strong performance in S4 last year. Overall, learners in S5 achieved the best results at level 6 (Higher) in the last five years. The proportion of learners achieving one or more Highers by the end of S5 rose from 40% in 2008 to 45% in 2009. The proportion achieving three or more Highers rose from 24% to 27% and the proportion achieving five or more Highers rose from 10% to 13%. The proportion of learners achieving these results exceeded both the national and the comparator average.

The proportion achieving five or more level 5 awards by the end of S5 rose from 46% to 51%. This improvement means that performance in Perth and Kinross is now in line with that of comparator authorities.

The results for S6 learners reflect lower attainment in previous years for this cohort. There was a decline in the proportion of learners achieving one or more, three or more, or five or more at level 6 (Higher) award by the end of S6. While performance remains in line with or above the national average for all measures, Perth and Kinross Council has not, as it had done last year, continued to narrow the gap with comparator authorities.

The proportion of learners achieving one or more Highers by the end of S6 fell from 47% in 2008 to 46% in 2009. The proportion achieving three or more Highers fell from 33% to 31% and the proportion achieving five or more Highers fell from 24% to 21%. Whilst managing to maintain the breadth of provision at level 7 (Advanced Higher) in schools, the proportion of S6 learners achieving one or more award at this level fell to 14%. This is above the national average but just below comparator authorities.

Attainment levels of looked after children continue to show an overall improvement. There was an overall improvement in the percentage of learners leaving care attaining at least one subject at level 3 (Access 3 or Standard Grade - Foundation) award and in the number of learners with at least level 3 in English and mathematics. By the end of 2008/09 80% of learners in S4 and S5 who were looked after at some point during the year attained at least one subject at level 3. Sixty percent of S4 learners and 80% of S5 learners who had been looked after at some point during the year attained English and mathematics at level 3¹¹. To support the continued achievement of looked after children, the Council have appointed a Looked After Children's Co-ordinator.

A high proportion of school leavers continue to enter positive destinations. More leavers enter higher education, training and employment than in comparator authorities and nationally. Fewer leavers are unemployed or seeking employment or training than in comparator authorities and nationally.

Levels of children and young people's attendance have remained stable over the last three years and improved by almost 1% in secondary in 2008/09. Levels of attendance in both primary and secondary are in line with the national average. The Council continued to reduce exclusions in primary and secondary schools in 2008/09. Across primary and secondary, there was an 18% reduction leading to a cumulative reduction of almost 35% over the last two years. The Council achieved a reduction of 48% in the overall number of learners who are on a part-time timetable in mainstream schools.

Over the last year, Perth and Kinross has received positive inspections of services across Children and Families' Services. The Council comply fully with the duties set out within the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and associated regulation and are committed to enabling all young people to achieve their fullest potential. In the joint HMIE inspection of services to protect children and young people in Perth and Kinross, undertaken in December 2008 and January 2009, all quality indicators were found to be good or very good, with one excellent. The report identified many positive areas of practice.

A range of inspections has been undertaken by the Care Commission, including Residential, Throughcare and Aftercare, housing support, adoption and fostering and Early Years Services. Gowans Terrace Family Centre was also inspected. All of these inspections have been good or very good.

There is continued improvement in outcomes for children with identified individual and family support needs. There are very good outcomes for children receiving a protective service. 80% of children have their names removed from the Child Protection Register within six to 18 months and are progressed to permanent placements if required. Cause for Concern referrals have continued to rise by 20% in 2008/09, resulting in an increase in Child Protection Conferences. The Council have responded to this by a staffing increase of four full-time qualified fieldwork social work posts in addition to a new permanency post. Nevertheless, rising levels of substance misuse and reporting of domestic abuse remain a challenge. An information sharing protocol has been introduced to underpin existing integrated good practice. Advocacy services have been made available for children and young people subject to Child Protection Case Conferences.

¹¹ Please note percentages are based on small numbers.

There has been a 300% rise in the number of children supported by the Child Health team accessing direct payments, empowering them to commission services tailored to their needs (section 23, The Children Scotland Act 1995). Perth and Kinross continue to offer long term intensive therapeutic support to children who have experienced trauma through the Family Change service helping to sustain children in placements and homes. Updated risk assessments and use of chronological information are firmly embedded within Children and Families' Services supporting a more rigorous approach to assessment and decision making.

The Council continue to provide one of the highest percentages in Scotland of placements in the community for looked after and accommodated children enabling them to be brought up in a family setting. An increasing proportion of children are looked after within kinship placements. The outcomes for young people with persistent offending history have improved and consolidated at a low level. Young people are being diverted from offending through the Inter-agency Early Intervention Panel and there has been a sustained improvement in the provision of reports to children's hearings leading to more timely decision making. Outcomes for early intervention show a significant reduction in youth disturbance calls.

Young people's wider achievement is supported through very good partnership working but the Council recognises a need to improve how staff help young people articulate their learning. In 2008/09 244 young people gained a Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Participation rates in the Dynamic Youth, Youth Achievement and John Muir Awards are increasing steadily. Community Link Workers continue to support individuals and families in a variety of ways, particularly at times of transition. The range of opportunities available to the volunteers in the City Base is increasing and becoming more diverse. Young people report increased confidence and improved skills resulting in awards, employment, delivering training, giving talks, and successful application to university.

Youth Council members say that as a result of their involvement in the Youth Council they have gained confidence, achieved a range of awards, and learned new skills. 68 young people gained their Community Sports Leader Award in session 2008/09 and 134 are signed up for the next session. The young people are developing their leadership and training skills alongside contributing back to the community through 10 hours of voluntary work on out-of-school programmes.

Services for children and young people through the Library service continue to develop and improve with an increasing uptake of programmes to support the early development of literacy and numeracy such as Bookstart. The Council has a good range of projects focused on improving the confidence, health, wellbeing and skills of users which is having a positive impact. However, staff recognise the need to continue to ensure that provision is targeted appropriately over the next few years.

Zest for Life in Letham is an opportunity for adults to meet together and work towards adopting a healthier lifestyle. The *PEEP Learning Together programme* supports parents and carers in their role as the first educators of their children. Parents attending PEEP sessions reported feeling more confident and knowledgeable and more included in their community. The Community Libraries Service launched Find Health Information websites and health information points in 13 community libraries. This was

complemented by the Books in Mind, delivering books on prescription for children and young people mental health issues.

The Council have improved support to local communities, focused on improving the quality of life of individuals and the sustainability of their communities. Since the launch of the Perth and Kinross Accredited Club Excellence Scheme in January 2009, 36 sports clubs have signed up to the scheme and are working towards accreditation, improving their standards in providing sporting opportunities and to ensure the protection of children and young people. In response to the recommendations contained in the Best Value Review of Sport and Active Recreation Services the management transfer of the Blairgowrie Recreation Centre to Perth and Kinross Leisure was completed in June 2009.

Learning and teaching is effectively supported by a modern information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and system. Continuing development of SEEMIS¹² in schools is supporting a standard approach to recording attendance and attainment and reporting to parents. SEEMIS has also supported the Service to effectively meet a range of national and local reporting and information sharing requirements. Management Information Systems (MIS) activities are underpinned by a comprehensive support and training service.

A computer replacement programme ensures that young people benefit from access to new computers and this has significantly contributed to schools' technical readiness to make a range of Glow¹³ facilities and resources available to staff and learners. An improved ICT infrastructure has been delivered in Blairgowrie Community Campus. There are plans for developments in five further campuses to ensure stakeholders will have access to a range of modern ICT resources.

The Council will be opening six brand new community campuses between summer 2009 and autumn 2011 as part of an ambitious Investment in Learning Programme. The £136 million investment in the six new community campuses seeks to provide the most modern education and learning facilities and access to a range of council services for people living in the communities in which they are located. These community campuses will have new public libraries and additional opening hours for the community. While at this stage is not possible to measure their impact, the opening of the new campuses will bring to fruition the Investment in Learning programme which aims to support community regeneration.

Impact on learners, participants and service users

The overall impact of services on learners, participants and service users is very good.

Very good progress has been made to ensure the safety and well being of children and young people is a key priority. Early support is provided through the Policy with Health for Unborn Babies. As a result, identified mothers and babies receive additional support from health visitors and social workers and risk is reduced. Babies who have been recognised as being particularly vulnerable have been protected by the child protection

¹² Scottish Educational Establishments Management Information System.

¹³ Glow is the Scottish Schools Digital Network.

system through the seeking of Child Protection Orders. All children identified as being at risk of significant harm are the subject of child protection plans.

The Early Years Social Work team undertake parenting assessment and assessment of parental contact and provide support to parents of more vulnerable children. The Alcohol and Drug Partnership and Child Protection Committee have jointly developed guidelines for working with children and families affected by substance misuse. This has successfully resulted in early identification of vulnerable children and more joint intervention.

The Council is well placed to address Child Internet Safety. Over 300 staff attended training seminars which delivered the *ThinkuKnow* programme developed by the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre. Awareness raising sessions were also held for parents.

As part of the development of the Early Years framework ECS have extended full-time nursery provision through the development of five hub nurseries out-with Perth City. The hub model promotes integrated working with other services and agencies. Forty places for children with ASN are available, providing targeted early years support within a universal provision within their own locality.

Parents and carers of pre-school children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are supported by the Early Bird Parent Programme. This helps parents and carers develop, both their own and their child's, communication and social interaction skills.

The I CAN (Early Talk) programme has developed practitioners' skills in supporting speech and language. To date 24 nurseries have been accredited at supportive level. Five nurseries have undertaken enhanced level training with a view to completion by summer 2010 and accreditation in session 2010/11. As a result of the programme staff have an enhanced understanding of strategies to support the development of children's early literacy skills, by increasing children's self-confidence through improving the quality of the exchanges during talking and listening activities.

In providing every pre-school child with access to a teacher, the Council have seconded two nursery teachers to support children in partner centres. This has been recognised as a positive development in recent HMIE reports.

The Council continue to make very effective progress with the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. All schools are taking steps to implement the Council's five part strategy for *Creating a Curriculum for Excellence* in line with a three year rolling implementation plan. All schools plan within the context of this framework and this is reflected in all school improvement plans. Schools evaluate and record their progress as part of their routine self-evaluation and report on progress annually in their Standards and Quality Report. These reports now need to have a greater focus on evaluating the impact of the school's work in improving children's learning experiences.

ECS staff's approach to embedding active, experiential learning in the early years through play and learning has been rolled out across all early years centres and primary schools. Through these approaches observations of learning demonstrate that children are developing as enthusiastic, independent learners, able to make decisions, solve

problems and work co-operatively with others. The draft Early Years Strategy identifies improvements for children and families that will need to be approached on a staged basis with clear tasks set.

The Council have completed the first year of a three year programme of Co-operative Learning Academies, which have trained staff from every school in these learning and teaching approaches. All staff attending have been positive about the quality of the training and the impact it has had on their own practice. There is evidence that this training is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of learners' experiences. However, further support and guidance is required to ensure that staff consistently build on this training to improve the quality of children's learning in the classroom.

The Council have improved the use of ICT to enhance learning and teaching. All schools now have access to Glow¹⁴ giving both teachers and learners access to the national schools' intranet. The Council recognises the need to further extend and embed its use.

Schools have taken positive steps to implement the strategy for *Improving Health-Improving Learning*. There is evidence to demonstrate that schools are building sustainable health and wellbeing strategies, policies and provision into their everyday practices. Eleven schools have met the standard for *Improving Health-Improving Learning*, with almost all on target to meet the standard by December 2010. A network of staff from over 40 schools has been established to share good practice and develop resources. However, the Council recognises the need to increase the number of schools achieving this standard.

The Council recognises the need to continue to develop a range of approaches to help improve relationships and behaviour in schools and beyond. In partnership with the Scottish Government's Positive Behaviour Team, SACRO and Tayside Police staff have embarked on a training programme to roll out restorative approaches to all schools and support services over the course of the next three years. The Council is using a range of other approaches including *Cool in School*, CALM training, Nurture Groups and *Seasons for Growth*. All these approaches seek to enhance children's emotional health and wellbeing. The Council recognises the need to continue to develop restorative approaches across all schools over a three year period to improve relationships and behaviour.

The Council is participating in the Bounce Back Resilience Programme which aims to create positive, supportive and resilient classrooms and schools and to provide resources to enable staff to help their learners develop resilient attitudes and behaviour. Schools continue to demonstrate their commitment to building skills for life, learning and work through developing and amending their enterprising programmes of study to incorporate international, environmental and economic development perspectives. Almost all learners have benefited from classroom or school practices that allow them to develop a resilient attitude and have been provided with links and insights into the world of work.

In the secondary sector, all schools have introduced Skills for Work accredited courses from S3. The number of Skills for Work courses has increased from 32 in 2008/09 to

¹⁴ Glow is the Scottish Schools Digital Network.

37 in 2009. A Skills for Work award ceremony has been held in partnership with Careers Scotland and Perth College. In addition, 900 work placements were organised for 2008/09. ECS has developed key partnerships across the Council, as well as with Perth College, Skills Development Scotland and employers to promote improved opportunities. Looked after and accommodated children will be a priority for the Council's employability strategy as part of their aspirations to ensure that these young people have good employment and housing options.

Perth and Kinross has made significant progress in relation to physical education and sport. Their work on developing physical education in the broader context of *Curriculum for Excellence* has been highlighted nationally as best practice and is currently available on the Learning Teaching Scotland website as a model for other authorities to follow. Partnership working between Active Schools, Sports Development and schools has also been highlighted as an example of good practice nationally by Learning and Teaching Scotland. All of this work has resulted in almost all pupils receiving high quality physical education and activity experiences in line with national guidance. Specific programmes have been developed for target groups. These include the provision of outdoor residential experiences for young people in foster care, the implementation of the Fit for Girls programme across secondary schools and partnership programmes to develop interventions to tackle childhood obesity. A programme of opportunities is also provided for young people with a disability.

The Council are making effective progress in linking schools, community clubs and facility programmes and in developing progressive pathways for participants. They have been leading the implementation of the *Perthshire Accreditation Club Excellence Scheme* (PACES) initiative in collaboration with Active Schools to work with target clubs to encourage continued participation in sport out of school. Good progress is being made in developing an integrated approach to programming the new Community Campus facilities by coordinating physical education, Sports Development clubs and community recreation activities through local groups.

Very good progress has been made in developing the innovative use of ICT in supporting young people at risk of missing out. In 2009, first steps in the development of the Perth and Kinross Virtual School were taken. English and mathematics Access 3 online courses were also developed and are used by a range of learners in different contexts. Learners at risk of missing out have been successfully re-engaged by working with other organisations, including Perth College, through the Youth Unlimited initiative. As a result, learners are now supported in their use of the on-line service in locations and situations suited to their needs. This work has contributed to the improvement in the proportion of young people achieving English and mathematics at level 3 in 2009.

Effective multi-disciplinary approaches provide very effective support for children and young people with ASN. Over the past year ECS has undertaken a comprehensive review of approaches to meeting the needs of children and young people with ASN. The review highlighted a number of effective areas of provision. However, it also identified areas for improvement.

Almondbank House in North Muirton has now opened an enhanced multi-disciplinary provision. It provides both primary nurture class and family support services for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and also those affected by parental substance misuse. New quality residential provision for up to four looked after young

people is also provided within the Almondbank House campus. A new special school, Fairview School, was inspected in March 2009 by HMIE and learners' experiences were evaluated as excellent.

The four primary school aged nurture groups continue to demonstrate that children who present emotional and behavioural difficulties can have positive learning experiences. The groups provide a safe and nurturing learning environment where each child has their needs met. The resultant outcomes for these children include increased resilience, enhanced ability to form positive relationships, better behaviour, reduced exclusions and improved engagement with learning.

Good progress has been made in developing the concept of *Learning Without Walls* leading to better outcomes in targeted areas of provision for children and young people. It is intended that the idea will be further promoted within the wider community, to business, industries, parents and local outdoor industries.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, chaired by the Chief Executive, has had a key role in bringing together partner agencies to deliver better outcomes for children and families. In addition, Integrated Children's Services Partnerships have been set up in six localities across Perth and Kinross. The partnerships have representation from primary and secondary schools, social work, CLD, the voluntary sector, careers, housing, childcare, psychological services, police and health. Their purpose is to ensure better outcomes for children and families in their locality and each partnership is developing a plan based on identified local needs. A range of services work together to intervene with children who need additional support. These include: Youth Unlimited, Thinking Out of the Box Programme, Double Dykes, for gypsy travelling children, and City Base, a drop in centre for young people.

Effective transition arrangements for children and young people with ASN are achieved through for example:

- An integrated approach to review placements and progress in learning.
- The use of coordinated forward planning with other agencies through the Post School Transition.
- The establishment of a panel to ensure the needs of learners with ASN, including looked after children, moving to a new provision post school can be met locally and with minimum delay.
- A *Help at Hand* event held in October 2009 designed to ensure that children and families are supported effectively through post school transition.

The Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy seeks to safeguard the rights of looked after children. Senior officers from the Community Planning Partnership act as corporate parents for looked after children to ensure positive outcomes for them.

ECS continue to improve opportunities for young people to recognise and appreciate their roles and responsibilities within their local communities and globally. Young people demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through a wide range of active learning opportunities within their schools and communities and through international

partnerships. The number of schools engaging with the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme continues to grow.

Almost all schools have received an Eco Schools Scotland Award. Very effective international partnerships have been built including developing one of the first Confucius Hubs in Scotland at Perth High School. At the 2009 Scottish Education Awards, Perth High School achieved the International Schools Award. In the *Muirton Youth Crew* young people are learning new skills and are contributing to the community through providing activities for other young people through their Kits for Kids project. The *Eastern Perthshire Youth Forum* have been supporting the community through their involvement in helping run major community events. Some of the young people have moved on to volunteering, work and college.

A wide range of opportunities which help people to achieve their full potential are provided by Perth and Kinross Council. These include annual events such as *Blooming Artists* and *Vocalease* where over 1,000 learners participated at Perth Concert Hall. Through the Child Care Strategy the Council supported 90 people to undertake professional childcare qualifications and a further 810 took part in a range of continuing professional development courses. The multi-disciplinary North Perth Community School has helped families by involving them in events as wide ranging as parent conferences and drop-in support, numeracy and literacy groups, dads and children cooking, school transition days, and youth clubs.

Significant progress in engaging people in planning and delivering services has been made. However, there is still a need to be more consistent and systematic. The Council has continued to support *Placecheck* recently completing a further scheme in Dunning, community engagement has been instrumental in the development of the community campuses. Council staff have conducted a series of focus groups and world café events with the communities of Kinross and Kinross-shire engaging with them about the future for community assets, community heritage and open space, services to the community, supporting the community and community attractions. 2,500 young people took part in the *Black Box* consultation on issues which affect them. The results from this exercise will be used to inform the next Youth Strategy.

The Council has established and led CLD Partnerships with membership from key stakeholders including community representatives. Each partnership has developed its own action plans to provide a variety of opportunities, including community arts, youth activities and adult learning opportunities, which reflect the needs of local people.

How good is our leadership?

There is very effective and purposeful leadership of the service with a clear sense of direction and robust and comprehensive approaches to self-evaluation. The Education and Children's Services Executive Director and the Depute Director lead and manage the service very effectively and ensure that continuous improvement, efficiency and a focus on stakeholders are integral to the development and delivery of services. They promote a culture of self-evaluation and ensure that effective systems are in place to sustain continuous improvement through rigorous challenge and support. In this they are very well supported by an effective SMT.

The SMT are highly visible and motivate staff to give of their best. The range and balance of skills, personal qualities and experience make for a very effective SMT. The team exemplifies the Council's approach to quality improvement through active leadership and personal involvement in improvement strategies and activities. There is a culture of improvement supported by the SMT's well embedded self-evaluation approaches and an understanding that all staff, at whatever level, have a key role to play in taking forward the work of the service. Staff are encouraged to feel confident about leading initiatives and a key priority is to develop leadership skills across and throughout all levels of the service.

The three key priorities of ECS complement corporate priorities and provide a clear strategic framework for the delivery of integrated services within ECS. This integrated approach enables the service to draw upon the collective knowledge, experience and personal interests of a wide range of staff and use this to lead projects. Working arrangements are built on trust and reflect a genuine concern for staff and partners. There are systems in place to help tackle challenging problems, share information and deal with difficulties. Staff and partners have regular opportunities to share ideas, review their work and learn from each other.

The HMIE inspection report on services to protect children and young people in the Perth and Kinross Council area stated that the vision, values and aims across services was excellent. The inspection found that collective leadership and direction was good and that leadership of people and partnerships and of change and improvement was very good.

Over the past few years the Council's Executive Officer Team, led by the Chief Executive, has worked effectively with elected members and staff to embed the Council's vision, aims and objectives and lead on the Single Outcome Agreement for Perth and Kinross. The Audit of Best Value of the Council shows strong leadership and very good relationships between elected members and senior officers which support the work of the ECS and ensures evidence based decision making about budgets and resources. There are clear links between service priorities and objectives, the Corporate Plan and the Single Outcome Agreement as well as to team plans and individual employee review and development. These links have been articulated well and have been widely communicated to headteachers, managers and staff across the service. Planning documents set out key priorities within a well managed planning cycle. The Policy Framework, drawn up after consultation and joint working, sets the agenda for all aspects of the service.

As part of the VSE exercise HMIE worked alongside ECS staff to evaluate the quality of six agreed themed areas. The following themed reports are the result of this process.

Theme 1: Early Years

The Early Years theme was chosen to help take forward the Early Years Strategy emerging from a comprehensive Review carried out in 2008. The VSE process helped to confirm the direction being taken by the Early Years Teams, highlight significant positive progress and chart areas for further action.

Within ECS the early years are supported by three main complementary teams: The Early Years Team (School Improvement) ensures that all schools, nurseries and partner

provider centres are delivering high quality development in the early years for young children. The Early Years Team (Children's Services) provides more intensive support for young children and families. The Childcare Strategy Team ensures access to childcare and childcare support, training and information as well as integrating childcare and pre-school education to provide out of school care. Each works collaboratively whilst retaining a discrete focus. A further project team is working to plan and implement the draft Early Years Strategy to ensure that it reflects both Perth and Kinross and National priorities.

What has been achieved?

Development of the draft Early Years Strategy has led to better integration of services to support the early years as demonstrated by the development of early childhood centres as 'Hubs'. The Play & Learning project, to promote active, experiential learning, indicates improved engagement in learning and increased confidence amongst young children. It also paves the way for the development of *Curriculum for Excellence* in the Early Years. Staff now demonstrate a shared understanding of the methodology, teamwork has improved and smoother transitions for children are reported.

The I CAN (Early Talk) project to promote language and communication skills has shown similar impacts on children and staff. The ICT in the Early Years project has been successful in embedding ICT skills in the everyday learning experiences of very young children.

What has yet to be achieved?

Improvements identified by The Early Years Team and confirmed by the VSE process include simplifying and streamlining delivery of services and better integrated working, particularly through the development of 'Hubs', the extension of pre-school entitlement from 12.5 to 15 hours per week, and improved access to services in rural areas.

Staff need to embed active learning in the early years in all schools and centres and ensure all partner provider centres are aware of the principles promoted through I CAN to improve children's experiences of talking and listening.

There is a need to ensure that all children have access to a teacher and that the deployment of nursery teachers is more equitable across schools and partner provider centres.

Staff, working with HMIE, also identified a number of areas for further improvement.

- Circulate the draft early years strategy for consultation, review and make amendments, finalise strategy and begin to implement stage 1.
- Evaluate the added value of the full-time places in nursery hubs with a focus on impact in relation to improvements in performance and service users' experiences including both children and their families.
- Consider the expansion of the hub model within more nurseries across Perth and Kinross, building on early evaluations of existing provision.

- Map, research and develop proposals for services for under threes, in collaboration with health and other agencies.
- Increase the skills and capacity of the Early Years workforce across services through shared continuous professional development opportunities, including training and networking.
- Review where schools and centres are with their learning through play approaches and target support from the team.
- Consider offering I CAN (Early Talk) opportunity to the partner centres ensuring sustainability is a core criteria.
- Develop the delivery of the extension of pre-school entitlement from 12.5 hours per week to 15 hours per week; including re-defining the role of the nursery teacher.

Theme 2 Additional Support Needs

The ASN Review was at an advanced stage of development in terms of self-evaluation due to the commissioning of a comprehensive review which began in May 2008. It was felt that it would be important to highlight this work within the VSE as it plays a vital part in ensuring that the needs of children and young people, particularly vulnerable children and young people, are effectively met. It is a large, complex and expanding part of the wider service and recent national legislation has serious implications for senior managers and schools.

Following an evaluation of the quality of provision across the service, a number of key strengths and areas for improvement were identified. These were detailed in a report to the Lifelong Learning Committee with a clear recommendation from Senior Management of ECS to adopt the findings of the review. Some key aspects are provided below.

What has been achieved?

There is a strong commitment at all levels to the presumption of mainstreaming and very effective procedures to meet legislative requirements of the Additional Support for Learning Act. Integrated working and the involvement of parents is improving with examples of very effective practice. There is high quality support for children and families for whom English is an additional language, for children in most primary specialist provision and for children of travelling families. There is an increasing understanding that strong systems to support the most vulnerable children and young people, also improve approaches to meeting the needs of all children and young people.

What has yet to be achieved?

- The Council needs to provide greater clarity about the philosophy of and policy for ASN provision by providing written guidelines which can then be disseminated. This should take place within a broad and robust management structure to promote good practice, quality assure provision and support legislative requirements.

- The audit process and ASN procedures need to be reviewed to reduce the administrative burden on schools, provide better information about pupils and lead to more equitable support for pupils in secondary schools.
- The Council needs to develop improved provision to meet the needs of children in Primary 1-3 with specific language and communication needs.
- The Council need to develop small group Social, Emotional and Behavioural provision for children in P1 to S1, and reconfigure provision for young people with challenging behaviour or school phobia.
- Staff need to improve secondary provision for pupils with ASD.
- Decisions about all outwith authority placements need to be made jointly within one budget.

Discussions during the VSE process also emphasised the need to be clearly focused on outcomes for children and young people and highlighted the opportunities provided by the development of the new Community Campuses being developed in Perth and Kinross.

Theme 3: Effective Learning and Teaching

Over the past three years, significant developments have taken place to ensure that all children and young people are provided with the highest quality learning experiences, allowing them to achieve their full potential. The Perth and Kinross *Standard for Learning: Realising Potential*, defined the standard expected of all schools and teachers. Further guidance was provided in part 2 of *Creating a Curriculum for Excellence*, the Council's strategic response to implementation of the national development.

Fundamental to this approach was a focus on improving both the 'what' and the 'how' of learning, encouraging teachers to transform the learning environment and develop innovative approaches. Underpinning this approach were three interconnected initiatives:

- Assessment is for Learning (AifL);
- Play and learning in the early years; and
- Co-operative learning.

The Futures Education approach to planning offered further support for staff and pupils.

The inclusion of Effective Learning and Teaching in the VSE helped to focus the processes in place to evaluate the impact of these initiatives and to clarify further action.

What has been achieved?

AifL:

A comprehensive programme of continuous professional development focusing on developing formative assessment and the impact of this work was evident during visits to schools by service managers and recorded in some HMIE reports. Approaches to AifL are well embedded in most schools. However, there is still room for further improvement.

Play and Learning:

The Early Years team have worked with all early years and primary schools since March 2006 to embed the principles and methodologies of active learning through the planned roll-out of the play and learning programme. This work was set within the context of *Curriculum for Excellence* and embraced the principles of active, experiential learning.

Almost all schools have now attended training through in-house, external or seminar presentation. Collaborative practice has been developed between some nursery and early years classes in primary schools. The projects undertaken as part of this programme were varied. Planned opportunities to share good practice informed a large number of practitioners across almost all schools. Smoother transitions for young people were reported as was an improved approach to team work amongst staff.

Co-operative Learning:

Teacher evaluations of the training academies have been overwhelmingly positive. The development has stimulated peer support groups to share resources and experience both online and in network meetings. Evidence from classroom practice reveals some very good co-operative approaches but there are also times when the techniques take precedence over the learning. There is a need for further targeted support to ensure a consistent approach is adopted across all schools. The approach is also being extended to include co-operative meetings to develop more democratic decision making.

Futures Education:

This approach to planning interdisciplinary learning using *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes has been adopted successfully in some schools. Key to this is the involvement of pupils in deciding what might be learned. When sharing these approaches to planning with staff and parents it needs to be very clear where this work sits in the larger context of implementing *Curriculum for Excellence* in schools.

What has yet to be achieved?

- AifL: A targeted support programme is required to ensure there is a more consistent approach taken in all schools.
- Play and Learning: There now needs to be consideration given to renaming this work excluding the term 'play', to ensure that the principles of active, experiential learning are understood, adopted and embedded across all stages and sectors.
- Co-operative Learning: The Council needs to ensure that they evaluate the impact of the training and its application in schools consistently and rigorously. Early

evidence shows that there remains work to be done to ensure teaching in this way is of a consistently high standard.

- Futures Education: There needs to be greater clarity amongst all staff about the purpose and place of Futures Education approaches in the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Staff, working with HMIE, also identified a number of areas for further improvement.

- All schools will continue to be supported and challenged through the School Improvement Framework in order to evaluate the quality of educational provision and identify areas for further development.
- As a result of the above ECS staff will work with schools to help them develop and articulate their whole school approaches to effective learning and teaching incorporating Play and Learning, Cooperative Learning, AifL and Futures Education approaches.
- Opportunities will be planned to develop skills in evaluative writing and evaluate the impact of improvements identified in the School Improvement Plan and the quality of learners' experiences.
- Through targeted support, headteachers will further develop their evaluative skills and as a result, they will be able to be truly evaluative when writing the Learning sections in the self-evaluation form and School Standards and Quality Report. The text used should reflect the robust evidence base which demonstrates the impact of effective learning and teaching approaches and outcomes for learners.
- The Council will appoint a Support and Development Officer (Cooperative Learning) to establish support networks and develop further guidance for staff who have been trained in cooperative learning approaches. This person will also work with service managers to develop a more detailed action plan leading to authority guidance and support for schools aimed at sustaining high quality cooperative learning approaches in all schools.
- ECS staff will ensure that staff are clear about the expectation of the role of SMT in schools as key personnel in developing high quality learning and teaching within their school. SMT need to know what good practice looks like to be able to do this well. As such there will be training role for service managers and the Support and Development Officer to enable this to happen.

Theme 4: Effective School Self-evaluation

In order to affirm that the capacity of ECS was improving, it was the Council's view that it was essential that this theme be included in the VSE. A culture of improvement in schools which is underpinned by a robust process of self-evaluation has been developed and a planned programme for the audit of quality indicators from *How good is our school?* has been in place for the past four years. The School Improvement Framework underpins a commitment to embedding self-evaluation into the day-to-day work of every establishment.

The Council's approach to self-evaluation has been developed at two levels:

Professional development:

Over the past two years a proportionate model of the School Improvement Framework has been introduced. The process is based on rigorous support and challenge but is now closely linked to the school's own procedures for self-evaluation.

Technical development:

All schools have completed an electronic self-evaluation form which is currently being used to inform the School Improvement process. An online version of the recording format is currently being developed through Glow in an innovative joint project with Learning and Teaching Scotland.

What has been achieved?

To date there is some evidence of impact in improvements in performance, learners' experiences and the quality of leadership through Extended Learning and Achievement Visits, HMIE Inspections and discussions with headteachers and staff. Not all schools are at the same stage in their development, but most have a better understanding of and confidence in, the self-evaluation process. They have also become more responsible and accountable for the overall quality of the educational experience for all learners. In the majority of schools, teachers are getting better at engaging in professional discussion as their understanding of the self-evaluation process develops. In an increasing number of schools, teachers are becoming more reflective and involved in self and peer self-evaluation.

What has yet to be achieved?

The Council needs to ensure that all schools are committed fully to the self-evaluation process and confident in using the quality indicators from *How good is our school?* to evaluate the effectiveness of educational provision for all learners. There is a continuing need to support and challenge all schools to ensure consistency of approach to self-evaluation by evaluating accurately against the quality indicators and identifying appropriate areas for improvement. (this will include the effective completion of the self-evaluation form (online by 2011).

The Council needs to gather appropriate evidence of impact on improved learning and teaching and achievement for all learners across all schools. The effectiveness of this process will be improved by providing support for schools in being self-evaluative and providing appropriate evidence when completing the self-evaluation form and Standards and Quality Report.

Statistical evidence and information should be gathered and collated in order to make evaluative judgements at authority level. This will inform the planning process at authority level and identify appropriate actions to drive forward improvements across all schools.

Staff, working with HMIE, also identified a number of areas for further improvement.

- The Council should scrutinise more closely where all schools are with regard to effective self-evaluation and the impact of the process to date in relation to improvements in performance, learners' experiences and effective leadership. Areas for further support and action should be identified.
- All schools will continue to be supported and challenged through the School Improvement Framework in order to evaluate the quality of educational provision and identify areas for further development.
- Opportunities will be planned to develop skills in evaluating the impact of improvements identified in the School Improvement Plan and the quality of learners' experiences. This will also include evaluative writing.
- Through targeted support headteachers will be able to write the Learning sections in the self-evaluation form and School Standards and Quality Report using language that is truly evaluative. The text used should reflect the robust evidence base which demonstrates the impact of effective learning and teaching approaches and outcomes for learners.
- The self-evaluation recording format will be developed further to simplify and complement the validation process for the Improving Health and Improving Learning Strategy. In order to ensure consistency of recorded information and approaches across all schools, the section on Statutory Duties and Other Requirements will also be developed further.
- Training to support the development of the online self-evaluation framework will be planned for schools as part of the pilot programme.
- The authority will continue to identify and gather the range of statistical evidence required to make qualitative and evaluative judgements with regard to improvements in performance across all schools and sectors.

Theme 5: Secondary Attainment and Achievement

The Council has a well-established and robust system for the analysis of SQA attainment data in which ownership of the data and the quality of the analysis has increasingly become the responsibility of each school.

The Council have used the results of this work to inform curricular developments leading to the introduction of new courses for young people supported by targeted resourcing.

What has been achieved?

There have been improvements in attainment in secondary schools but these have not been consistent in all categories nor across all schools. An overall improving trend in attainment in primary schools and in S1/S2 has not fed through year on year into S4-S6.

The proportion of learners achieving level 3 awards in English and mathematics by the end of S4, including learners for whom English is a second language has increased. This exceeds the performance of comparator authorities.

The annual SQA data analysis reviews have led to a shared understanding across all school SMTs regarding data analysis and effective action for improvement. There is a need to embed further this consistently at departmental level in schools. Reviewing the process during VSE Phase 1 has helped to inform future developments.

New curricular pathways have been set up to offer vocational education leading to an increase in young people achieving positive destinations. A focused programme to improve attainment at Access 3 English and mathematics has been successfully implemented using highly effective ICT strategies. This has included innovative planning work at authority level to support individuals at risk of not achieving.

Partnership work has begun to develop ways to recognise aspects of young people's wider achievement

What has yet to be achieved?

- The Council needs to embed the use of data analysis at departmental level to improve outcomes for learners and as a result, produce further gains in attainment.
- There is a need to establish a quantitative system for recording and tracking wider achievement in partnership with CLD and develop innovative methods of evaluation such as the 'social return on investment' approach.
- The Council need to develop the use of SEEMIS tools to improve the accessibility of tracking data and to incorporate the recording of wider achievement. The Council aims to ensure that these and other processes lead to attainment that exceeds that of comparator authorities in all measures by 2011.

Staff, working with HMIE, also identified a number of areas for further improvement.

- Data analysis - The Council will seek stakeholder views on improvements to the existing arrangements. This will include meetings with young people and with school improvement staff.
- Focus on wider achievement – information will be gathered including stakeholder views. This will demonstrate the range of opportunities available to young people including vocational courses and programmes to support post-school transitions. This includes work supported by the Raising Achievement Strategy and More Choices More Chances. Partnership working will be highlighted within and outwith ECS.
- Staff will produce a calendar for all partner agencies regarding key dates in the attainment cycle. They will then secure an agenda for action for all secondary schools shared as a result of discussion and actions that are linked to the annual calendar and review.

- The Council will further develop work with SEEMIS to produce a single entry data system that can be used by all teaching staff.
- The Council will coordinate SEEMIS, Swift and Glow systems to maximise the amount of shared information available to all partnership agencies.
- The Council will deliver continuous professional development for Principal Teachers on data analysis and attainment improvement strategies.

Theme 6: Wider Achievement

The inclusion of this theme within the VSE, and its link to the theme on secondary attainment and achievement, is a reflection of the increasing integration of ECS and a desire to fulfil the key service priorities to raise attainment and achievement, support the most vulnerable and ensure equality of access to cultural and community services.

Within ECS young people have access to a range of opportunities to support their wider achievement, both in school and in the community. Key to this is the effective partnership working across the service and an understanding that through an integrated approach, young people can access earlier and better support. There has been a clear and positive change in working together between all services and partners in Perth and Kinross over the past three years.

When targeting the most vulnerable, partnerships provide continuity of support for known families. Local partnerships help to ensure that positive messages are being communicated about young people, which in turn contributes to improving relations in the wider community.

What have we achieved?

Improvements in Performance

Taken together, the opportunities provided for young people to achieve have had a very positive impact on improvements in performance. A number of award schemes have provided a vehicle for a very wide range of young people to achieve, from the most able to the most vulnerable. These include the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Dynamic Youth Awards, Youth Achievement Awards and John Muir Awards.

The *Linking into New Careers* (LINC) project targeted young people who had left school with no positive destination and of the 30 who started the course 28 moved on to positive destinations.

Stepping 4ward, Girls on the Move, Community Sports Leader Awards, Young Scot web portal training and the Tobacco and Safe Choices peer education programme have all resulted in improved achievement, inclusion, confidence and skill development amongst young people. The success of these initiatives is often due to the fact that they are led by young people who then contribute their new skills back into the community.

Impact on Learners

The self-evaluation activities carried out during the VSE provided a positive and supportive forum for assessing progress and charting future improvements. It became clear that there were significant positive outcomes and impact on young people.

Groups of young people were asked to evaluate the impact of the activities they had been involved in and how they could be improved. Participants reported many positive effects including gains in confidence, the development of skills (including social and communication skills and self-awareness), helping them into positive destinations, contributing to and supporting their communities. There were examples of young people securing funding for, and setting up, their own community projects. Parents, police and other community members commented on improvements in communities being safer places due to the increase in activities for young people.

What has yet to be achieved?

The Council need to continue to build on partnership working through training and by providing opportunities for support and challenge. Developing joint approaches to *Curriculum for Excellence* will help to take this forward.

The VSE process highlighted a need to enable young people to reflect on and articulate their learning as a result of their wider achievement experiences and identify the benefits to their community. It also identified a need for schools and parents to value the impact of these opportunities more. Creating further opportunities to recognise and celebrate achievements, particularly in schools will help with this, as will improvements to parental information.

The Council need to record achievement and gather data on wider outcomes in a more integrated way. This will include using awards as evidence towards SQA qualifications.

Staff, working with HMIE, also identified a number of areas for further improvement.

- It was recognised through the self-evaluation process that young people were not always able to articulate their learning as a result of their wider achievement experiences. Some young people were unable to recognise the transferable skills they had gained and they could not always identify the contribution they had made to their community. Young people will be encouraged to reflect more fully on their learning and staff working with young people in school and community settings will be offered training to allow them to support young people to reflect on their learning.
- In order to answer the question “What will the recognition of young people’s wider achievement look like in Perth and Kinross?” a working group, with representatives from across ECS and its partners, will be set up to look at how young people’s wider achievement can be recorded. Any recognition of learning and achievement which takes place in the community will be recorded alongside learning and achievement which takes place in the school.
- Currently staff in CLD are effective at identifying outcomes for individuals and groups. However, during the self-evaluation week it became apparent that there is also a need to identify wider outcomes which may impact, for example, on attendance at school or on crime statistics leading to safer communities. Work will be done to engage staff in how best to gather baseline information from a variety of sources so that the impact of work can be evidenced in relation to these wider outcomes and in turn the contribution to the national outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement.

- There is a need to further explore *Curriculum for Excellence* in relation to CLD. Awareness Raising sessions will be arranged for staff and opportunities for discussion across a range of professionals will be put in place to explore links and identify areas for integrated working.
- Although there are a number of events, including the young people led Spirit of Youth Awards, aimed at celebrating young people's wider achievements, young people themselves felt that still more could be done by the schools to acknowledge and recognise their wider achievements. Staff will investigate ways of using the work generated by young people while doing various Awards as evidence which can be used against an SQA qualification.

What are the key priorities for improvement?

The ECS key priorities are:

- raising achievement for all;
- supporting vulnerable children and families; and
- providing equality of access to cultural, community, sport and leisure services.

Raising achievement for all

To raise achievement for all the Council will:

- continue to improve attainment in primary and the early years of secondary, particularly in writing;
- increase the proportion of learners achieving Credit and Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 awards by the end of S4;
- plan for the introduction of new qualifications in secondary schools by 2013;
- raise levels of boys' attainment at all stages, but particularly in writing across primary and the early years of secondary;
- continue to have low levels of exclusion;
- continue to have low levels of violence and aggression against staff in schools; and
- remain committed to raising levels of attainment and achievement for all even further, by exceeding the performance of comparator authorities by 2011 and becoming one of the highest performing councils nationally across all measures.

To achieve this, the Council are:

- acting on the improvement actions identified through the recent VSE of the Service and inspections;

- targeting resources on improving levels of attainment and achievement for vulnerable learners who live in areas of greatest deprivation;
- developing restorative approaches across all schools over a three year period to improve relationships and behaviour;
- increasing the number of schools achieving the standard Improving Health, Improving Learning;
- developing approaches to recognising and recording learners' wider achievements;
- continuing to develop innovative ICT approaches to support learning and teaching;
- implementing the outcomes for the ASN Review in particular extending the range of specialist provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- developing clear curriculum pathways for all children 3-18 to ensure every child is able to develop their skills for work, life and learning;
- extending and embedding Enterprise and Vocational Opportunities for all;
- developing opportunities for all based on their entitlement to a broad education based on personalisation and choice and the opportunity to study in depth;
- improving the quality of learning and teaching by increasing the proportion across all schools of teachers trained in the latest approaches to co-operative learning;
- developing leadership at all levels of the service with a clear focus on leading learning in the classroom;
- ensuring there are robust arrangements for performance management, including monitoring and tracking learners' progress systematically; and
- focusing on using assessment information to plan learners' next steps in learning.

Supporting vulnerable children and families

To support vulnerable children and families the Council will:

- reduce levels of Youth offending;
- improve support for families through the integration of early years services with early intervention and parenting support and implement the draft Early Years Strategy;
- continue to improve outcomes for Looked After Children through the implementation of the Looked After Strategy; and

- deliver a more systematic approaches to measuring outcomes for children and young people.

To achieve this, the Council are:

- expanding the early intervention approach by Youth Justice;
- continuing to act on the findings of the recent multi-agency self-evaluation on Child Protection and ASN;
- implementing the participation strategy to promote greater customer involvement in the delivery, planning and design of children and family services;
- extending the level of residential respite and further embed the use of Advocacy Service;
- further developing the Fostering and Adoption website;
- furthering the development of the implementation of Getting It Right For Every Child;
- continuing to develop the public awareness programme to ensure that all members of the community are aware of the full range of child protection issues; and
- working with partners to improve access to specialist support services for children in need of help following abuse or neglect.

Providing equality of access to cultural, community, sport and leisure services

To provide equality of access to cultural, community, sport and leisure services the Council will:

- involve local people in planning and delivery of services;
- ensure the needs of communities are taken account of in the way the new community campuses develop to maximise their success;
- continue to embed good community engagement practice across the Council and its partners;
- support the enhancement of customer services at local level, particularly through the library service;
- develop a programme of activity to maximise the cultural, community, and leisure services contribution to health and wellbeing; and
- work to strengthen the wider impact of cultural and community services.

To achieve this, the Council are:

- finalising the new strategic framework for sport and active recreation to ensure best use of resources and maximise benefits to service users;
- developing a new cultural strategy informed by the outputs of the cultural planning process to enhance the quality of cultural offering and maximise access to cultural experiences;
- developing a more strategic approach to the commissioning of cultural and leisure services;
- reviewing and implementing service improvements and service redesign;
- strengthening partnership working to successfully deliver on key outcomes;
- acting on the improvement actions identified through the recent VSE of wider achievement; and
- developing more systematic ways to capture views of services users and to take account of these in the planning and delivery of services.

Supporting all of the Council's priorities

Underpinning all priorities the Council are:

- delivering leadership and management opportunities to support succession planning, motivation and effective working;
- developing strategic support for integrated working including workforce planning and training;
- continuing to develop the approach to measuring outcomes to ensure robust scrutiny of service delivery, finance and governance;
- implementing an integrated management information solution across ECS;
- reviewing and updating the school estate and asset management plans and developing proposals for a balanced and affordable capital programme reflecting priorities across the service and the Council;
- developing a schools and community campus ICT infrastructure and systems to support learning and teaching and provide access to the Scottish Schools Intranet (Glow) and *eric*;¹⁵
- undertaking a Strategic Review of the School Meals Service and a Strategic Best Value Review of School Catering and Cleaning Services;

¹⁵ Councils intranet.

- continuing to deliver the Investment in Learning Programme within agreed timescales and put in place arrangements for the effective contract management of the new campuses as they are opened; and
- ensuring effective and efficient implementation of modern customer focussed shared support for service systems and processes.

What is Perth and Kinross Education and Children's Services capacity to improve?

ECS have a very strong capacity to improve and are well placed to fulfil their ambition to deliver high quality services that meet the needs of all and support all service users to be the best that they can be. The service has a robust approach to improvement with a clear focus on improving outcomes which have a positive impact on service users.

ECS are well placed to build on existing good practice and focus on local outcomes that will achieve meaningful improvements for learners, participants, children and young people and communities. Working together with Community Planning Partners these support the delivery of the Single Outcome Agreement.

The SMT, led very effectively by the Executive Director, supported by the Depute Director, has a clear focus on integrated working to deliver the service's priorities. Working relationships are very good, evidenced by a parity of esteem between professionals. However, while integrated working is strong and improving, the Service recognises that there is further scope for improvement to ensure all services work together to provide an integrated service at the point of delivery

Perth and Kinross Council's ECS has a clear sense of direction and a commitment to both supporting and challenging staff. ECS is an improving service with a clear focus on supporting the best possible outcomes for all learners, participants, service users and communities.