

Validated self-evaluation



Dundee City Council
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Validated self-evaluation in Dundee City Council: Education Department

Commentary by Education Scotland

Introduction

As part of its strategy to drive continuous improvement for learners and to ensure it is delivering best value, Dundee City Council Education Department, invited Education Scotland to work with them on a validated self-evaluation (VSE) between April and September 2013. During the first phase of the VSE it became apparent that a number of staff were due to retire and that new appointments would be made. As a result, it was agreed with the Director that the VSE should continue into September to enable the new senior officer team to build on the good work undertaken in April. The VSE was conducted as part of the Education Service's planned approach to self-evaluation. Further details on the themes examined through the VSE can be found in the Dundee City Council Education Department's VSE report. <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/education/>

What has the VSE achieved?

Education Scotland are confident that the quality of Dundee City Council's Education Department's self-evaluation is accurate and robust. The Director of Education set a clear agenda at the beginning of the VSE demonstrating strong leadership and a clear vision. During the VSE, officers demonstrated an increasing ability to use evidence more effectively to identify gaps in service delivery, data collection, and performance. Officers used this information to drill down further into their themes to ask more challenging questions and to interrogate the evidence with greater clarity and focus. As a result of the challenge from Education Scotland, the VSE teams identified important areas for improving their self-evaluation. Amongst these was the need to gather more impact and outcome data, to better triangulate evidence to test for reliability and validity. The VSE led officers to achieving a more robust evidence base and as such, to a clearer set of reliable actions for further development.

Looking ahead

The VSE built on the existing enthusiasm and teamwork of the officers involved in the process. During the week, officers were constantly changing their areas for improvement, modifying existing practice in light of the evidence gathered, and looking ahead to how they could improve their approaches to self-evaluation. Self-evaluation statements were updated during April to September, each providing an increasing level of precision and refinement, leading to a clearer set of priorities. It is planned to build on this momentum with the new management team and to further develop self-evaluation skills and processes across the Education Department and Council. Indeed, this has already been undertaken and significant progress has been made in, for example, refining the School Review process. As a result of the work undertaken by Education Scotland in partnership with Dundee City Council's Education Department, the authority is now better placed to take forward their improvement plans and to build further capacity in officers and staff in self-evaluation for improvement. Looking ahead, senior officers are keen to develop

creative approaches to evidence gathering so that they can plan for the future and learn from what they know about themselves now, to what they need to know about themselves in the future. It is planned that such transformational thinking will lead to a more holistic and integrated assessment of impact and outcomes for children, families and communities.

Next steps

As a result of the VSE, Dundee City Council has planned a number of improvements which are detailed in the authority's VSE report. The Council will continue to work in partnership with the Area Lead Officer and other Education Scotland staff to further develop the actions identified across each of the themes. This work will be incorporated into the Local Partnership Agreement between Education Scotland and the Dundee City Council Education Department.

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