

# Progressing towards an empowered system

September 2022



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## Foreword

The Scottish Government, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and Education Scotland are committed to creating the conditions for school empowerment, as set out in the Education Reform Joint Agreement in 2018. This Agreement is founded on the understanding that all stakeholders in the education system are empowered to work together to improve outcomes for Scotland's learners.

Empowered schools have been and remain a key element of our compelling and consensual vision for the future of Scottish education, during both recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and through education reform.

This resource takes account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on work to develop a more empowered system. It identifies where there has been progress and is intended to stimulate reflection, discussion and action on what steps we need to take to build on successes and strengthen school empowerment further. It has, understandably, been challenging to engage directly with schools to gather evidence of empowerment in action during the pandemic.



**Gayle Gorman**  
Chair of School Empowerment  
Steering Group

However, we have been able to draw on significant evidence from a wide range of engagement in order to provide a series of case studies.

Progress towards empowerment builds on increasing trust and collaboration at all levels. I hope that everyone involved in Scottish Education will find this publication helpful as they reflect on their own role in continuing to develop an empowered system.

## An empowered system

Ensuring that all learners achieve excellence and equity is the cornerstone of Scottish education. Empowered, responsible and collaborative schools are central to our shared vision, where decisions are taken closest to those they affect most. Within Scottish education, empowerment releases the potential of individuals at all levels to build capacity and develop practices.

Staff within an empowered system grow stronger and more confident, working in partnership to lead learning and teaching that achieves excellence and equity for all learners. Collaboration for improvement happens at all levels. In an empowered system, establishments take ownership of their own outcomes. Staff, including senior leaders, evaluate their performance and take well-judged action to make improvements. They identify priorities for improvement which take account of the local context and are in the best interests of children and young people.

Within an empowered system, leaders support a culture that develops and encourages teacher and practitioner agency. They encourage an ethos which supports and enables staff to collaborate and learn together, including supporting teacher-led professional learning. They are responsible for making decisions in partnership with their learning community. Teachers, practitioners and support staff are integral to shaping an empowered system. They are adaptive and creative in implementing approaches to learning and teaching, making decisions in partnership to help improve outcomes for all in the learning community.

When learners feel empowered in their learning, they are consistently involved in planning to improve outcomes. They are increasingly able to make informed decisions to realise their aspirations. They have an accurate understanding of their progress and what they need to do to improve.



Parents<sup>1</sup> in an empowered system are partners in their child's learning. They feel meaningfully involved in matters such as school improvement planning and part of improvements due to ongoing and effective two-way communication between home and school.

Local authorities add value in an empowered system by enabling key decisions to be made by those closest to the educational experience of children and young people, and who best understand the particular context of the learning community. Additionally, Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) work with local authorities and practitioners towards developing positive outcomes for children and young people.

There is a wide range of partners and national organisations who work together well within an empowered system. Schools, local authorities, parents and carers, colleges, universities, the local community, third sector, public sector and business organisations all collaborate effectively to support and secure improvement in outcomes for learners.



1. The term 'parent' refers to parents and carers.

# The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on the intended outcomes related to school empowerment. The pandemic accelerated and strengthened certain aspects of empowerment because the system needed to work more collaboratively. We have seen examples of collaboration, participation and engagement, professional learning and autonomy impacting the delivery of learning positively. Much of the system's positive and proactive response to addressing the numerous and far-reaching challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is to be acknowledged and commended. Local authorities and schools felt empowered to exercise their judgement and take account of local circumstances within the necessary limitations of the national response to the pandemic. Nevertheless, this response was not uniform across Scotland. The events and consequences of the past two years have had a major impact on the capacity of the system to focus on strategic planning when faced with so many urgent operational demands.

School leaders took a solution-focused approach to meeting learning needs and used a variety of funding streams, including Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), local authority funding or Scottish

Government Connecting Scotland grants to provide learning and teaching resources. There are many examples of effective deployment of resources, as well as the production of highly responsive and adaptive guidance and information, the use of tools, particularly digital tools, and enhanced skills development across the system.

To meet the immediate needs of their communities, school leaders took decisions at speed which directly addressed the needs of learners at local level. They diverted guidance and resources to where they were most immediately required. They and their staff prioritised the health and wellbeing of their children and young people and their families.

Senior leaders and staff used their knowledge of family circumstances and took action to distribute a wide range of resources. They identified priorities which took account of the local context in the best interests of their learners.

They supported the holistic needs of children and young people, often providing and delivering food and care packages. Senior leaders and staff provided learning packs at all levels of the system, for example learning packs for National

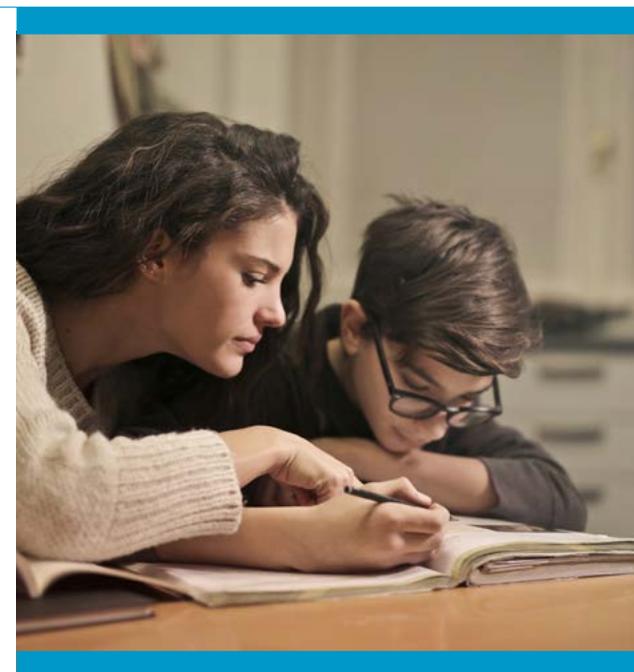


Qualifications in art and home economics. Where access to devices or internet connection was challenging, many schools ensured learners were provided with hard copies of learning materials and resources. Approaches included delivering learning packs to children and young people's homes or providing a safe collection point in school or community buildings for collection. In addition, items such as jotters, pens and pencils were distributed routinely or left in a community location for families to access. In most cases, provision of devices and connectivity was targeted towards socio-economically disadvantaged families with limited or no access to digital hardware and connectivity. Scottish Government funding enabled many school leaders to deploy additional staff to where they had identified the most need.

Senior school leaders and teachers were proactive and responsive in employing flexible and creative approaches to curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment to meet the needs of children and young people. Schools planned, implemented, then refined their individual approaches to take account of their unique context. School staff used their knowledge of children and families to inform bespoke approaches to delivering learning within their local contexts. Senior leaders frequently showed themselves to be agile leaders, who took decisions, often under considerable time pressure, to provide the most appropriate curricula and methods of delivery. They adapted their

curriculum in light of the pandemic to focus on literacy, including digital literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, especially during periods of remote learning. Many staff also participated in professional learning to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people during the pandemic. They were adaptive and creative in implementing approaches to learning and teaching, making decisions in partnership to help improve outcomes for all in the learning community.

Breadth is widely acknowledged as a strength of the Scottish curriculum. However, the stronger focus on numeracy and literacy, including digital literacy and health and wellbeing, inevitably led to some children and young people experiencing a reduction in this breadth of curriculum. In secondary schools, understandable concerns around qualifications for young people in the senior phase sometimes meant that breadth of learning for young people in the broad general education received relatively less attention. Leadership opportunities at different levels arose, such as those for subject specialists in the secondary sector during the alternative certification process. Overall, headteachers report a greater involvement in decision-making processes than teachers, practitioners and support staff.



As a consequence of the pandemic, staff changed the focus of their professional learning to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people. Teachers prioritised increasing their skills, knowledge and understanding of digital technology and its role in supporting learning and teaching, especially during the periods of remote learning. Staff at all levels collaborated to support each other in improving their digital skills. This was often well supported by local authority central digital teams. Many headteachers have acknowledged the role of all staff in upskilling colleagues. Such collaborative approaches mean that staff in almost all schools are more confident and skilful in using an increasing range of digital tools to deliver more effective learning.

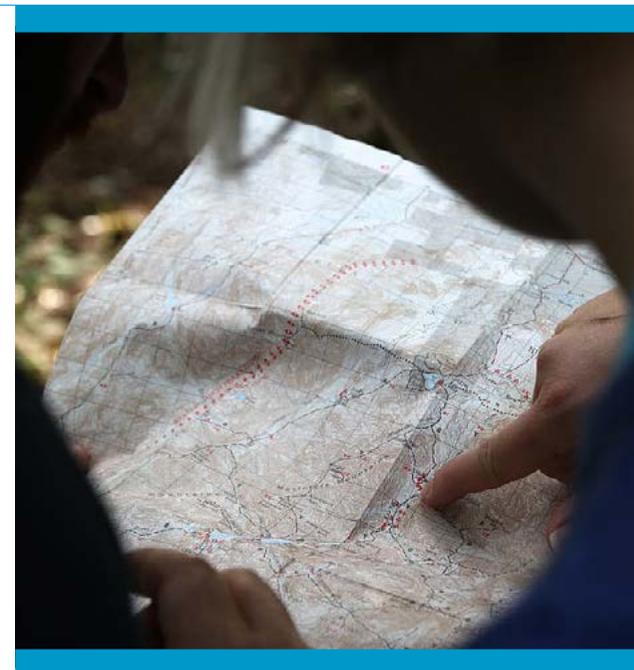
Education Scotland and other organisations noted a considerable increase in the uptake of professional learning programmes. This includes in digital learning, leading teams, leading remotely and curriculum design. Organisations such as the General Teaching Council for Scotland saw more engagement in post-event recordings than live events. There is also evidence of practitioners setting up their own networks to further share learning and wellbeing. There is now a framework for digital learning which has been adopted by all Initial Teacher Education providers.

Many children and young people developed additional self-efficacy and motivation to master tasks and achieve their learning goals when they

learned remotely and upon their return to school buildings. Consequently, these learners felt more empowered to plan and access their learning at times that suited them best. Children and young people were more able to learn at their own pace and were supported to develop independent learning skills through approaches such as self-assessment.

However, there are substantial numbers of learners whose experience of the pandemic was less empowering than that of their peers. This is particularly true of many, although not all, vulnerable children and young people, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage. There remains a need for empowerment activity to focus on equity of positive outcomes for children and young people. Empowerment could be an important lever in reducing the poverty-related attainment gap and the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families.

During the pandemic, staff, parents, learners and partners shared a common goal – to improve learners’ experiences. People in the education system were empowered to work together to make and deliver solution-focused activities for children and young people. Stakeholders were empowered to address many of the challenges their community faced in a way which suited their context. There are many examples where local authorities and schools built on the experience of the periods of remote learning to strengthen their engagement with parents.



As a result, there have been major changes to the ways the system accesses skills, information, guidance, tools and resources to bring about improvement to school practices and performance. These have been particularly successful and empowering when deployed to respond to the local context by stakeholders within the local context.

## Case studies

The following case studies illustrate ways in which empowered key partners worked together to address successfully some of the challenges the pandemic presented. These are intended to stimulate reflection, discussion and action on what steps need to be taken to build on successes and strengthen school empowerment further. The case studies were selected or adapted from existing evidence sources.

### Learner empowerment



**Learners**



**Parents and carers**



**Teacher and practitioners**

#### **St Benedict's High School, Renfrewshire Council, National Overview of Practice in Remote Learning 11 (page 2)**

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St Benedict's High School is making use of feedback to improve the quality and range of the remote learning provision. Through questionnaires and discussion, young people in S1 and S2 reported that at times, they felt overwhelmed. Some were finding demands of learning on their own challenging. In particular, they felt that the number of subjects, as well as the varying expectations of staff in each area, was difficult.

In a parental survey, half of respondents felt the volume of work for learners was too high. As a result, across the school and in departments, staff worked together to simplify their remote learning offer. They planned short learning episodes with clear outcomes and longer themed learning, for example, a focus on learning in science, technology, engineering

and mathematics (STEM). The school reports that this has been a valuable exercise and is working well for young people. Young people shared that they were not entirely comfortable being in lessons 'on camera' all of the time. Many found the forum too public to share any difficulties or concerns they were having.

Staff undertook professional learning and now make more use of the facility in Microsoft Teams to have small, breakout sessions on a regular basis. Staff feel this has enabled them to tailor support better. They report that this has had a positive impact on young people's engagement and the quality of work submitted by learners. Young people say they now feel more comfortable talking to staff.

# Learner empowerment



Learners



Teachers and practitioners



School leaders



Support staff



Partners

## **Stonelaw High School, South Lanarkshire Council, National Overview of Remote Learning 9 (page 12)**

The school has a well-established system for tracking the health and wellbeing of young people. The system was developed following the first period of remote learning and is used by all teachers across the school. All young people worked with their pastoral teacher to agree the support they would require while learning remotely. This included setting timescales for pastoral catch-ups. Pupil support staff also facilitate a live drop-in session every lunchtime, which is open for all young people and provides informal support to those who access the sessions. As a result, a significant number of young people have daily or weekly check-ins with pastoral staff. This contact includes telephone calls, emails and socially distanced walks.

Led by both teachers and young people, the 'One Stonelaw' approach to health and wellbeing encompasses three groups:

- **The 'Be Strong' group is developing mental and emotional wellbeing**
- **The 'Choose Kind' is building positive relationships**
- **'Be U' focuses on promoting and celebrating inclusion, equality and diversity.**

Each group has created an online space which provides the whole school with access to resources, web links and activities to support key aspects of health and wellbeing. These classrooms are continuously developed to provide ongoing support to young people returning to school buildings. Staff have developed sketch-notes for parents to help them support young people with their health and wellbeing, and make effective use of social media to celebrate 'Wellbeing Wednesday' and 'Feel Good Friday'. Staff and young people share hints and tips

to support mental and emotional wellbeing. This approach has become increasingly popular during lockdown and engagement has increased.

The 'One Stonelaw' approach, reinforced by the Parent Council, also supports both universal and targeted transitions for children in P7. A programme of virtual lessons has been developed and delivered by the depute headteacher, pupil support staff and newly qualified teachers. The leadership team has engaged in a series of virtual meetings with all children in P7 and their parents to build confidence and support children to become more familiar with their new learning environment.

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### **Reflective questions**

- How effectively do we engage children and young people in achieving positive change in schools?
- How well are children and young people specifically involved in planning to improve outcomes at school level and evaluating success?



**Learners**



**Parents and carers**



**Teachers and practitioners**

### **Moorfoot Primary School and Garvel Deaf Centre, Inverclyde Council, Achieving excellence and equity - 2021. National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (page 41)**

Over the last few years, all children have been taught British Sign Language (BSL) from the start of their nursery placement through to Primary 7, with a view to improving communications and relationships amongst all pupils. As children shared their learning about BSL at home with their parents and families, they too were interested in learning more about deaf culture. Arrangements were put in place for adults to learn BSL free of charge at sessions run by a BSL tutor and supported by parents of deaf pupils from Garvel Deaf Centre. Outreach classes are held in a community setting for any parents or families who are unable to travel to the school. BSL has been incorporated and is celebrated across the school including at assemblies, concerts and the school blog.

#### **This has resulted in:**

- Increased parental engagement in children's learning amongst hearing and deaf parents and their families
- Parents feeling listened to and involved in the wider life of the school and community
- Greater access to deaf adults, deaf peers and deaf role models both in school and across Scotland
- Improved relationships between children and parents, and reduced frustration and anxiety at home
- Greater deaf awareness and a shared understanding amongst hearing parents, families and pupils
- Improved communications with hearing parents of deaf children, deaf parents of hearing children and deaf parents of deaf children
- Parents regularly accessing and engaging with the online workshops on the school's learning blog
- Improved relationships and friendships between hearing and deaf children
- Improved children's experiences of school and learning
- Increased appetite amongst pupils to learn about different cultures and how to sign in other languages
- Closer working with cluster secondary school
- Greater links with the wider community and partnerships with national deaf organisations
- Parents continuing their learning and progressing to qualifications in BSL
- Parents of hearing children using BSL to communicate with members of the community.

## Parent and carer empowerment



School leaders



Parents and carers



Partners

### **Rosewell Primary School, Midlothian Council, What Scotland Learned: 100 stories of lockdown (page 118)**

The senior leadership team (SLT) met with the Parent Council (PC) to discuss a partnership approach to teaching and learning and to support health and wellbeing in the community. We adopted the tagline #WeAreRosewell #WeAreResilient. We focused on coming out of the situation having built a stronger community. Overnight, we provided learning and communication through a range of digital platforms. Some of these were new platforms so we had to quickly adapt and upskill both parents/carers and staff. SLT offered personal support over the telephone or on the doorstep to ensure everyone in the community had access to on-line learning and to the latest information. Families were supported through 'Rosewell Shares' which was set up by the PC and they received regular food boxes and other financial support. The school used a 'Cash for Kids' grant and supplemented food boxes with a 'hot meal treat' including a recipe

card that encouraged families to cook together. In collaboration with the school, the PC posted weekly activities on social media. They were focused on spreading positivity in our community. Some of these attracted attention from national press. SLT and PC communicated daily to identify where support was needed most.

Rosewell Primary School and the PC initially set up a joint community approach. 'Rosewell Shares' was set up by parents from the PC and linked with local church. 'Cash for Kids' provided extra funding. The local shops provided prizes for events and were drop-off and collection points for resources. We made sure that we had daily contact, over seven days, with some of our more vulnerable families. This meant we could respond immediately and get support, when required. The PC also acted as a gatekeeper and referred families onto us. A robust

tracking system meant that no-one was left feeling alone or without support. We encouraged families to engage with creative and innovative approaches to online learning. Many of our joint activities were based on the outdoors and encouraged families to get out and about into the local community. This supported the overall mental and physical health and wellbeing of everyone. We promoted the coming together of the community by linking with as many organisations and companies as possible. The biggest difference was the community acting as one in the face of adversity. We became more resilient.

# 4



### School leaders



### Learners



### Parents and carers



### Local Authority and Regional Improvement Collaborative

## Tynecastle High School, City of Edinburgh Council in Pupil Equity (CEC) in Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards (education.gov.scot) p30

The headteacher met with the Parent Council to keep them informed about major financial decisions. During this meeting participatory budgeting (PB) was discussed in relation to the allocation of PEF. As a result, the school decided to use this approach. The priority was to educate current students about PB through a series of classroom presentations as part of the social subjects curriculum. CEC Lifelong Learning colleagues were tasked with creating an educational presentation and delivering it to all students in the school. As part of the presentation, students were asked to generate ideas that were in line with PEF criteria, and to submit these ideas to the steering group. This was followed up in tutor time. S3-S6 pupils were able to submit ideas online, and S1-2 pupils could submit suggestion sheets. A

senior student subgroup sorted the various suggestions into distinct categories, and then analysed the ideas to identify ones that met the PEF criteria. The steering group was tasked with producing costs for each of the ideas by speaking to heads of department and the senior leadership team (SLT). The steering group was then tasked with establishing a voting process. Just over half of students voted on £8,000 of PEF money (10% of the overall PEF budget). The total funding requested was £14,500 for the 10 projects. The school reports there is no formal evaluation of this work as it was undertaken in session 2018/2019 and the funding had not all been spent by the end of the session. In the following session COVID-19 and lockdowns prevented further developments including completion of the evaluation. However, the school has firm plans

to continue developing participatory budgeting this session and have been asked to share their practice with other schools.

### Reflective questions

- To what extent are parents and carers supported and empowered to inform and evaluate our school improvement and education recovery plans effectively?
- How well does our school work with parents to develop shared responsibility and ownership of improvement as partners in their child's learning?
- How far are decisions around resources influenced and shaped by those who use or benefit from those resources?

## School leader empowerment

# 6



School leaders



Teachers and practitioners



Partners



Support staff

### **Belmont Academy, South Ayrshire, Achieving excellence and equity: 2021 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (page 51)**

At Belmont Academy, South Ayrshire, the quality of education and the management of development priorities benefit from clear strategic direction. The senior leadership team support and challenge each other, and manage effectively the pace of change. They have been very successful in supporting staff to take forward school improvement priorities, and have developed successfully a culture of trust where staff feel valued, identify strongly with the vision and values of the school and share an understanding of the range of socio-economic factors that affect young people in the school community. The school is explicit in its focus on promoting wellbeing, raising attainment and improving learners' experiences. Senior leaders link the school's allocation of funding to improvement priorities, which are based on the school's vision, values and aims and link directly to local

and national priorities. Departmental improvement plans align closely to the school improvement plan, with specific areas of focus. Staff are clear on how they are contributing to these priorities. A major strength of the school's work lies in its approaches to empowering staff to take decisions and lead aspects of school improvement. Well-planned professional learning opportunities support this building of capacity. The aspiring middle and senior leader programmes are providing a useful vehicle for staff to develop leadership and mentoring skills. Senior leaders have ensured time is available to enable staff to engage in a range of professional learning opportunities and to collaborate with each other. Teachers are engaging with relevant professional standards through approaches to professional review and development. They are taking increasing responsibility for self-directed learning, including

undertaking accredited courses at Masters level to support the work of the school. All teachers volunteer for working groups which provide opportunities for them to build positive relationships with colleagues and partners. All teachers assume responsibility for developing aspects of their department's work or whole-school priorities. They are involved in approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning at both a whole-school and departmental level. Consultation with all stakeholders has resulted in an ambitious revised curriculum framework and delivery. Senior leaders are aware of the importance of ensuring all young people, parents and partners continue to be involved fully to secure further school improvement.

## School leader empowerment



**School Leaders**



**Teachers and practitioners**



**Local Authority and Regional Improvement Collaborative**

### **Angus Virtual School, Angus Council, National Overview of Practice in Remote Learning 7 (page 10)**

Angus Council has taken a collaborative approach to quality assuring the effectiveness of remote learning, building on existing quality improvement approaches and system leadership through the Angus Virtual School (AVS).

The local authority established the AVS in 2018, as a means to provide a systems leadership approach and pedagogical support to schools. The purpose of the AVS is to work with schools and partners to secure sustainable improvement. Primary headteachers meet regularly in 'triads', and more recently secondary leaders in 'quads', in order to discuss, share and peer-review educational provision. Meetings are facilitated by AVS officers to ensure a level of consistency within quality assurance and appropriate levels of support and challenge. Since August 2020, these groupings have continued to meet in these well-established

forums, to discuss and peer review the quality of remote learning. AVS officers have developed a bespoke planning and monitoring framework to accompany the refreshed local authority remote learning guidance.

This framework is helping school leaders and staff to measure quantitative and qualitative information in relation to remote learning, focusing on high-quality remote teaching, targeted support for individual learners, and wider strategies to promote and sustain learners' motivation and engagement. School leaders discuss, evaluate and share practice on their school's approaches to remote learning using the framework. AVS officers ask that school leaders provide examples of remote learning and associated data/assessment information to allow for an evidence-based discussion about improvement.

For example, headteachers regularly review pre-recorded lessons or join live lessons and provide constructive feedback to teachers on what went well and what could improve. AVS officers comment that this process has helped particularly to ensure consistency of approach across the local authority, as these regular sessions allow for moderation of standards and expectations for remote learning. Headteachers report that this approach is enabling the sharing of issues and approaches. This is helping to improve consistency.

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#### **Reflective questions**

- How has the (draft) headteachers' charter impacted on the relationships and responsibilities of teachers, schools and local and national agencies and organisations?
- How well do school leaders collaborate effectively in partnership with their whole learning community to support and secure improvement in outcomes for learners?



### Teachers and practitioners

#### **Falkirk High School, Falkirk Council, What Scotland Learned: 100 stories of lockdown (page 38)**

All staff and pupils faced a steep learning curve when adapting to home learning during lockdown. We recognised the need to support staff with skills and confidence to embrace the digital and virtual learning environment we now found ourselves in and, therefore, created our very own in-house virtual Continual Professional Development (CPD) Programme. This was led by staff for staff, to open up and embrace this new way of working from home. Over 18 sessions throughout May and June were delivered, with almost all staff participating in one or more sessions. Each session was researched, planned and prepared by our own staff in areas of their own professional and personal expertise and included follow-up support materials and a Question and Answer after each session to share best practice amongst each other. A staff survey was completed

digitally to measure participation and engagement and to support planning for the next session.

The overwhelming difference, evidenced by our staff survey, came from staff commenting on their improved skillset with digital tools to support learning:

- “It’s been fantastic. The CPD has addressed issues affecting me right now and given me solutions ... the support information afterwards is great.”
- “has had a huge impact on my information and communications technology (ICT) skills and much improved confidence to design and plan my lessons for pupils.”
- “It has been great to have the time to participate in the CPD opportunities and I have improved my ICT skills immensely in a very short time.”

However, the most significant difference was staff confidence and having the opportunity and the ability to experiment with new pedagogical approaches to support our digital learning priorities as a school. Lockdown learning has allowed our school community to be ready, willing and able to confidently use digital learning within and outside of the classroom. With staff being isolated in their own homes, our in-house career long professional learning programme provided the opportunity for staff to support each other, as well as a forum for them to discuss concerns, collaborate and share best practice across all subjects and faculties. The sessions also enabled staff to connect socially and emotionally with each other which also supported their own wellbeing.

## Staff empowerment



Learners



Support staff

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### **Fortrose Academy, The Highland Council, National Overview of Practice in Remote Learning 4 (page 4)**

Pupil support assistants (PSAs) have been upskilled significantly during the period between the two lockdowns and this is leading to more targeted and bespoke support for pupils. PSAs are now joining live lessons and offering support to those pupils with additional support needs. The school reviews the deployment of this staff to reflect changing circumstances.



Support staff



Teachers and practitioners



Partners

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### **Berryhill Primary School, North Lanarkshire Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards (education.gov.scot) p32**

At Berryhill Primary School in North Lanarkshire, PEF-funded principal teachers have engaged in and embedded the findings of collaborative action research. This has been supported by a partnership with the University of Glasgow's Robert Owen Centre. Teachers worked in an culture and ethos of collaboration to further develop the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.

A principal teacher was fully trained in a range of numeracy approaches and has shared this training with classroom teachers. Staff engaged in professional learning to improve their numeracy skills and implement new approaches to learning and teaching. A number of children were performing by 8-21 months below expected attainment levels. By the end of the intervention, this attainment gap had narrowed to an average of 3-8 months. The establishment also has evidence of children's attitudes towards maths and numeracy improving in this period and attendance increasing for the group as a result of improved confidence.

## Staff and partner empowerment



Support staff



Teachers and practitioners



Partners



Local Authority and Regional Improvement Collaborative

### **St Peter the Apostle Learning Community Transition Programme, West Dunbartonshire** **Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards (education.gov.scot) p27**

West Dunbartonshire Council recognises the benefits of collaboration and joint approaches to improving outcomes for children and young people. This being so, it has created a culture that encourages schools to work collaboratively, with each other and with partners. Within this context, the St. Peter the Apostle Learning Community undertook a joint PEF project to develop an enhanced transition programme for children in P7 moving to S1. This was designed to support young people whose needs were not being met by the existing arrangements. The costs were shared across the seven schools (six primary schools and one secondary school). This learning community includes council wards with the highest levels of deprivation within West Dunbartonshire.

In 2017-18, the learning community used PEF to fund additional educational psychologist input to support the design and delivery of an enhanced transition programme. Training for school staff was included in the programme to ensure sustainability beyond PEF. Staff engaged in professional reading and research with the specific focus of improving outcomes for identified learners. In addition, the funding was used to increase the allocation of pupil and family support workers to support delivery of the programme, fostering professional engagement and collegiate working. Initially, funding was also used to employ a project lead. A needs analysis was undertaken at the outset and this identified a group of anxious young people who were vulnerable at the point of transition. The programme

has continued beyond the initial project and is now delivered by class teachers, working together in an ethos of collaboration.

# 11

Evaluations of the programme carried out by the Educational Psychology Service at the end of years one and two demonstrate a decrease in overall anxiety scores indicating that the programme was helping to reduce anxiety in the target groups. Feedback from pupil focus groups reinforced the positive impact of the programme. The work has allowed staff to be creative in developing approaches to more fully meet the needs of all learners across the learning community.

### **Reflective questions**

- What are the factors that enable rather than constrain staff agency?
- How effectively are all staff engaged and supported in identifying, providing and evaluating their own professional learning?

## Staff and partner empowerment



**Support staff**



**Teachers and practitioners**



**Partners**



**Learners**

### **Clerkhill Primary School, Aberdeenshire** **Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards (education.gov.scot) p37**

Clerkhill Primary School in Aberdeenshire has engaged in a number of partnerships with cluster schools, churches, third sector organisations, local businesses and health colleagues. Partnerships are a fundamental part of the school's approach to improving outcomes for children and young people. Staff recognise the importance of collaboration for improvement.

Pupil surveys in 2018 evidenced a need to provide further opportunities for children to participate in a range of activities, including sports and music clubs. The school reports that for some children this has resulted in improved social skills and increased engagement in the life of the school.

Partnership with a local church in 2019-20 led to the provision of a successful breakfast club for some children. This was valued by children and parents, with increased school attendance evident. A Lego league and science club were established in partnership with a local business. These provided opportunities for a number of children to experience science through social interaction sessions in 2019-20. The school has successfully worked with partners from across the local community, providing a wider range of opportunities for achievement for their learners.

# 12

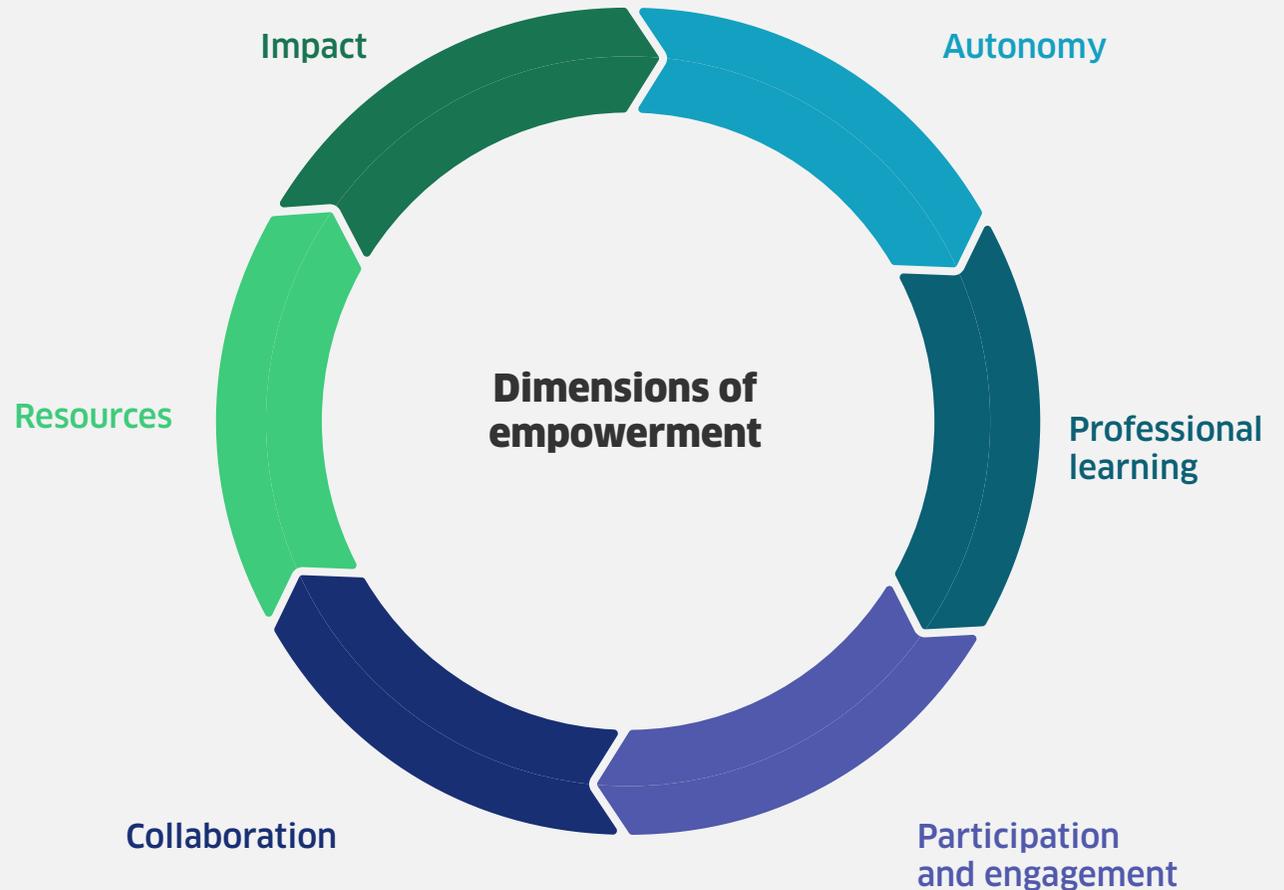
## 5. Appendix: Dimensions of empowerment

In academic year 2018-19, HM Inspectors carried out three national thematic inspections focusing on aspects of empowerment set out in the [Education Reform Joint Agreement, June 2018](#).

- [National thematic inspection: readiness for empowerment](#)
- [National thematic inspection: empowerment for curriculum leadership](#)
- [National thematic inspection: empowerment for parent and pupil participation](#)

HM Inspectors identified six emerging dimensions of empowerment as features of practice within and across Scottish schools. These six dimensions are reflected within the case studies set out in this publication.

These dimensions of empowerment are important levers for change to support further discussions and developing further empowerment of headteachers and schools. They can apply at all the different levels of the education system to ensure that decisions about children's and young people's learning and school life are taken within schools, supported by parents and the local community.





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