

The School Improvement Partnership Programme: innovating to tackle educational inequality

Question and Answer

1. What kind of projects will the programme support?

All partnerships will want to focus on reducing the effects of disadvantage on educational outcomes. The following list is not prescriptive. Some in this list are concerned with a particular context, others are about a particular theme or approach. We will be looking for a diverse range of projects to gather evidence for our action research.

- Differences in achievement by gender.
- Differences in achievement by ethnicity.
- Variation within a school for example across departments in a secondary.
- The performance of looked after children.
- Improving transition.
- Differences between urban and rural.
- Differences between small and large schools.
- So called “invisible” children.
- Social and emotional challenges.
- Bucking the trend.

Most projects will operate across local authority boundaries. Some will look to explore:

- cross-sectoral approaches,
- enhancing an existing collaboration,
- multi-disciplinary approaches,
- pedagogy and curriculum and
- partnerships with the independent sector.

All supported partnerships will be innovative and willing to take well-considered risks and learn from the results.

2. What relationship does the programme have to the Scottish Government's ambitions to create the conditions for continuous improvement in raising attainment and achievement, and reducing the inequity in educational outcomes found between children in different circumstances of affluence and deprivation.

The keys to raising attainment are widely understood, as are the roles required of key participants whether school leaders, teachers, learners or parents. Most national and local authority interventions are focused on developing these, and this programme is intended as a major contributor to sharing and spreading our learning.

Evidence developed by ADES and others shows clearly that systems that have successfully raised attainment show the following characteristics:

- Increasing the ambition, aspiration and expectations of every child and young person
- Delivering excellent learning and teaching in every classroom, every day
- Developing effective leadership at all levels
- Engaging family and the wider community
- Focusing on literacy and numeracy as platforms on which to build future learning, and
- Using information intelligently to understand progress.

The Cabinet Secretary spoke of these key drivers in his lecture of 27 March to Glasgow University

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Speeches/school-attainment-27032013>

3. What types of activity will be funded?

The funding is to allow staff in schools to develop new practices and use new methodologies. Its purpose is not to directly provide services, for example to run a Duke of Edinburgh's Award Group. It can be used to fund staff cover to free their time to participate fully in the partnership. Likely activities would include the following.

- Training and use of methodologies such as learning rounds, collaborative enquiry and lesson study.
- Visits between staff in partner schools.
- Directly observing practice in other schools / settings.
- Time to experiment – research, analysis, evaluation, review and writing up.
- Bringing in specific expertise.
- Joint CPD for the partnership.
- Time to engage in research.
- Work with students outwith the normal curricular pattern.

4. What are the pre-requisites for all partnerships?

All partnerships must sign up to:

- having a clear rationale for the partnership with a sound justification and self-evaluation,
- being willing to share all data arising out of the partnership for research purposes,
- ensuring staff involved are volunteers and have ownership and commitment,
- allowing access to the school for example to researchers,
- being willing to conduct specified common research methodologies and evaluation activities,
- undertaking activities that are intended to lead to specified improvements in outcomes for specific groups of learners,
- trying out new things, evaluate them honestly and empower staff to take considered risks,
- this work informing and influencing the school improvement plan,
- support from the school and authorities Senior management team,
- having secured political approval if required and
- provide staff time and other resources as appropriate to join the research team for example a link QIO from the authority.

5. How long does a partnership last?

It is important to view this opportunity as long-term, and so your ideas need to be sustainable. For the purposes of the initial research phase, your expression of interest should run until end June 2014. We cannot guarantee a financial contribution to this beyond that date.

6. What is the process and timeline?

The timeline indicated below is for the first tranche of partnerships. Further partnerships will be considered during the year.

9 August	Materials issued to local authorities inviting expressions of interest
30 August	Initial expressions of interest sent to Education Scotland
5 September	Panel meets to agree initial partnerships
September	Initial meeting for all partnerships to explore research approaches, action plan, etc.

7. Who sits on the panel?

The panel will involve representatives from Education Scotland, ADES and Professor Christopher Chapman from Glasgow University. It is important to remember that partnerships will be chosen to achieve an appropriate spread for the research project (sample frame).

8. How do I notify Interest?

A simple expression of interest form is enclosed with these materials. You may be visited by the Education Scotland Area Lead Officer and / or a researcher as part of the process.

9. How many partnerships are likely to be supported in the first year?

The first year of this programme is an action research project. We are anticipating supporting approximately 10 partnerships of different types to help form what this programme may look like should it be rolled out. For those schools who are not chosen in the first year, the Area Lead Officer will meet with you and representatives of the authority to discuss how we might still support your ideas.

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