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The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement

Education and Training Inspectorate

The Reflective Teacher

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Foreword

During inspection members of the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) observe many examples of very good teaching, where the pupils are motivated, stimulated and eager to learn. The good teaching we observe is often characterised by a strong desire to achieve the best possible outcomes for the pupils and a willingness, on the part of the teacher, to improve the quality of teaching.

In order to improve further many teachers already monitor and evaluate their work. The evaluation of teaching and learning can be done many ways; ranging from individual thought(s) about a lesson at the end of the day, to peer evaluation and discussion about the outcomes. Whatever the process, however, it is of key importance that the outcomes of the evaluation are used to improve teaching strategies, to improve teaching and learning and, by so doing to bring about improvement in the experiences of the pupils and the standards which they attain.

Over several years the Inspectorate has published a series of documents, including 'Together Towards Improvement' (TTI), 'Evaluating Schools', 'Evaluating Subjects' 'Evaluating Pastoral Care' and 'Improving Subjects', to make schools aware of the quality indicators used by the Inspectorate in many areas of evaluation, and to help those who work in schools to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. In 2003, several Digital Versatile Discs (DVDs) were produced to help the staff of an organisation evaluate the quality of provision by reflecting on, and discussing, examples of good practice.

Using these materials many organisations are now undertaking rigorous self-evaluation of their provision, in order to improve the experiences of the pupils and the standards they attain. In adding 'The Reflective Teacher' to those documents already published, the Inspectorate recognises the important part played by the individual teacher in the classroom, in bringing about improvements for the pupils.

The purpose of the document is to outline the quality indicators used by the Inspectorate to evaluate teaching, in order to help the individual teacher to undertake an honest and open evaluation of their work.

As is stated clearly in the first section of the document, it is to be used primarily by individuals at a level which suits their stage of development and level of participation and to support their personal development through Early and Continuous Professional Development. It is not intended to be part of the inspection process or to be used for the purposes of appraisal.

Through self-evaluation, each teacher will be able to identify the strengths in their work, and this will help improve their confidence. The use of the process outlined in the document will also assist them to identify areas for improvement, and to take the first steps towards implementing that improvement through, as necessary, professional development, for example, in-service training.

I hope each practitioner in Northern Ireland finds the Reflective Teacher useful, and that the document prompts a willingness to evaluate their own work, helps them to recognise the strengths in their teaching, and encourages an enthusiasm to develop professionally the areas they have identified for improvement.

Marion J Matchett.

Marion J Matchett (Miss)
Chief Inspector

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *For whom is this document intended and how might it be used?*

1.1.1 This document is intended to be used primarily by a **teacher, individually or with others**. You may decide, for example, to use the document within a year group or in small groups, to evaluate your work with others, and to set your own targets for improvement.

1.1.2 As an individual teacher, through your own classroom teaching, you have a major part to play in promoting the improvement of the learning of your pupils.

It is your role to:

◆ reflect on the provision you make for your pupils;

◆ assess the quality of provision within your own classroom; and

◆ decide how the quality of your work is contributing to improvement throughout the whole school.

This document is designed to promote your professional competence by helping you to:

◆ do your best for the learners under your care;

◆ find evidence to support the evaluation of your work;

◆ identify your strengths and celebrate these areas;

◆ build on the areas of strength;

◆ identify and address areas for improvement;

◆ identify your own staff development needs and assisting with your professional development and improvement;

◆ strengthen your professional relationships;

◆ contribute to whole-school development and improvement.

The document is not designed:

- **to be used as a check list;**

- **to be used for appraisal;**

- **for others to set targets for individuals.**

2.   EVALUATING YOUR WORK

2.1   *Why evaluate your work?*

2.1.1   Instinctively, teachers evaluate their practice; you may make changes to lessons, for example:

- when you feel you are losing the attention and motivation of some of the pupils;

- when some pupils are not achieving the learning outcomes you have planned for them;

- after you have marked work;

- when you become aware of an aspect of a colleague's work that you feel you could adopt.

2.1.2   It is also important for you to evaluate your own work to ensure that:

- you are providing the best possible outcomes for the pupils in your care; and

- your own work contributes to improvement in the experiences of the pupils and the standards which they attain;

- you can contribute to whole-school evaluation work.

2.1.3   If you regularly ask yourself the question:

Did I make a difference to-day and how do I know?

Then you have already begun to evaluate your work in order to make the learning outcomes better for your pupils.

SOME OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY CONSIDER:

Do I engage in self-appraisal and critical evaluation of my work?

Am I open to the possibilities of change and innovation?

Do I engage in professional development?

Do I keep up to date with relevant aspects of my subject or phase?

Do I engage professionally with other members of staff?

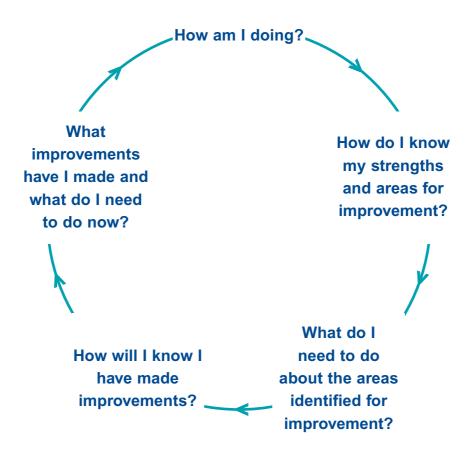If the answers to the above tend to be yes, then you have already begun the pathway to becoming a reflective teacher.

2.2 *How do I continue to improve my work through self-evaluation?*

2.2.1 As indicated, the process of self-evaluation is important to help you to establish:

◆ the strengths of your practice on which you can build; and

◆ where there might be areas for improvement which could be addressed.

2.2.2   The majority of teachers write and record some evaluation of the work outlined in their planning. These evaluations can vary from brief notes about resources needed, to more insightful comments on their own teaching and the teaching strategies which need to be developed further.

2.2.3   Continuous evaluation is very useful and adds to your own evidence of how the pupils are learning. There are many ways to evaluate, but in an effective manageable process of self-evaluation, you will ask yourself questions such as the following:

How effectively am I performing?

What improvements have I made and what do I need to do now?

How do I identify my strengths and areas for improvement?

How will I know I have made improvements?

What do I need to do about the areas identified for improvement?

These questions lead to a continuous process of evaluation as set out below.

How am I doing?

What improvements have I made and what do I need to do now?

How do I know my strengths and areas for improvement?

How will I know I have made improvements?

What do I need to do about the areas identified for improvement?

Using these questions will help you to identify an area you may wish to improve. An elaboration of these statements is included in Appendix 1.

3. WHAT PERSONAL QUALITIES WILL YOU REQUIRE TO BE AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER?

3.1 *To be successful and effective as a teacher you need to:*

◆ be able to engage, motivate and enthuse pupils;

◆ be a good listener and communicator;

◆ have commitment to the all round development of young people and children;

◆ show consideration for their personal and educational development;

- be self-motivated and able to work as a member of a team;

- keep up to date with relevant aspects of your subject and/or phase;

- exercise patience and display sensitivity to the individual needs and abilities of pupils;

- respect your pupils and encourage them to respect each other;

- foster positive relationships with your pupils;

- encourage parents to be involved in the education of their children;

- form positive professional relationships with all of those involved in the life and work of the school;

- support and manage colleagues in development work, where appropriate.

4. WHAT PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES WILL YOU REQUIRE BE AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER?

4.1 The professional competences you require to be an effective teacher may be grouped into five categories and can be identified through self-evaluation and developed through Early and Continuous Professional Development.

These categories are:

A. knowledge of the needs, abilities and aspirations of your pupils;

B. planning for improvement;

C. teaching and learning strategies;

D.   classroom management;

E.   monitoring and evaluation of learning;

A.   *Knowledge of the Needs, Abilities and Aspirations of Your Pupils*

Knowledge of your pupils and their specific needs, aspirations and interests is essential to ensure effective teaching and learning.

How do you know that you have knowledge of, and address the individual needs, abilities and aspirations of your pupils?

Ask yourself if you:

◆   have a perceptive insight into the pupils' intellectual, social and emotional needs;

◆   recognise that effective pastoral care underpins and enables successful learning;

◆   provide reassurance, build confidence and encourage pupil motivation and commitment;

◆   share the intended learning outcomes with the pupils, where appropriate;

◆   provide a range of work which sensitively respects differences in ability;

◆   involve the pupils in their own target setting;

◆   seek specialist support, when appropriate, to meet pupils' individual needs.

Being well prepared for lessons is essential to ensure effective teaching and learning.

What constitutes good planning?

Effective classroom planning should reflect your overall knowledge of:

◆ your pupils' previous learning experiences and achievements;

◆ the range of abilities and different learning styles within your class;

◆ the need for an appropriate match of work to the level of ability of your pupils;

◆ aspects of teaching and learning across the curriculum;

◆ the aims and objectives of the school.

and include:

◆ progression in the learning opportunities;

◆ appropriate learning outcomes;

◆ where appropriate, relevant success criteria from which to form judgements on progression and continuity;

◆ an appropriate variety of teaching strategies;

◆ short clear statements of what you want the pupils to learn;

◆ activities to motivate and challenge the pupils;

◆ an outline of an effective range of resources, including ICT;

◆ an outline of how the learning is to be monitored and evaluated both regularly and effectively;

◆ reference to whole-school or departmental planning.

C. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

Applying a range of teaching strategies, that are fit for the purpose intended, is essential to ensure effective teaching and learning with your pupils.

What should effective teaching strategies ensure?

An effective range of teaching strategies should ensure that:

◆ pupils are aware of what you plan/anticipate they will learn in the lesson;

◆ pupils are able to work individually, in pairs, in groups (to include active learning opportunities) and at a whole class level and work to their individual learning styles;

◆ there is a good balance of practical, written and oral work;

◆ there are opportunities for independent learning;

◆ an appropriate time is allocated for pupils to reflect on and then build upon, what they have learned;

◆ there are opportunities for pupils to celebrate their achievements.

D. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Effective classroom management requires you to develop good management skills and strategies which promote learning.

When is classroom management seen to be effective?

Classroom management is effective where:

◆ there is an attractive and stimulating environment which is well-organised and resourced to support the pupils' learning;

◆ a wide range of strategies encourage the pupils to be settled and engaged in purposeful and productive activities;

- ◆ agreed whole-school procedures are reflected within your classroom to ensure effective pastoral care and child protection;

- ◆ there is engagement in relevant staff development which seeks advice and guidance, if appropriate, from relevant sources.

E.   MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF LEARNING

Evaluation of your lessons should help to inform and guide subsequent planning, teaching and learning.

How do you undertake an evaluation of the learning taking place?

The evaluations of your lessons should:

- ◆ make honest judgements about how well the intended learning outcomes of the lesson were realised;

- ◆ use a range of formal and informal assessment procedures to measure the progress which your pupils are making;

- ◆ use the outcomes of your assessment procedures and evaluations to help you plan for future lessons.

5.   WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY WORK?

5.1   Every organisation, including your school, needs to have a School Development Plan which makes reference to a Staff Development Policy (SDP), which aims to improve the quality of provision within the organisation, including the quality of classroom practice.

5.2 Your school's long-term SDP should:

◆ be based on identified individual and whole-school needs;

◆ make effective use of staff, local and national expertise, as appropriate to the school, and in relation to specified priorities;

◆ ensure that activities are monitored and evaluated regularly and that such findings are used to influence future school developmental planning.

5.3 You will find it useful to plan your personal development programme (PDP) which will be relevant, effective and ongoing throughout your career. In terms of professional development, your school's SDP will also provide you with opportunities to:

◆ seek support and improvement in development needs identified through self-evaluation;

◆ seek and obtain support when necessary;

◆ further develop your strengths;

◆ acquire skills, which enhance your suitability for promotion;

◆ share examples of your good practice with others.

5.4 *Who might contribute to your development?*

5.4.1 **Support from within your school**

There are many opportunities for you to gain support to improve your practice. The first place that the support might begin is within your own school. Every teacher usually recognises the strengths of those with whom they work, which they feel they would wish to develop. It is important within a staff that these strengths are shared and that a school culture is such that teachers will share professional expertise and be able to approach another member of

staff to obtain advice and support, without being made to feel inadequate or unprofessional.

After all, you too will have strengths which will be of benefit to others.

5.4.2   **External support**

There are many outside organisations where you may gain support. The following list is not necessarily exhaustive but it does provide a basis on which to seek external support:

The Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) within each Education and Library Board (ELB);

Regional Training Unit (RTU);

Universities and Teacher Training Colleges;

Centre for Professional Development (CPD);

Behaviour Support Units of ELBs;
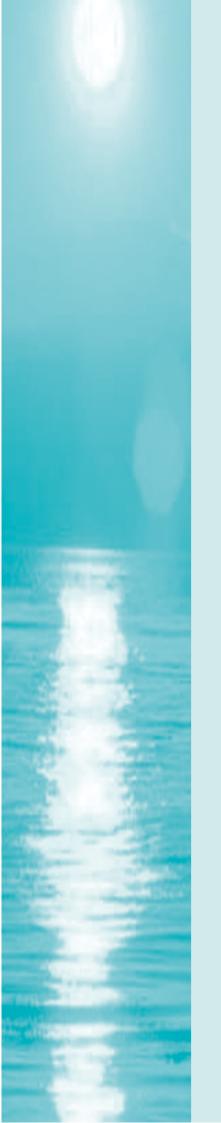
Outreach Centres;

and other agencies charged with enhancing the quality of learning and teaching.

6.   CONCLUSION

6.1   Self-evaluation on a whole-school or personal level should effect improvements in the experiences of the pupils, the quality of teaching and learning and the standards the pupils attain; it should also support your own professional and personal development, and help you to be a confident teacher.

6.2   Self-evaluation should confirm the strengths of your practice and, where necessary, indicate areas for improvement. The most important outcomes are that the strengths are maintained and built

upon and the areas for improvement are acted upon with subsequent changes in practice.

6.3   As with any process of self-evaluation:

- the procedures used should be developed by you to meet your needs;

- the evidence obtained should be both qualitative and quantitative;

- the outcomes of your evaluation should lead to action to achieve the intended improvements in teaching and learning;

- the views of pupils, colleagues and parents could be taken into consideration;
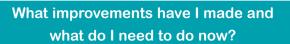
- the process should be ongoing.

Appendices

How am I doing?

The identification of strengths and areas for improvement signals the beginning of the process. The identification of the area for improvement may come about in many different ways, for example:

- there may be **a whole school evaluation** of a particular aspect of provision taking place, and you wish to see how the quality of your work can contribute to the overall improvement in experiences and raising of standards in the school;
- areas for improvement raised, **at the end of an inspection or following peer observation**;
- concerns that some **pupils in your class are not achieving well enough**;
- **unexplained variations in exam results**;
- some **pupils appear to be bored or inattentive**;
- your **planning does not appear to be guiding adequately your teaching**;
- you realise that you are **using a narrow range of teaching strategies**;
- in the light of **comments from the pupils or parents**.

How do I know my strengths and areas for improvement?

The gathering of evidence is a very important aspect of the process. The evidence should support the recognition of strengths or the identification of the areas for improvement. This evidence could be found in, for example:

- your own and whole school planning;
- comments of interested parents;
- samples of pupils' work;
- questionnaires issued to pupils;
- observation notes made by a colleague;
- outcomes from the use of quality indicators as outlined in' Together Towards Improvement'; or
- after the use of the DVD appropriate for your phase of work.

You may also employ some other methods of gathering evidence to evaluate the quality of provision, for example:

- peer evaluation with a colleague;
- observation in another classroom; or
- by recording the lesson.

It may be useful to refer to a coach/mentor within or outside the school to help you identify your strengths and areas for improvement.

These and many more ways to gather evidence are very useful, and, as you become more at ease with the process you may employ more of the methods.

What improvements have I made and what do I need to do now?

At this stage you are reviewing the new evidence you have gathered. A review of the evidence, particularly the same evidence you used at the start of the process to identify the area for evaluation, should also provide confirmation of improvement.

You will want to know specifically the improvement in outcomes for the pupils, in terms of their experiences or the standards they reach. The success criteria you identified at the beginning of the process will help you to evaluate whether or not you have reached the levels you set.

All you may now have to do is to continue the new practice and build on your success, but you may also find that there is work still to be done. If you are being rigorous and honest about your own evaluation you will be able to identify the way forward.

As you progress through the process it is advisable to keep a brief record of all that you have done which illustrates;

- the evidence you used;
- your success criteria; and
- the outcomes in the form of improvements you have made;

This record will help you in the future with other evaluations, and provide you with valuable information of the changes you implemented to bring about improvement.

At this stage you have reached the end of this review process, but there may still be areas for development and you may be identifying new priorities, so the process can be repeated. As you use the process more frequently you will become more confident about the evidence you use and the areas you review.

THE PROCESS OF SELF-EVALUATION

How will I know I have made improvements?

The action to bring about improvement is the most important aspect of the whole process. When you have identified an area for improvement you will want to know **what improvements in practice or outcomes you want to achieve. If you set appropriate success criteria they will help you to asses if you have reached your goal.**

The **success criteria** you establish will vary according to the area you are evaluating and will be time-bound, but some general principles include the need for success criteria to be:

- focused sharply;
- reflecting the experiences of the pupils and the standards which they attain;
- easily measured; and
- relevant to the area being evaluated.

What do I need to do about the areas identified for improvement?

An honest evaluation of this evidence will identify for you the strengths in your work and the areas for improvement, and allow you to move on to the next stage of the process.

Some of the areas for improvement may be easily remedied, for example:

- a shortage of resources which could be obtained in the short term;
- a change in the layout of planning.

Other areas may need more attention, for example:

- the widening of the range of teaching strategies; or
- providing opportunities for independent learning.

At this stage in the process **you need to be realistic about what is possible**. You need to be comfortable with the level of change and the timescales. There will be short-term areas for improvement which can be acted upon quickly without undue effort but the other more difficult areas must not be neglected.

Other areas will **need a more intensive change in practice** so these must be undertaken at a suitable pace; the process should allow you to bring about that change on a permanent basis. **Identifying time scales for completion** and the implementation of the changes in practice are very important.

The Department of Education aims to ensure that pupils' learning experiences are of good quality and provide a firm foundation for future success in education and throughout life. The Inspectorate aims to promote the highest standards of education and plays a part in assisting all of those involved in education to self evaluate and improve their own provision by providing clear indicators of quality. These indicators are laid out in a number of Inspectorate publications.

Evaluating Schools

Evaluating Subjects

Evaluating Pastoral Care

Improving Subjects

Together Towards Improvement - A Process for Self Evaluation

Together Towards Improvement - A Process for Self Evaluation in Pre-School

Evaluating Pre-School Provision

DIGITAL VERSATILE DISCS

Pre-school

Primary

Post-primary

Vocational Training

Youth Sector

Alternative Educational Provision (AEP) (2 Discs)

Special Education

Classroom Observation for Teacher Education

Professional Development Action Plan:

Focus Area for Development: _____

What areas have I identified?	What do I need to know?	How will I know I am making improvements?	When do I hope to complete the process?	What difference did I make?
1) …				
2) …				

In schools a number of terms are often used to describe aspects of teaching or learning. The definitions of these terms are wide and varied. In this section a definition of some of these terms is provided to stimulate discussion and debate. This discussion may lead to the setting of definitions for other aspects of teaching and learning.

Glossary of Terms

Learning Outcome

What you want the pupils to learn or achieve by the end of a lesson or a series of lessons.

Success Criteria

The measures of evidence you will use to ascertain whether or not you have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Range of abilities

The abilities of the pupils in your class, these abilities may vary from subject to subject.

Differentiation

Setting work to support and challenge all the pupils within your class, regardless of their ability.

Teaching Strategy

The approach you use to teach the class—terms such as whole-class teaching, paired work, group work, individual work are the most common.

Pace of lesson

The pace of a lesson is the speed with which it moves from introduction to conclusion.

Group Work/Co-operative Learning   A group of pupils working on a set task with a single outcome. A group of children sitting together does not constitute group work.

Independent Learning   Pupils working on a task individually making their own decisions, for example about how to find and present information.

Paired work   Similar to group work, two pupils working on a task with one outcome.

Progression   Improving on the pupils' previous experiences and achievements.