



Case study

School Self Evaluation Tracker (SSET)

The Boswells School, Chelmsford

“An outstanding system for self evaluation which is robust and reliable”

“What it offers, crucially, is something that is aligned to the Ofsted schedule, produces a coherent analysis of how the school views its own performance and also provides the opportunity to explain the evaluations and relate them specifically to the school”

“The beauty of SSET is that it replicates the judgements that Ofsted use. Schools will operate different cycles of self review but SSET offers robust evaluation against Ofsted criteria, storage of those evaluations and analyses of those evaluations”

David Crowe, Headteacher of The Boswells School, Chelmsford, has welcomed the School Self Evaluation Tracker as a welcome alternative to the traditional (and now defunct) Ofsted SEF. “I had something of a love/hate relationship with the SEF when it was first introduced. It required a massive amount of work to set up and did not necessarily flow naturally from self review activities within school. Writing it seemed like an event in itself,” he says.

“SSET has enabled us to co-ordinate and bring together our evaluations of the many different aspects of our work and produce reports for scrutiny at the touch of a button. For example, clicking on ‘Extended SEF’ in the Reports section will immediately produce an extended SEF as a written report. The report results from the process of reviewing and recording our evaluations within SSET without requiring any additional work save the press of a button.”

As a headteacher, David had a number of different requirements which made him choose SSET. He says: “What I felt we needed was a vehicle which could become central in helping us to make sense of the data that we were drawing in. We’ve got lesson observation data, we’ve got skill area reviews, we’ve got assessments of performance at leadership level and so on, which inform our judgements about how well we are doing and what we need to improve.

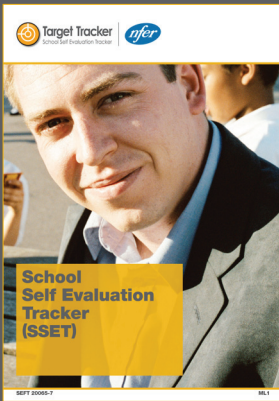
“We use SSET to evaluate our work in a way which is rigorous and reliable. The trade-off is that the statements that characterise the Ofsted judgements may not be exactly the descriptors that you might choose, but within such a robust and workable system that trade-off is a reasonable one. What it offers, crucially, is something that is aligned to the Ofsted schedule, produces a coherent analysis of how the school views its own performance and also provides the opportunity to explain the evaluations and relate them specifically to the school. It is also able to electronically store the evidence that supports the evaluations made. The integration of all of these functions works really well for us.

“SSET is used by many different schools and is able to facilitate their different ways of working. David says: “You have the opportunity to personalise SSET through your use of the software, and in the free text you choose to evidence the evaluations you have made. In doing so, the way in which you analyse and explain your judgements will reflect your house style, your philosophy of review, of teaching, of education; all of those things can be brought in and enable you to tell the story of your school and its situation through the SSET software.”

About SSET

The School Self Evaluation Tracker (SSET) is a one-stop school self improvement tool which helps schools to gather their evidence in one place and evaluate their performance according to the new Ofsted Inspection Framework. It is aimed at Headteachers of both Primary and Secondary schools, as well as Local Authorities who want to make it available to schools in their area.

SSET is a collaboration between NFER and Target Tracker (part of Essex County Council), who have been developing software for school improvement for over 10 years.



Please contact:

T: 01245 213144

and go to:

www.nfer.ac.uk/sset1

for more information and an online demo.

“SSET links in very well with our monitoring and data systems which are developed as live processes and enable intervention with students to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.”

David uses SSET to support his philosophy of leadership development: “It offers us the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in action. Different members of senior leadership assume responsibility for updating evaluations and evidence files on SSET and this work is reviewed through named governor committees who have oversight of particular areas of the school’s work. In this way, the process remains dynamic and the input of key leaders is reflected in the production of key documents such as the SEF. Governors and all staff have full access to SSET, so are able to access evaluations and the evidence to support them at any time of their choosing. SSET opens up the process of school review to all members of the school staff and governing body,” he says.

SSET does not tell schools what to say or how to think. “What SSET doesn’t do is give you the answer to all your self review questions. I think a school needs to think of its own situation, where it currently is, where it wants to go and what it needs to prioritise in order to get there. School leaders can take a view on what needs to be reviewed, how and when.

“The beauty of SSET is that it replicates the judgements that Ofsted use. Schools will operate different cycles of self review but SSET offers robust evaluation against Ofsted criteria, storage of those evaluations and analyses of those evaluations. These evaluations are useful within the school, for wider local scrutiny (through, for example, the summary evaluation report it can produce) and for presenting the wider picture of the school’s work for such as Ofsted,” says David. “The focus is not SSET software at all but rather what comes out of it: clear, well presented information that the school can use to move itself forward. There is nothing magical in SSET that will enable you to use it intelligently and effectively, but it gives you the opportunity to do that. I think that’s a good thing.”

The Boswells School uses SSET as one of a complementary range of tools which use data to inform interventions for learners. David says: “For me self review is only really pertinent if it is a process which feeds back into the life of the school and enables initiatives and new developments to be implemented and reviewed. If self review becomes an event or a series of disconnected or purposeless events then it is unlikely to improve the school’s performance or provision. SSET links in very well with our monitoring and data systems which are developed as live processes and enable intervention with students to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. We have a range of different approaches and processes which are able to inform interventions in the classroom and which are complementary: SSET is one of those.”

SSET is integrated into the cycle of review and evaluation in the school. “The evaluation function works very well for us, we are confident in it and we have an annual cycle built around it. This area of SSET can be the receptacle for a number of our evidence documents. For example, we have a two-year cycle of skill area faculty review. We can simply attach the reviews, which are pretty significant documents, within SSET,” says David.

The Boswells School had an Ofsted inspection in 2010. David says: “For our March 2010 inspection we simply used the SSET-produced extended SEF and we gave it to the lead inspector. He felt it was an effective document, well used to inform and evaluate the ongoing work of the school - so for us it has been trialled and tested. What we did with the inspection team was set them up with read-only access in advance of and during the inspection so they could look at whatever they wanted without being restricted. They could trawl through and they could check the documents, something they found useful and which saved the paper chase that such an exercise can sometimes be.”

He adds: “We’ve developed our use of SSET over the years and, particularly in respect of the evaluation functions, I think it is outstanding.”