RAISING ATTAINMENT

IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

a handbook for school self-evaluation

NEW UPDATED EDITION

Lesley Saunders
Bob Stradling
with
Peter Rudd

nfer

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION: ISSUES IN SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

This introduction is based largely on work carried out in 1999–2000 by the
NFER for the Council for Local Education Authorities. The project was led
by Peter Rudd and written up in the report 'Evaluating School Self-Evaluation',
published by NFER in 2000.

1. THE POLICY CONTEXT

The wealth of guidance from the Department for Education and Employment
(DfEE) on target-setting and school improvement published since 1997
indicates that there has been an observable change of focus in UK
government thinking about the role schools have in evaluating educational
quality and performance. Schools' own capacity and responsibility for
reflection and evaluation is now at the forefront of policy.

The literature emanating from the DfEE in recent years makes it clear that
the context for, indeed the primary function of, school self-evaluation is
school improvement, and 'improvement' defined to all intents and purposes
as raising standards of pupils' performance. The current agenda of target-
setting entails working explicitly towards specific measurable improvements
year-on-year in pupils' test and examination results.

The 1997 White Paper *Excellence in Schools* acknowledged, however, that
setting targets would not by itself be sufficient to bring about improvement
in performance: schools would need to engage in 'self-evaluation'. To this
end, a five-stage cycle for self-evaluation and annual improvement has been
promoted by the DfEE, comprising:

● review of quality of performance, pedagogy and management;

● diagnostic comparison with other similar schools;

● setting of specific school-based targets focused on raising pupils'
   achievement;

● development planning to implement targets;

● evaluation of action taken and impact on pupils.

OFSTED have taken progressive account of the need for school self-
evaluation in revising the inspection framework. A new inspection
framework was introduced in 1996 which gave greater emphasis to a school's

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own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, and in 1998 there was explicit reference to school self-evaluation:

'You should encourage the headteacher to provide... evidence of:

- *any self-evaluation reports, analyses of the school's performance over time and any data available to the school from the LEA or other sources...'* [1]

The 1998 publication *School Evaluation Matters* focused directly on self-evaluation and offered advice to schools about carrying out evaluation. The current OFSTED view is that external inspection and self-evaluation are complementary activities. The *Handbook for Inspecting* series (2000) states that '*OFSTED is committed to promoting self-evaluation as a key aspect of the work of schools*' and the front covers of the Handbooks display the rubric *'with guidance on self-evaluation'*. There is a whole section in each Handbook on using it for school self-evaluation. The nature of the relationship between OFSTED inspections and school self-evaluation is described thus: '*It is advantageous to base school self-evaluation on the same criteria as those used in all schools by inspectors. A common language has developed about the work of schools, expressed through the criteria. Teachers and governors know that the criteria reflect things that matter.*' (p. 138)

This makes sense and it is true that a majority of schools view the inspection criteria as being a suitable basis for self-evaluation for pragmatic reasons. However, the NFER research revealed that many schools and local education authorities (LEAs) – as well as other educationists – nonetheless consider that self-evaluation and school inspection are *not* the same thing. It is evident that there are some tensions between the (external) requirement for inspection and (internal) school-based desires for self-evaluation and improvement. A number of schools and LEAs are making use of frameworks other than that supplied by OFSTED, including quality assurance standards, such as 'Total Quality Management', British Standards indicator BS5750, 'Investors in People', the earlier version of this Handbook and/or school-driven frameworks, such as that suggested by MacBeath [2] in his book *Schools Must Speak for Themselves*. Even so, it should be noted that the 2000 edition of the OFSTED Inspection Framework [3] overlaps substantially with this Handbook, which can thus be used to help prepare for external inspection and/or for implementing the school's OFSTED action plan.

[1] excerpted from: OFSTED (1998). *Inspection '98. Supplement to the Inspection Handbooks Containing New Requirements and Guidance.* London: Office for Standards in Education.

[2] MacBEATH, J. (1999). *Schools Must Speak for Themselves: the Case for School Self-evaluation.* London: Routledge.

[3] OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (1999). *Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools with Guidance on Self-evaluation.* London: The Stationery Office.

2. BENEFITS OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

Self-evaluation in its various forms is a positive experience for headteachers and class teachers in a number of ways. The benefits to schools of self-evaluation – reported by headteachers and other members of staff – can be listed as follows:

- School self-evaluation can help bring about a **change in the culture** of a school, helping to formalise and to extend existing processes of evaluating teaching and learning and data analysis. One headteacher outlined how he was using a whole-school evaluative approach which rested on the ability to change: *'I believe in a thinking, changing school and a thinking, changing teacher who will develop a thinking, changing child'*. One aspect of changing school culture is an increased willingness to use methods of evaluation that have not necessarily been used previously, including, for example, the technique of classroom observation by peers.

- Teachers' **professional development** can benefit from a school's commitment to self-evaluation, particularly in an institution where staff are encouraged to share expertise with colleagues and to take up training opportunities. Some schools have adopted an explicit approach, using packages such as 'Investors in People'; while for others professional review took place within a more general framework such as an LEA supporting framework.

- For some headteachers, particularly those recently appointed, school self-evaluation provides a mechanism with which to learn about their school and to **organise change**. In other words, the processes and mechanisms provide school senior managers with a framework (and 'levers') for the management of change. One headteacher sees self-evaluation as an important part of a process of strategic planning: *'fundamental to where you are, what you are achieving and where to move forward. If you don't [self-evaluate], you stagnate'*.

- Schools can **develop their own agenda** for self-evaluation, enabling teachers to focus on aspects of the school that they identify as areas for improvement. Furthermore, the internal agenda set within schools can also help promote **ownership** among teachers of their self-evaluation activity. While it is clear that much of the impetus for self-evaluation is being generated by headteachers, particularly in the early stages, many are keen to encourage teachers to become involved in these processes.

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- Many school interviewees say that they have benefited from having the support of a **'critical friend'**, whether an LEA advisor, consultant or colleague from another school. A critical friend who is external to the school can help teachers identify areas for development, meet the demands of a timetable for implementing and evaluating activities and can '*ask difficult questions*'.

- School self-evaluation can be used to encourage **community involvement**. Parents, pupils and governors can provide useful feedback, inform classroom practice and help to set the agenda for change. There is evidence that self-evaluation has afforded some schools the opportunity to involve pupils and parents in the process. Several school interviewees say that their planned 'next step' in the evaluation process is to seek the views of parents or pupils: '*children know what helps their learning and what doesn't*'.

- Self-evaluation packages and programmes, whether developed 'in-house' by LEAs or 'bought in', can provide schools with a range of **tools** for implementing evaluation activities. These may take the form of questionnaires for parents and pupils, observation checklists, files for recording data, or some other format. 'Toolkits' for schools avoid the need for teachers to '*re-invent the wheel*' and can facilitate the sharing of information across institutions. This is exactly how this Handbook should be perceived and used.

Many LEA officers also report how useful school self-evaluation processes are, both for the authority and for their schools. The main positive aspects of school self-evaluation for LEAs can be summarised as follows:

- The need for monitoring and evaluation provides the LEA with **a useful 'way in' to their schools**. In other words, a commitment to school self-evaluation provides a rationale for initiating and maintaining close contact by LEA personnel with schools and their staff.

- An LEA's support for school self-evaluation can help the LEA develop **an overview of how their schools are performing**. There is a dual purpose to school self-evaluation in this respect. Firstly, there is a professional development function – LEA personnel, in working with schools, can help to train staff in methods of data collection, evaluation and analysis. Secondly, the sharing of such evaluation data is in itself useful to the LEA. Such information can be used not only to see how pupils and teachers in a particular school are faring, but also, through the use of aggregated data, to develop an overall picture of how the borough's schools are performing.

- School self-evaluation processes help **to facilitate the development of positive working relationships between LEAs and their schools**. LEA officers have a clear view that they are working *with* schools: '*OFSTED's vision for school self-evaluation seems to be inspection. [But] inspection is something that is done to you; self-evaluation is*

something you are part of. School self-evaluation is a relatively new, but very useful, mechanism for the encouragement of good working relations, sometimes in areas where there has previously been some hostility between schools and the LEA. The key to these good working relationships appears to be the use of consultation and the maintenance of dialogue between school staff and LEA personnel.

● Some LEAs have had concerns about how schools can feed into their aims and goals as expressed in the LEA Educational Development Plan – school self-evaluation represents **an important link between the Education Development Plan and individual School Development Plans**.

● School self-evaluation can have the effect of **informing and supporting the OFSTED inspection process**. Sometimes evaluation was directly linked to inspection requirements, but, whatever form of self-evaluation or self-review is adopted in an authority, it usually has a '*knock on*' effect of helping a school to '*know where it is at*' prior to an inspection.

3. SOME CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

Although there seems little doubt that school self-evaluation will be developed further as an essential mechanism for monitoring and improving teaching and learning at the institutional level – and indeed as a collective activity or process it is already having a positive impact on many aspects of school life – self-evaluation also presents school communities with a variety of difficulties. For example, the degree to which schools have **ownership** over their self-evaluation activity and the extent to which ownership is **embedded** in the school varies among schools. It is clear that much of what happens in schools by way of self-evaluation has not, to date at least, followed a 'bottom-up' model as outlined by MacBeath (see Footnote 2), but tends to be led and managed by the headteacher or senior management team. Some staff may become suspicious about the underlying purpose of school self-evaluation, which they may see as part of a management agenda which includes appraisals and/or the criteria for performance-related pay. For example, a primary school headteacher encountered difficulty in overcoming negative perceptions of self-evaluation among staff whom she described as '*battered by inspections*'. However, she felt that initial anxieties had diminished: '*It's okay when teachers realise that it's a mirror rather than a stick*'.

Anxiety about the impact of self-evaluation on teachers' **workload** is a more widespread concern. Staff in some schools clearly feel they are suffering **initiative fatigue**. Further, the **resources** which schools commit to self-evaluation, in the form of time, training and material support, often present schools with a challenge. In some schools staff are required '*to fit school self-evaluation in around existing commitments*'. Teachers in primary schools report that the lack of non-contact time available has impacted on self-evaluation work, particularly classroom observation.

The question therefore remains, to what extent are all schools able and willing to carry out rigorous and demanding self-assessments? And how far are schools asking themselves the difficult questions?

All this means that the relationship between self-evaluation and (preparation

for) external inspection needs to be considered very carefully. School self-evaluation has several functions and evaluation activities can be seen as being shaped by at least four sets of influences: (1) the impact of **government initiatives**, such as the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours and national requirements for target setting; (2) the demands of **OFSTED Inspections**; (3) the **role of the LEA** in processes of school improvement; and (4) the purposes of school self-evaluation **as defined by schools** themselves. Is the purpose of self-evaluation to prepare for inspection, to assist in the process of achieving performance targets, to 'raise standards', to assist teachers' professional development or, as is often the case, some combination of these things? Some concerns have already been raised that schools may be complying with something they call self-evaluation, which they deploy as a limited preliminary inspection process rather than as a broad tool for self-evaluation and professional development. The crucial question that needs to be asked by school managers and staff is, 'who or what is school self-evaluation for?'[4]

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[4]   SAUNDERS, L. (1999), 'Who or what is school "self"-evaluation for?' *School Effectiveness and School Improvement,* **10**, 4, 414-29.

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USING
THE HANDBOOK

1. THE PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

The purpose of the Handbook is more specific than some other toolkits for self-evaluation: it is designed to help schools evaluate what they are doing to raise the levels of attainment of their students. Its primary objective is to assist in the processes of target-setting for each department and the whole school: it consists of a series of evaluation schedules for school senior managers and heads of department. The Handbook is designed with secondary students and their curriculum particularly in mind – though the majority of questions and issues in the schedules could also apply to the upper primary sector as well.

Raising attainment involves:
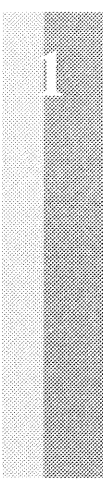
- managing individual students' *motivation* more effectively;
- reviewing the effectiveness of prevailing *teaching and learning styles*;
- providing more effective *feedback* to students;
- instituting or developing agreed *'early warning systems'* for picking up problems that militate against achievement.

Different priorities may emerge at different times, however, dependent on a school's internal and external circumstances. The schedules are therefore constructed to help schools focus on any or all of the following:

- under-achieving departments, to help them improve;
- 'accelerating' departments, to help identify and share good practice – finding 'the difference that makes a difference';
- departments not appearing to do well with particular groups of students (e.g. low achievers; high achievers; mixed ability groups);
- departments appearing to do very well with particular groups of students;
- practical tools for staff self-appraisal;
- ways of testing the overall system in the school for identifying and improving the attainment of all its students.

The schedules consist of a series of questions designed to help schools collect and analyse various kinds of evidence. The following section explains in more detail how the Handbook has been structured. The senior management team, or whoever is taking the lead on evaluation strategies, will then need to decide on the precise focus which is relevant and helpful for the school – the Schedules in Section A provide some help with this.

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As we said above, the OFSTED Evaluation Schedule overlaps substantially with this Handbook and most of the Handbook can be mapped on to the relevant parts of the OFSTED Evaluation Schedule. Naturally, however, the two approaches to evaluation have rather different functions which are reflected in their respective emphases. A key difference is that this Handbook does not assume a 'top-down' approach to initiating self-evaluation activity.

2. HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY AROUND THE EVALUATION SCHEDULES

It is now well understood that raising students' attainment has implications for every area of school life: in order to provide as comprehensive a resource as possible, the Handbook covers a wide range of topics for potential exploration. But obviously it is not possible – nor indeed desirable – for a school to attempt to evaluate everything at once. Indeed, a risk for some schools is that they spend too much time reviewing and not enough time doing, i.e. implementing the changes the reviewing process has identified as necessary. So the Handbook is not a set of commandments which have to be worked through from beginning to end. Some descriptions of how other schools have used it are given in Appendix 1.

To try and simplify the material in the Handbook, we have concentrated on four main areas of school practice, under which relevant evaluation questions and issues are grouped. The four areas are:

- **evaluating classroom learning** – *B1*

- **evaluating classroom management** – *B2*

- **evaluating support for learning outside the classroom** (this includes such areas as homework, study support, work/community experience, the contribution of adults other than teachers) – *B3*

- **evaluating whole-school strategies** – *B4.*

In organising the material into these four sections, we have tried to keep key factors together – such as learning styles and assessment – which are sometimes treated separately. Each of the schedules in turn therefore addresses the following themes:

- **opportunities for achievement and progression** (progression requires a basis of secure achievement; it is not simply the acquisition of the next level of grades/qualifications – students need also to internalise continuities and connections)

- **promoting self-esteem** (self-esteem is not just a matter of creating a 'feel good' factor, but requires students to establish concrete evidence of their own abilities)

- **assessment, monitoring and review** (including real and regular opportunities for self-review by students)

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- **testing the system** (finding out whether the school's systems and structures for raising attainment are functioning as intended).

It is important to stress that evaluation should be *manageable*. 'You need to have the confidence not to do too much', as one headteacher put it. Schools will want to use a range of evaluation activities in order to gather a selection of evidence from different perspectives. Each Schedule in Section B includes information on what activities, or combination of activities, would be relevant for which questions.

We have highlighted:

- ◆ classroom observation *(questions coded O)*
- ◆ questions for use in structured discussion with teachers *(questions coded T)*
- ◆ questions relating to school policy (and other similar) documents *(questions coded P)*
- ◆ questions relating to student records *(questions coded R)*
- ◆ questions relating to examples of students' work *(questions coded W)*
- ◆ questions for use in structured discussion with students *(questions coded S)*
- ◆ questions for use in discussion with adults other than teachers *(questions coded A)*
- ◆ questions relating to assessment/performance data *(questions coded D)*.

For each area of school practice under scrutiny, we assume that people using the Handbook will wish to identify the **key implications** of the evaluation findings for different groups of staff in the school, including:

◊   Senior managers/governors

◊   Heads of department

◊   Heads of year/KS coordinators

◊   Learning support staff

Each schedule in Section B therefore concludes with a summarising review of implications.

Some further information on **classroom observation** is included in Section C; it is worth adding here that classroom observation is a very rich source

of information and it is sometimes tempting to institute an ambitious programme of observation covering a large number of staff and students over an extended period of time. But writing up the results of this, not to mention identifying areas of further action, is likely to be extremely time-consuming and may raise expectations amongst colleagues which are hard to fulfil.

Observation does not have to be exhaustive; the following approaches are useful in different ways:

- the '**snapshot**': one-off observations, repeated – when necessary – later on in the year and/or in different departments or year groups;

- the '**dipstick**': a systematic series of observations over a period of time, of different teachers/teaching groups within the same department or of different departments;

- student '**tracking**': following or shadowing (a group of) individual students for a half/whole day; if at all possible, it is useful to extend the exercise to include non-lesson time.

It is important to bear in mind that *background information* will be required to contextualise each lesson observed, for example:

◊ numbers of students;

◊ mixed ability or set;

◊ teacher's estimate of ability range of students;

◊ their previous exposure, if any, to the topic;

◊ objectives of the lesson.

Classroom observations will also almost always need to be supplemented by *discussions with teachers* and/or by an examination of students' *portfolios of work*.

Although we have tried to cover a wide range of issues and approaches to evaluation, the schedules are still by no means exhaustive. We would strongly encourage schools to use the schedules as a basis for in-school discussions within 'diagonal' teams (and, if possible, with teams from other schools). Such teams can work together to generate more relevant questions and materials, if necessary, in order to develop the evaluative processes further and also to establish 'ownership' amongst all staff.

This is one reason why the Handbook has been produced in a loose-leaf format, so that further material can be added at appropriate points. The version of the Handbook which your school compiles will therefore reflect its particular needs and circumstances.

USING THE HANDBOOK

2

A.
SCHEDULES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

A1. DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST FOR THE SCHOOL

Answering the following questions – which NFER has used with a group of head/deputy head teachers – should help you to decide where the school is now in terms of student attainment, where the gaps are in your knowledge and information, and what steps need to be taken as a result. This should in turn help you to focus your evaluation programme more effectively.

1. Are you able to identify:	YES	NO	COMMENTS
● DEPARTMENTS			
• which are under-achieving across the board.	1	2	
• which are 'coasting' on their track record.	1	2	
• which show a rising curve in performance.	1	2	
• which are performing well with low attainers	1	2	
● INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS			
• who are under-achieving across the board	1	2	
• who are 'coasting' on their track record	1	2	
• with a rising curve of performance	1	2	
• who work well with low attainers	1	2	
• who do not work well with low attainers	1	2	
2. What information can you use for identifying the departments or individuals?			
• GCSE results	1	2	
• SATs results	1	2	
• Other standardised test results	1	2	
• Ongoing teacher assessments	1	2	
• Attendance figures for lessons	1	2	
• Homework completion	1	2	
• Selection of options at 14	1	2	
• Annual reviews with heads of dept	1	2	
• Staff appraisals	1	2	
• Value added measures:			
– year-on-year trends	1	2	
– progress with each cohort	1	2	
• Reviews by learning support team	1	2	
• Recent audit of teaching styles	1	2	
• Systematic parental feedback	1	2	

A. SCHEDULES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

3. What initiatives have already been taken to raise attainment?	YES	NO	COMMENTS
• Priority for INSET on differentiation/ raising attainment	1	2	
• Changes in record keeping and retrieval	1	2	
• Changes in the pastoral system	1	2	
• Early warning system for identifying individual pupils' problems	1	2	
• Improved liaison with primary partner schools	1	2	
• Changed role for learning support team	1	2	
• Introduction of positive behaviour policy	1	2	
• Consistent homework policy	1	2	
• Consistent marking policy	1	2	
• Extension of school day – study support	1	2	
• Increased opportunities for recognising achievements	1	2	
• Peer support and mentoring	1	2	
• Mentoring by AoTs	1	2	
• Enhanced use of ICT	1	2	
• Basic skills support policy	1	2	
• Induction programme for Year 7s	1	2	
• Use of Individual Action Plans/Progress Files	1	2	
• Facilities for pupils to do homework on site	1	2	
• Home-school contracts	1	2	
• Other	1	2	

4. What steps have you taken to test the effectiveness of any of these initiatives?			
• Detailed review of OFSTED report/action plan	1	2	
• Pre-OFSTED audit	1	2	
• Classroom observation	1	2	
• Informal feedback by individuals	1	2	
• Monitoring programme by senior management team	1	2	
• Targets in School Development Plan	1	2	
• Analysis of performance data	1	2	
• Other	1	2	

5. In the OFSTED *Evaluation Schedule,* the criteria listed below have been set for effective teaching. In your view, how problematic are they as professional development goals for your staff?

TEACHERS...	HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC →		NOT ESPECIALLY PROBLEMATIC		COMMENTS
show good subject knowledge and understanding in the way they present and discuss their subject	1	2	3	4	
are technically competent in teaching basic skills	1	2	3	4	
plan effectively, setting clear objectives that pupils understand	1	2	3	4	
challenge and inspire pupils, expecting the most of them, so as to deepen their knowledge and understanding	1	2	3	4	
use methods which enable all pupils to learn effectively	1	2	3	4	
manage pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour	1	2	3	4	
use time, support staff and other resources, especially information and communications technology, effectively	1	2	3	4	
assess pupils' work thoroughly and use assessments to help and encourage pupils to overcome difficulties	1	2	3	4	
use homework effectively to reinforce and/or extend what is learned in school	1	2	3	4	

6. Looking at your responses to these questions, what would be your priorities for:

● immediate action:

● medium-term action (i.e. over next 2-3 years):

A. SCHEDULES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

A1

7.   How can these actions best be initiated?

7.   How can these actions best be initiated?

A2. PLANNING AN EVALUATION EXERCISE

How will your evaluation exercise fit with existing planning for any of the following?

Pre-OFSTED preparation

Post-OFSTED action planning

School review and monitoring

School development planning

Curriculum development

Staff appraisal

Staff development

School quality assurance system

Any further comments:

....

....

....

....

....

A2

A. SCHEDULES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

What sources of information are available to you? What else do you need?

	EXISTING	NEEDED
Examination results	☐	☐
'Value-added' data	☐	☐
Test scores	☐	☐
Attendance data	☐	☐
Destinations data	☐	☐
Individual student records	☐	☐
Departmental records	☐	☐
Departmental action plans	☐	☐
Classroom observation	☐	☐
Attitudinal data: teachers	☐	☐
students	☐	☐
parents	☐	☐

Anything else

....

....

....

....

A. SCHEDULES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

Which personnel will be informed/involved?

	INFORMED	INVOLVED
Senior management team	☐	☐
Heads of Key Stages	☐	☐
Pastoral leaders	☐	☐
Departmental/faculty leaders	☐	☐
Teachers	☐	☐
Parents	☐	☐
Students	☐	☐
Governors	☐	☐
Any other group(s)	☐	☐

....

....

What internal resources are you likely to need?

What external support would you ideally like?
Where can you obtain this?

A2

A. SCHEDULES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

How do you see the evaluation contributing to raising attainment?

A2

A. SCHEDULES FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

B.
SCHEDULES
FOR EVALUATION

B1. CLASSROOM LEARNING

1.1 Opportunities for achievement and progression

KEY TO SYMBOLS p27

1.1.1 In what ways is previous work being acknowledged and built on, for individual pupils and for the class as a whole?

O

(Look for phrases like: *You remember talking about...., Does this remind you of something we've already looked at?*, etc. Linking back may need to be made at several points in the lesson, not just at the beginning; and may need to refer back to concepts or issues tackled some time ago, not just in the previous lesson.)

Do all students appear to understand what links are made and why? (Look for non-verbal signals as well as the questions being asked.)

1.1.2 What specific tasks are set?

O

Are tasks common to all students or differentiated?
If differentiated, in what ways e.g.

- by setting variations on the core task(s),
- by outcomes expected,
- by the kind of learning activity involved in the task,
- by varying the pace or the rate of the activity, or
- by dialogue with individual students?

(Note that these strategies are not mutually exclusive, but decisions about the relative emphasis need to be based on what is relevant for each individual student.)

1.1.3 How clear are the criteria for success in each task?

O
(T, W)

Is success related implicitly/explicitly to:
- each student's previous performance,
- the performance of the group,
- a predetermined set of criteria,
- some combination of these?

1.1.4 How does the teacher identify individual learning needs/problems?

O

How does the teacher respond to questions or other signs of lack of understanding?

1.1.5. Is effort as well as performance commented on?

O

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

1.1.6. How is learning reinforced and built on? **O, W**
Is this done for all individuals in the group?
How is the next stage of learning (as distinct from content)
introduced and made clear?
Is it the appropriate stage in each case, especially for students who
have demonstrated difficulties?

1.2 Promoting self-esteem

1.2.1. How are low achievers, in particular, encouraged to carry on **O, W**
learning despite their difficulties? **(T)**
Are there any obvious obstacles to their learning?

1.2.2. What feedback does the teacher give individual students? **O**
Do there appear to be any assumptions operating in the teacher's
mind about individual students' performance?
If so, what sort of assumptions do these appear to be?

1.2.3. What are the teacher's expectations of the group as a whole, **T, W**
compared with other groups in the same year or past years?
And what are the teacher's expectations of individuals within the
group?
Do these expectations match those of colleagues in other
departments or of the form tutor(s)?
What evidence is there to support them?

1.2.4. Generally, are there sufficient challenges within the learning tasks **O, W**
set for the whole ability range?
Is there sufficient range of support for the learning tasks set e.g.
–   clarifying the purpose and basic concepts of the task,
–   pointing out relevant resources,
–   extending the timescale for completing the task,
–   bringing in learning support expertise?

1.3 Assessing , monitoring and review

1.3.1. Is there an explicit policy for assessment and marking?   **O, W**
Do students understand it?
Is assessment used for:

	MAINLY	SOMETIMES	NEVER
– awarding a grade/mark	☐	☐	☐
– assessing progress	☐	☐	☐
– diagnosing learning needs re:			
subject concepts	☐	☐	☐
subject skills	☐	☐	☐
core skills	☐	☐	☐
basic skills	☐	☐	☐
– helping students' self-diagnosis	☐	☐	☐

1.3.2. How is work assessed: **O, W**
  – by written mark/orally,
  – with grade/percentage/number,
  – with written comments in the margin (if so, what are the comments about?),
  – other kinds of feedback?
What aspects of work are assessed:
  – subject content,
  – grammar and spelling?
Do written comments refer back to previous work by the student?

1.3.3. Do students seem clear about what is being assessed and why?   **O, W**
Is only written work given a mark/grade?   **(T)**
What criteria does the teacher apply for giving oral feedback?

1.3.4. At what stages in a task, and how frequently, is work marked?   **O, W**

1.3.5. How far are students involved with reviewing their own work and   **O, W**
at what sort of intervals?   **(S)**
Are they consulted about criteria as well as about their own performance?

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

1.3.6. How far is marking differentiated into *must, could, should*   **W, O**
objectives?
How far is assessment/marking (of classwork and homework)
used to set individual learning targets?

1.3.7 How far is homework integrated into the lesson, whether as regards   **O**
work being given back or work being set?

1.3.8 How is assessment data used to help identify learning needs?   **P, T, D**

1.4 Testing the system

1.4.1 How easy is it within the school to identify precisely what the
learning needs and difficulties are for an individual student in any
given task or lesson? Over time?
Across a range of subjects?

The following exercise may help.

Group exercise:

Staff in small inter-departmental working groups should discuss, agree on
and nominate **one student in each year group with either specific or
general attainment and learning problems.**

Heads of Year (HoY) should then collect all available information on these
students which appears relevant to their learning difficulties and then
construct a learning profile for each of them (see Section C3).

HoYs should then be asked to say:

- how long the whole exercise took;
- where the information was stored;
- in what form it was available;
- whether there were any major differences between departments/form
  tutors in the kind and quality of information provided;
- what gaps there were in the information;
- how effective the overall system is for recording and retrieving
  information on students;
- what recommendations they would make for improving the system.

The construction and implications of these students' learning profiles could
form the basis of further INSET sessions on support for learning across the
curriculum.

KEY TO SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

O = classroom observation

P = school policy (and other similar) documents

R = student records

W = examples of students' work

T = discussion with teachers

S = discussion with students

A = discussion with adults other than teachers

D = assessment/performance data

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

B1. REVIEW

Senior managers/governors

How far are assessment/marking policies consistent within and between departments? If not, what aspects need to be reviewed?

How far are teaching/learning approaches across the school consistent with each other and with the school's objectives?

How effective is the coordination of support for learning?

Heads of department/faculty

Is the departmental assessment and marking policy actually working?

Is students' work brought to departmental meetings to help review the policy?

On what occasions and for what purposes do staff have access to student data held by other departments? Should there be more data-sharing? What would be the advantages and disadvantages?

Is it possible to identify any (groups of) students for whom provision is inappropriate (too challenging/insufficiently challenging)?

Heads of year/KS coordinators

What use is made, when, and by whom, of performance data on students, individually/by tutor group/by subject?

What further coordination needs to happen between different subject departments to support learning targets for students in difficulty?

Learning support

Is there any student data held by learning support/SEN which other departments do not have but which they could benefit from (e.g. data on reading age at intake)?

What practices for helping low achievers' learning could usefully be shared between different departments and/or different year groups?

B2. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

2.1 Opportunities for achievement and progression

2.1.1 How is the lesson started?
Does everyone seem clear about what is expected of him/her?
How are initial queries, disruptions (including late-comers) dealt with?

O

2.1.2 Do the posters and displays around the room aid this particular lesson in any way?
(Reminders of basic principles; framework of essential facts, such as Periodic Table; visual aids pertinent to specific topic(s) being covered.)

O

2.1.3 How is the classroom arranged?
How is seating managed and who gets to sit where?
Is the seating rearranged during the lesson?
If so, for what purpose, in what ways and with what results?

O

2.1.4 For a given task, are all students 'on task'?
If not, how does the teacher react to those who are not?

O

2.1.5 What use, if any, is made of learning support from:
(i)   in-school learning support staff
(ii)   other staff within the department
(iii) staff from other departments
(iv)   non-teaching staff
(v)   staff from support units/agencies outside the school?

Do they seem to be clear about what their role and specific tasks are?
Do they stay with one student or adopt a peripatetic role?
Do they exchange roles/tasks with the teacher at any point?
Is there time for discussion between the teacher and the 'supporter' before and/or after the lesson?

O, T

2.1.6 How is the lesson ended?
Does everyone seem clear about what is expected of him/her?
How is 'closure' managed, in terms of:
(i)   student behaviour
(ii)   rounding off/summing up of content
(iii) reference, if any, to next/future lessons?

O

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

2.2   Promoting self-esteem

2.2.1   What evidence is there of students' own work on display?   **O**
Whose work is displayed:
- the best?
- everyone's?
- a range?

2.2.2   For a given task, are students working individually, in groups or in   **O**
a combination of both?
Does the teacher move round to each group/individual or only
selected ones?

2.2.3   Are questions planned for students of all abilities, so that everyone   **O**
can have a chance to contribute orally?

2.2.4   What happens if some students finish before others?   **O**
What happens if some have not finished when everyone else has?

2.2.5   What sort of feedback does the teacher give the students as a group?   **O**
How much of the feedback is positive, how much is neutral and
how much is negative?

2.2.6   How does the teacher make his/her expectations of the group as a   **O**
whole (say, compared with other groups in the same year or in   **(S, T)**
past years) apparent or explicit?
Do these expectations seem to match those of the students
themselves?
Is there any way of gathering evidence of the teacher's or the
group's expectations changing over time?

2.2.7   Are there any extrinsic rewards available to be won, such as merit   **O**
points or prizes?
Are successes other than academic ones celebrated?
How?

2.3 Assessment, monitoring and review

2.3.1 Is there an explicit policy for monitoring and review (as distinct from marking)?
Do students understand it?

Is review used for:

P

O
(T, S)

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
– praising	☐	☐	☐
– recognising effort	☐	☐	☐
– giving constructive feedback	☐	☐	☐
– valuing students' work	☐	☐	☐
– giving encouragement	☐	☐	☐

2.3.2 To what extent is work reviewed during class, as part of a formative programme?

O, T

2.3.3 Are there opportunities for students to review and appraise their own work, e.g. as an end-of-module self-assessment, or as part of RoA profiling:

O, S

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
– singly	☐	☐	☐
– in groups	☐	☐	☐

2.3.4 How is assessment data used to plan teaching?

P, T, D

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

2.4 Testing the system

If students of different academic ability are being 'shadowed' during their classroom time, this could be supplemented by interviews asking questions such as:

2.4.1 Which of the day's lessons did you most enjoy?
Why?
Which lesson did you least enjoy?
Why?

Then, for each lesson:

2.4.2 What do you think the lesson was trying to put across?
How successful was it from your point of view?
What did you personally learn from the lesson?

2.4.3 How did today's lesson link with the previous lesson in this subject?
Was the connection clearly made?

2.4.4 Whom did you ask when you didn't understand something?
Was there anything you didn't understand which you didn't ask about?
Why?

2.4.5 Did you receive any comments or feedback on your own work (written or verbal) from the teacher?
If so, were these positive, neutral or negative?
Were they helpful?

2.4.6 Did you receive any comments or feedback on your behaviour from the teacher?
If so, were these positive, neutral or negative?
Were they helpful?

2.4.7 Did you complete the tasks you were set?
If so, was there something else for you to go on to?
What was it?
If not, what might have helped you finish?

Important note: *It would be essential for the interview to be conducted in private by a 'neutral' person and for the responses to be given in strict confidentiality. It should be explained that this is an exercise in finding out more about students' experiences and needs (not a pretext for having a go at teachers!). It should also be made clear that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers; and no personal consequences will follow from their responses.*

Likewise, in making use of the results, it should be explained that the purpose of the interviews is to identify any gaps between what teachers intend to do or think they are doing and how students actually perceive and experience this. The results of such exercises should be shared, first, with the teachers concerned as a confidential exercise; and then, with their permission and in an anonymised manner, shared with other staff as part of a whole-school review of teaching/learning, for example.

See Section C2 for a sample interview schedule.

KEY TO SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

O = classroom observation

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D = assessment/performance data

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

B2. REVIEW

Senior managers/governors

Are there any messages coming through about the length/organisation/timing of the school day?

Is the current allocation of learning support staff and non-teaching assistants appropriate for the identified needs of students across the different subject areas?

Heads of department/faculty

Are there examples of good practice in the management of classroom learning within the department which have gone unnoticed and which might usefully be shared with colleagues?

Heads of year/KS coordinators

Are there any obvious differences of classroom ethos between different departments?

Are all students being given opportunities to be challenged and to achieve in every subject?

What sort of evidence would you look for?

Learning support

Are the roles and specific tasks of learning support staff made clear by colleagues in other departments?

Are there obvious differences between departments in what they need and expect from learning support?

What is the main role of learning support staff in the school:

To help individual named students?

To help any student with difficulties?

To help subject staff identify learning difficulties amongst all students?

To help subject staff develop effective support and differentiation strategies?

In what ways could coordination between learning support and other departments be improved?

B3. SUPPORT FOR LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

This section covers areas such as homework, study support activities, work/ community experience, the contribution of adults other than teachers and other learning activities. It is also intended to provide some coverage of what might loosely be called the school 'ethos'; a few key questions aimed at identifying characteristics of the school as 'an environment for optimising learning' have therefore been devised.

3.1 Opportunities for achievement and progression

KEY TO SYMBOLS p41

3.1.1   What sort of learning activities does the school make available to students for demonstrating non-academic achievement (e.g. Youth Award, Duke of Edinburgh Award)?
Which students (i) are offered (ii) take up these activities?
Are all groups represented in practice (girls as well as boys, whole ability range, different ethnic groups)?

O, T, S

3.1.2   What sort of provision is there for allowing students to develop/ demonstrate social and personal skills in school (e.g. staffing the reception area, escorting visitors round school)?
Are such opportunities given to each student or to those who volunteer or to those deemed suitable (e.g. as a reward)?

O, T

3.1.3   Are the students involved in supporting the learning of other students, either in this school or in another school(s) (e.g. helping with reading in a partner primary or special school)?

T

3.1.4   What sort of assignments are given for homework?
How far is homework a continuation/completion of work done in class, and how far do homework assignments offer different kinds of challenge, particularly for those at either end of the academic ability range (extension, consolidation work)?
Are there differences between departments in policy and/or practice?

O, T, W

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

3.1.5 What evidence is there of the school as a work-centred (rather than a regulation-oriented) environment?
To what extent do students have access to learning resources outside as well as within lesson-time (e.g. library, open learning centre, IT equipment)?

O, T, S

3.1.6 What range of activities do adults other than teachers (AoTs) – including people from the local business community but leaving aside regular professional staff like Careers Officers, Learning Support Staff, Advisory Staff – help with:

T, S, O

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
OUT OF SCHOOL:			
– Work experience/work shadowing	☐	☐	☐
– Teacher placement	☐	☐	☐
– Extra-curricular activities	☐	☐	☐
IN SCHOOL:			
– Basic skills support	☐	☐	☐
– Mentoring	☐	☐	☐
– Curriculum development	☐	☐	☐
– Classroom teaching	☐	☐	☐
– Mock interviews	☐	☐	☐

3.1.7 How far do AoTs' perceptions about individual students/groups of students match those of teachers?
Are there any conspicuous differences (e.g. a student who is under-performing at school winning fulsome praise from a work experience supervisor)?
What possibilities for creating alternative opportunities for achievement might this suggest?

A, S

3.1.8 What do students get out of work experience?
How far, and by what means, is work experience integrated into the students' curriculum?
How effective is the briefing and de-briefing for placements?

S, O, T

3.2   Promoting self-esteem

3.2.1   What sort of image does the school have in the community?   **A**
How are its students generally perceived?

3.2.2   How would you describe the general environment of the school?   **O, A**
What are likely to be visitors' first impressions?
Whose responsibility is it to welcome outsiders?

3.2.3   What sort of induction programme is there for: **S, T, P**
- first-year students?
- individual students who join the school later?
- sixth-formers?
- new staff?
How well does each of these programmes work?

3.2.4   How would you characterise the relationships, generally speaking,   **O, S, T**
between;
- staff and students,
- students?
- staff?
Do staff encourage conversations with students outside the
classroom?
Are there any obvious differences of ethos between departments?
Between year groups?

3.2.5   How would you describe the level of discipline at key moments   **O**
(e.g. at change of lessons, at the end of the day)?

3.2.6   Do students generally know and agree with the school's aims?   **S**
Do they feel strongly enough about them to want to put them into
practice for themselves?

3.2.7   Does homework actually enable students to develop a broader   **W, T, S**
repertoire of learning strategies, or is it a way of sorting the sheep
from the goats?
What provision is made for students to do homework on school
premises if their home circumstances are uncongenial?
What do students, and their parents, think the purpose of
homework is?
Do their views accord with those of teachers?

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

3.2.8   What is the school's truancy record at present and how does it **R, P**
compare with previous years?
What provision is made to identify and deal with truancy:
◊ of a tactical kind (skipping lessons)
◊ of a casual kind ('bunking off' for the odd day or two here and
there)
◊ of a persistent kind?
Are parents contacted immediately absence is noted?
Has provision for dealing with truancy highlighted any underlying
problems (e.g. bullying, parental illness, care of younger siblings,
dislike of particular teachers/lessons)?
If so, what action has been taken, how far does it consist of sanctions
and/or support, and how far can it be adapted to the individual
circumstances of the young person?

3.2.9   What is the range of study support and extra-curricular activities **T, S**
on offer and what use is made of them by students?
Is the range of opportunities on offer designed to be attractive to
all students or do these activities tend to attract those you would
have expected to be involved?
To what extent are students encouraged to see these activities as
part of their own 'optional curriculum'?

3.2.10   Are there early warning systems in operation for identifying when **P, R**
(and why) a young person might be about to go off the rails in
their work and/or behaviour, and for providing extra support?
How effective are these systems, in terms of 'rehabilitation'?

3.2.11   Is there a Student Council or other representative body? **S**
How do students get elected/appointed to Council? **T**
How do they make their views known to Council?
What sort of issues tend to get raised?
Is Council perceived to be effective by students and/or by staff?

3.2.12   Has the school adapted facilities for disabled students? **P, S**
Are these sufficient for these students' needs?

3.3 Assessment, monitoring and review

3.3.1 How might the school set up systems to measure key skills and the development of self-reliance, flexibility and breadth?
Are these qualities (i) systematically assessed (ii) accredited?

T

3.3.2 What aspects of students' behaviour are assessed and recorded?
Is the emphasis on sanction or reward or on both equally? (For example, what is the ultimate sanction prior to suspension/exclusion?
Is there an equally conspicuous reward for good behaviour?)
Are the criteria and systems for recognition of merit regularly reviewed?
Do they have equivalence in practice with those for sanction and punishment?

R, P
T

3.3.3 Is there a 'home-school contract' in operation?
How does it function and what is its purpose?
How far is it used developmentally, to keep school and home mutually informed about each student's provision, progress and problems?
To set specific learning targets?

P, T

3.3.4 How far is homework enforced?
How effective are the systems for checking whether it has been done?
The penalties for not doing it?
Again, are all departments consistent in policy and/or practice?
Is homework marked and returned regularly and frequently?

T, S

3.3.5 How and by whom are off-site activities monitored and reviewed?
How and by whom are students' performance and progress in off-site activities (e.g. work experience, community experience, residential experience, outdoor pursuits) assessed and accredited?

T, R

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

3.4   Testing the system

This area is obviously a complex one to investigate and it might be helpful to use more than one approach to test the system, separately or in combination.

3.4.1   Some commentators have advocated asking the school's main *'stakeholders'* what their expectations of the school are and how they would evaluate effective teaching and teachers. However, a prior exercise might be to hold short brainstorming sessions with school staff on a departmental, hierarchical and/or year group basis, to identify first of all who staff see as the main 'stakeholders' in the school. It may be that different departments/levels in the school hold different views and assumptions. Clearly it matters whether the school has a clear and coherent view of the external people/ groups who could be said to have a legitimate interest in the school, not only from the point of view of accountability but, more importantly, of seeking a common agenda. (See the next section for issues concerned with local collaboration.)

3.4.2   Students – as the most important group of stakeholders – can fairly readily be asked for their views and experiences of school, though the extent to which this can be handled as a genuine information-gathering exercise by staff will depend to a great extent on the quality of relationships that already exist. Schools occasionally carry out systematic surveys, but the time and effort this takes must be weighed against the practical use to which responses will be put. It is better to have a short focused questionnaire about a current area of concern or to survey just one group of students than to try to ask everyone about everything.

3.4.3   Certainly, many schools have found it useful to survey *parents' views* from time to time, to see if there are ways in which parents' satisfaction with the school is falling short of what staff would wish. It would be important for schools to see whether any groups of parents (e.g. those from certain ethnic minorities) held views about or had experiences of the school which were conspicuously different from those of other parents, and to follow up any discrepancies. Additionally, *AoTs* involved in the school could be asked to give their (anonymised) impressions of the school's discipline, ethos, standing in the community, etc., at the same time as they are being requested to give feedback on the particular activity – such as mentoring – in which they are directly involved.

3.4.4   An indirect, ongoing test of the system is the extent to which 'stakeholders' are prepared to put time and resources (one-off or continuing) into the school, for example through local education-business partnerships or new funding initiatives.

KEY TO SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

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B3. REVIEW

Senior managers/governors

Are the findings on school ethos/image consonant with what you expected?   With what you hoped?
How difficult was it to compile the evidence?
How will you identify what are the key areas for action?
How can they be built into school development planning in a phased way?
Are there key groups of stakeholders with whom you need to work more closely/positively?

[To be completed in group discussion]

Heads of department/faculty

Are the findings on departmental ethos/image consonant with what you expected?
How will you identify what are the key areas for action?
How can they be built into departmental development planning in a phased way?

[To be completed in group discussion]

Heads of year/KS coordinators

[To be completed in group discussion]

Learning support

[To be completed in group discussion]

B4. WHOLE-SCHOOL STRATEGIES

4.1 Opportunities for achievement and progression

4.1.1 How often and for what purposes are the school's stated aims and objectives reviewed?

To whom are they disseminated and in what form (e.g. by converting them into annual targets)?

How does each department work to these targets?

Does each department have a review cycle which enables information to be fed back into the overall targets?

4.1.2 How does the emphasis on 'key skills' impact on the kinds of learning tasks and outcomes that should be demanded of individual students?

How can individual departments reinterpret/elaborate 'key skills' in a meaningful way for each subject area?

4.1.3 What opportunities are there for the school – as one institution among many influencing young people's capacity to do better and aim higher – to work more closely with other local bodies, including other schools/colleges?

Areas where consortium-working, which should also involve non-education partners, may be particularly relevant include:

- joint INSET on differentiation (including making use of special school expertise)

- agreeing joint criteria for 'success' – what *is* a successful school, in terms of broad performance indicators agreed on by all stakeholders?

- quantifying relevant qualitative indicators (e.g. student participation in study support) in a systematic and standardised way

- developing accountability at consortium rather than just at institutional level, by:
  - identifying local barriers to achievement and progression,
  - suggesting how non-education partners/stakeholders can contribute to their removal

- making use of Beacon School expertise to benefit as many schools as possible, in a partnership model.

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

4.2 Promoting self-esteem

4.2.1 What evidence is there from:
(i) policy documents
(ii) classroom practice
(iii) opportunities outside the classroom
(iv) actual student performance,
that all young people in the school are equally valued, regardless of sex, race, class, religious/cultural affiliation or academic ability?

(This is a 'portmanteau' question requiring extensive investigation.)

4.3 Assessment, monitoring and review

4.3.1 What other kinds of information beside GCSE qualifications does the school compile and use on the performance of its students:
(i) to monitor individual performance
(ii) to monitor the school's performance
(iii) to 'market' the school?

4.3.2 What methods (quantitative, qualitative) are used to monitor GCSE and other test/examination results year-on-year and across departments?
Which levels of staff are involved in this kind of monitoring exercise?

4.3.3 Does each department have an explicit policy on assessment and marking?
How far is this being adhered to in practice?
Does the policy include a statement of what assessment and marking are *for*?
What procedures and processes does the school have for reviewing the implementation of assessment policies?
For changing them in the light of experience and/or external factors?

4.3.4 What steps have been taken to find out whether every student is fulfilling his/her potential in terms of GCSE and other formal qualifications?
What other information not available/accessible at present is needed to provide a comprehensive picture of each child's annual progress/ achievement rate?

4.3.5   What mechanisms are in place to involve parents in regular reviews of their children's progress:
- (written termly/yearly reports,
- interviews at parents' evenings,
- interim information on individual subjects)?

What steps have been taken to identify which parents do not get involved and why, and to work out ways of encouraging them?

4.4   Testing the system

4.4.1   The school's inspection by OFSTED inspectors provides a hard test of the extent to which whole-school policies are translated into effective departmental, year group and classroom practices. Many schools initiate a pre-inspection health-check to see how far (in Desmond Nuttall's phrase) *'the processes involved in teaching and learning are accessible to inspection even at a moment's notice'.*

Policy and planning documents – especially the School Development Plan – are critical starting points, but the point is to be able to identify how far the actual practice meets policy; and, where there are gaps, to know why. Is there too much distance between those who write the policies and those who have to carry them out? Has policy been overtaken?

4.4.2   Other, smaller-scale tests of the system are available too. All schools are now beginning, by a variety of means, to look at 'added value' analyses of school/student performance. It is often the initial exercise of compiling data for such work which starts to alert the school to the fact that student records may be incomplete, inaccessible or are not being effectively used to monitor progress/ problems as well as achievement. Subsequently, considering what to do with the resultant 'added value' analysis throws up important management issues, such as how the data should be interpreted and shared with colleagues, and then used to support positive change.

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

KEY DOCUMENTATION:

School Statement of Aims and Objectives:
Is this a 'live' document? Is it reviewed and modified by:
(i)   staff
(ii) governors
(iii) students
(iv) parents
on an annual basis?

Curriculum Policy:
Is this a reiteration of National Curriculum requirements and learning outcomes or does it make reference also to pedagogical processes and the school's provision for individual learning needs?

Equal Opportunities Policy:
What does this cover (gender; race; class; religious/cultural affiliation; special needs; staff as well as students)?
Is bullying and verbal abuse clearly outlawed?
Is there any provision for positive discrimination?

Assessment/marking policy:
Whole-school? Departmental/faculty? Year band? Unwritten?

Homework policy:
Whole-school? Departmental/faculty? Year band? Unwritten?

Annual/termly student performance data:
What counts as performance data? Where is it stored?
Who has access to it? Who uses it and for what purpose(s)?

B4. REVIEW

Senior managers/governors

It is obviously crucial to turn the 'wish lists' emanating from this kind of evaluation exercise into manageable priorities as far as time and resources are concerned, so that the 'start small, think big' principle can be kept in mind by everyone on the staff and governing body. What sort of rate or pace of change are you now looking for?

How will you go about prioritising the desired changes into annual targets to be integrated into the School Development Plan?

[To be completed in group discussion]

Heads of department/faculty

[To be completed in group discussion]

Heads of year/KS coordinators

[To be completed in group discussion]

Learning support

[To be completed in group discussion]

B. SCHEDULES FOR EVALUATION

C.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES FOR

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION, STUDENT INTERVIEWS

AND

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

C1. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION: BRIEFING AND SAMPLE SCHEDULES

Observation of teaching/learning is one of the many instruments for evaluating teacher, department or whole-school performance. There are three main uses to which observation may be put. The first is **auditing**, where the purpose of the observation is simply to take stock of the various types of teaching/learning occurring within a school or department. The second use links observation to targets for **individual staff appraisal or review**; and the third, **monitoring**, uses observation to check the extent to which specific activities are happening consistently and in line with school policies – for example, implementation of homework policies, communication with pupils. Clearly, these uses can and do overlap. But, by its nature, observation of colleagues is a particularly sensitive area, and it is essential that its particular purpose and aims in any given exercise are clear and thoroughly explained to all participants, so as to overcome any fears or misunderstandings.

Points to remember at the outset

There are therefore various points to bear in mind when considering the use of classroom observation as part of an investigation of school practices and processes. First and foremost, you need to consider what are the questions you wish or expect to answer by using observation as distinct from any other evidence-gathering approach.

Context

- is everyone clear why this particular observation is being done: i.e. as part of auditing, staff appraisal, monitoring?

- is the exercise in response to inspection (impending or following) or as part of a process of self-evaluation?

- what issues are you setting out to observe (time on task, communication, differentiation)?

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

Personnel

● who will carry out the observation(s)?

● who will compile the observation schedule(s), write up the results, collate the information, communicate the findings?

Approach

● what type of schedule will be used ('objective' box-ticking, or 'subjective' open-ended)?

● will the observation supply all the information you require or will it need to be supplemented by examining teachers' lesson plans, pupils' work?

Follow up

● what will be done with the information?

Focus of observation

Observation can be used to gather illuminative evidence on a very wide variety of issues connected with teaching/learning, for example:

◆ *scrutiny of whole-school/departmental strategies* e.g. equality of opportunity, differentiation;

◆ *classroom management and learning* e.g. resource deployment, learning styles and teaching strategies;

◆ *staff development* e.g. setting individual/departmental targets for INSET, identifying examples of good practice and transferable messages.

It is important for everyone to be clear about where observation fits into a specific evaluation programme.

Organisation and management of observation

The schedule

The type of observation schedule used will naturally influence the conduct of the observation. More qualitative, open-ended schedules allow the observer to take in more of the overall classroom environment and provide opportunities for recording in detail, for example, how unexpected events are dealt with, but they carry the risk that the observer will fail to record (or even register) basic standard information. The more 'objective', tick-box schedules are good for quantifying classroom events and activities, but can miss out the qualitative aspects of the lessons under observation. Examples of both types of schedule are given later in this section.

Regardless of how 'objective' a schedule appears to be, however, there have to be very clear guidelines about the ways in which the schedule can

and cannot be used and interpreted if more than one person is to use it. It is extremely helpful to undertake some sort of moderation exercise, where the intended users observe the same lesson (this could be video-taped, to avoid having too many people in one class observing one solitary teacher) using the schedule, and compare notes afterwards. This should go a long way towards ensuring consistency of approach.

For the more high-tech inclined, a software programme, developed originally for use in anthropological work and called *The Observer*, is available for both DOS and Macintosh machines. This can be used in conjunction with hand-held data-loggers such as those produced by PSION.

Establishing ground rules

It is a good idea to establish some basic rules for the programme of observations, including such items as:

♦ the observer will be as unobtrusive as possible – it is worth noting that refusing to have any eye contact with members of the class, as advised in some observation manuals, may be just as obtrusive as deliberate interventions;

♦ the observer will not participate directly, for example, by support teaching, joining in discussion groups, role playing, offering advice, etc.;

♦ the observer may wish to talk to students and look at their work, but this should be at an appropriate time and agreed before the observation begins.

There may well be additional rules you would want to negotiate.

Giving feedback

Whether, when and how to give feedback to the person who has been observed is an important issue which sometimes gets overlooked. To some extent, this will depend on the overall aim of the data collection. General impressionistic feedback to the individual teacher can, and probably should, be given straight away, whilst aspects of the lesson are still fresh in the memory of both teacher and observer. This is best done as part of an informal dialogue. A more formal debriefing – such as would be appropriate for staff appraisal – has the advantage of being more considered and would also explicitly draw on other kinds of evidence.

Selecting the observers

The personnel selected to conduct observation can range from senior managers to newly qualified or recruited teachers. The former would clearly be the appropriate staff to conduct observations for appraisal needs, whilst the latter could be seen as 'fresh pairs of eyes' and relatively neutral regarding the school, who could provide insightful comment for an auditing or

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

monitoring exercise. Peer group observation can be particularly useful when the aim is a broad professional one, such as identifying good practice across departments. However, careful negotiation and consultation with those about to be observed will always be required.

A BRIEF READING GUIDE

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EXAMPLE 1: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

School:	Teacher observed:
Observer:	Date:
Subject:	Topic:
Class:	No. of students: Boys
	Girls
Time lesson started:	Time lesson finished:

Pre-Lesson Procedures

1. Ensure that you are introduced to the teacher whom you will be observing before the lesson begins (if necessary before registration or during a break).

2. Find out:
   - some background on the class:
     How many students?
     How many regular attenders?
     Is it mixed ability, set, etc.?
     What is the teacher's estimate of the ability range of the group (generally and in their subject)?

   - what will be covered during the lesson?

   - what are the main lesson objectives?

   - what, if anything, have the students already done on this particular topic?

3. Agree some basic ground rules for the observation; i.e.
   - you will be an unobtrusive observer;

   - you will not 'participate directly', e.g. by support teaching, joining in discussion groups, role playing, etc;

   - if opportunities arise [i.e. individual or group tasks but not during frontal teaching] you will want to move around the room talking to students and looking at their work.

4. Ask the teacher to introduce you and to explain your presence in the classroom.

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

Entering the Classroom

1. Select a place to sit (i) where you can get up and move around the class without being disruptive; and (ii) where you can observe the whole class without being conspicuous.

2. Note where the resources are stored. Is student work displayed? Are there posters, etc.?

3. Draw a rough map of the seating arrangements. Indicate who sits where by a B for boy and a G for girl. If the seating is rearranged during the lesson draw a second map.

School: Teacher observed:

DESCRIPTION OF LESSON

Lesson Opening:

Focus on: *How does the teacher start the lesson?*
What tasks are set?
Are the tasks differentiated or common for all students?
Does everyone seem to understand what is required of them?
How does the teacher respond to questions or other signs of lack of understanding?

Timing:

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

C1

> ### Learning activities and tasks:
>
> **Focus on:** *Brief description of the tasks (e.g. Task 1, 2, 3...);*
> *Are students working individually or on groups, or combination of both (note group sizes)?*
> *Does the teacher move around to every group/individual or only selected ones?*
> *Are all students 'on task'?*
> *If not, how does the teacher react to those who are not?*
> *How does the teacher identify learning needs/difficulties?*
> *How does (s)he respond to learning difficulties?*
> *What happens if some students finish before the rest?*
> *What happens if some have not finished when everyone else has?*
> *What feedback does the teacher give individual students?*

Lesson Ending

Focus on: *Are students still working on task at end of lesson or does the teacher allow time for summing up?*
Is there any reference to what will be done in the next lesson?

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

EXAMPLE 2: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

RATING SCALE

CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHING	LEVEL OF DIFFERENTIATED TEACHING			
	HIGH			LOW
Clarity of explanation of tasks	1	2	3	4
Responsiveness to misunderstandings about what is required	1	2	3	4
Apparent appropriateness of tasks to ability range of pupils	1	2	3	4
Effectiveness of approach to identifying individual learners' difficulties	1	2	3	4
Responsiveness to individual difficulties	1	2	3	4
Level of two-way interaction between teacher and individual/groups	1	2	3	4
Effectiveness of feedback to individuals	1	2	3	4
Use of any learning reinforcement activities	1	2	3	4
Use of a range of alternative strategies for helping learners with problems	1	2	3	4

C2. STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: SAMPLE SCHEDULE

(To be udertaken with individual students; the interview will probably take about half an hour and should be based on what you have observed them do. You may wish to use a tape recorder.)

The overall aim is to find out what helps students to learn, in different subjects/contexts, etc.

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1. Assessment

How do you find out how well you're doing in lessons?

Prompt: *Do teachers give you marks, write on your work?*

Do you have tests?

Do you record your achievements?

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

2. Objectives/Targets

How do you know what you're aiming at in the lesson?

Prompt: *Does the teacher explain at the beginning of the lesson?*
Does the teacher check up that you know what you're doing as you go along?

3. Responsibility

Can you choose different ways to do your work in a lesson? If so, when does this happen and why?

Prompt: *Does this happen in most lessons, or only some (which)?*
Are there only some kinds of learning activities where there is a choice about how to work?

4. Pace

Do you ever find you don't get your work finished or that you finish early? Why?

Prompt: *What do you do if you finish early – are there extension activities?*
Can you ask for help if you have problems finishing your work?

5. Grouping

Do you work best alone, in a pair, in small groups, in teams?

Prompt: *Does any adult other than the teacher help you? Is that useful?*
What kind of things do you do in pairs/teams/groups? (role play?
discussion?)
Does this vary according to what learning task you have? If so, how?

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

6. Learning approach and resources

What things help you most to learn?

Prompt: *Need to get students to talk about:*
Materials/worksheets, textbooks, other printed materials/library books etc.
Tools/equipment.
AV Aids – passive – just watching/listening to videos, audio etc.
interactive – using tape recorder, computer, video.

7. Homework

How do you find doing homework compared to working in school?

Prompt: *Do you do it with the same level of confidence, motivation?*
Do you find it easier/more difficult to work alone/at home?

C3. PROFILE FOR IDENTIFYING STUDENTS' LEARNING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

	Long-term low attainment	Short-term learning problems	Subject or skill specific learning difficulties	Consistent under-achievement	Reluctance to learn
poorly developed basic skills					
persistent below average scores on verbal and non verbal cognitive functioning tests					
difficulties in 'transferring' skills and knowledge					
inability to learn from mistakes					
poor study skills					
non-completion of assignments					
poor concentration and short attention span					
short memory span					
lack of persistence and expectation of failure when attempting new tasks					
high level of dependency on sympathetic teacher (needing constant attention, direction, supervision and reassurance)					
poor capacity for self-expression					
poor personal and social skills					
low self-esteem and confidence					
signs of anxiety, frustration and defensive behaviour					
disruptive or withdrawn behaviour					
sudden deterioration in performance, attainment and organisation of work					
starts to miss deadlines					
sudden decline in confidence and self-esteem					
inconsistencies in performance and attitude depending on the task or the skills and understanding required					
avoidance of tasks calling for certain skills, knowledge or procedures					
difficulties in comprehending certain concepts					
difficulties with certain processes, operations and skills					
difficulties with the sequential learning structure of some subjects, e.g. maths, modern languages					
difficulties in interpreting abstractions					
difficulties with any kind of spatial representation					
problem with symbolic representation of knowledge					
difficulties in interpreting what is required of them in certain kinds of tasks					
mismatch between classroom performance and potential as indicated by cognitive functioning tests, primary school reports etc.					
inconsistent or erratic performance					
apathetic non-participation in the classroom					
non-attendance and poor attendance					
frequent expression of view that school is boring and irrelevant					

C3

Note: This is intended to supplement the criteria used by schools for implementing the SEN Code of Practice

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C. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SCHEDULES

APPENDIX

APPENDIX:
HOW SCHOOLS HAVE USED
THE SCHEDULES

Coordinators in the schools which piloted the Handbook were invited to select, through consultation with their colleagues, a particular focus for their school's evaluation work, and to say what were the special circumstances influencing their choice. What follows is a digest of what each school wrote, and shows the range of interests and concerns which were encompassed by the Handbook.

School's choice of focus	Rationale/context
Classroom learning/management	Development of internal Quality Assurance programme; post-OFSTED Action Plan
Classroom learning/management	OFSTED Report and subsequent Action Plan
Quality Assurance, with an emphasis on quality of learning in the classroom	Interest in working towards a quality assurance programme which develops an institutional focus on quality of learning for all students
Departmental development and evaluation of communication systems in school, from the students' point of view	SMT evaluation/monitoring of communications systems; maths faculty chosen as example of good practice
Building on current practice in lesson observation and student monitoring	–
Whole-school strategies	Streamlining record-keeping
Classroom learning and promoting self-esteem	School's recent work on value-added focused on correlations (or lack) between Year 7 entry scores, GCSE results and A level results
Classroom management	Wish to improve on techniques and format for classroom observation
Classroom management	Recent merger of two schools, and consequent need to integrate practice

HOW SCHOOLS HAVE USED THE SCHEDULES

School's choice of focus	Rationale/context
Students' and parents' attitudes in context of whole-school quality assurance	Local reorganisation from 13+ to 11+ transfer; interest in value-added; school's own quality assurance initiative
Monitoring quality of teaching and learning in the classroom; raising standards of achievement for all students	Positive use of appraisal and staff development, in the light of impending OFSTED inspection
Raising attainment at A level, especially most academically able	Recent OFSTED inspection
Examination of practice in a 'high-achieving' department	-
Whole-school strategies for promoting self-esteem	Closure of two old schools/opening of one new one on same site; need to identify areas of strength so that they could be incorporated into policies for new institution

RAISING ATTAINMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
new updated edition

Now updated to take account of the new policy context, this Handbook is designed to assist with raising attainment. It was thoroughly tested in the field with different kinds of secondary schools.

Raising attainment can seem daunting because it takes in every aspect of school life. The problem is therefore not so much 'what do we do?' as 'where do we begin?'. Raising attainment involves:

- managing individual students' *motivation* more effectively;

- reviewing the effectiveness of prevailing *teaching and learning styles*;

- providing more effective *feedback* to students;

- instituting or developing agreed 'early warning systems' for picking up problems that militate against achievement.

The Handbook guides schools through various approaches to evaluating what they are doing to raise the levels of attainment of their students by such means. Because it is important for schools not to waste time and effort on 'reinventing the wheel', the materials aim to:

- show the range and kinds of evidence that can be used in evaluating *process* as well as outcomes;

- provide *practical evaluation instruments*, for use in classroom observation, discussion with students, scrutiny of policy documents and so on.

Schools may each have very different priorities, of course, and above all evaluation needs to be *manageable*. The schedules in the Handbook are therefore constructed to help schools focus on the following:

- under-achieving departments, to help them improve;

- 'accelerating' departments, to help identify and share good practice – finding 'the difference that makes a difference';

- departments not appearing to do well with particular groups of students, e.g. low achievers, high achievers, mixed ability groups;

- departments appearing to do very well with particular groups of students; and

- ways of testing the overall system in the school for identifying and improving the attainment of all its students.

The Handbook is designed with secondary students and their curriculum particularly in mind – though the material could also be used in the upper primary sector. The Handbook is published in loose-leaf format so that staff can photocopy material and also add their own.