

Devolved School Management Self-Evaluation Toolkit

INTRODUCTION

The DSM 2012 Guidelines aim to meet local needs and support the delivery of the best possible outcomes for young learners, in line with the objectives of Curriculum for Excellence, GIRFEC and the Early Years Framework.

This initial version of the DSM Self Evaluation toolkit should be used in conjunction with the revised DSM Guidelines by elected members, chief executives, directors of education, headteachers, teaching staff and Parent Councils.

A key function of this Self Evaluation toolkit is to ensure that the updated DSM Guidelines are being consistently applied across Scotland. The purpose of this first version of the toolkit is therefore to



provide local authorities and schools with assurance that their DSM schemes follow all of the principles laid out in the new guidelines.

The DSM Self Evaluation toolkit can be used at a local level to assess DSM schemes by an appropriate group of stakeholders within a local authority. This group of stakeholders could consist of representatives from an existing or new group and would include local elected members, directors of education, headteachers, heads of establishment (nursery or special schools), parent representatives, other teaching staff etc.

It is suggested that the stakeholder group overseeing DSM should not be overly bureaucratic and should help to facilitate more collegiate working across a council and its partners. However, it is entirely the decision of local councils to how these arrangements should be established to meet local circumstances.

Furthermore, it is recommended that once the DSM Self Evaluation toolkit has been used an analysis of current local DSM arrangements is undertaken through a workshop based approach with a focus on identifying improvement actions that can also be potentially informed by best practice from other councils.

CORE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF A ROBUST DSM SCHEME

The 2012 Guidelines are based on the core values of *subsidiarity, openness, transparency and local accountability*. The DSM Guidelines are also based on nineteen principles that are grouped under the following four broad headings accompanied by some brief explanatory information.

Subsidiarity and Empowerment

Scottish local authority education services should support decision making at the most appropriate point to empower headteachers and other teaching staff.

For schools this would mean ensuring that directors of education, headteachers, other staff and Parent Councils understand the key aims and principles associated with the management of devolved budgets. These arrangements should be managed in ways which ensure a clear focus on the best educational outcomes for learners.

Partnership Working

Each local authority should have in place appropriate arrangements to review and update their own DSM Scheme, which will include input from and consultation with headteachers, teachers, parents and other key stakeholders to promote effective partnership working between education providers within learning communities. Joint work with partners should be guided by agreed local priorities framed in the School Improvement



Plan, the Education and Children's Services Plans and the Community Plan.

DSM schemes should also facilitate and promote effective joint working

involving chief executives, education directorates, headteachers, other staff and parents within a DSM framework overseen by local elected members.

Accountability and Responsibility

DSM Schemes will clearly state how budgets are devolved to establishments, and which responsibilities have been devolved to school level. Related advice should address the need for schools to meet the minimum standards agreed by a local authority.

Local authorities should ensure that all headteachers are consulted and fully engaged when setting minimum or core staffing standards. It should also be recognised that these minimum staffing standards may be subject to review from time to time and should be aligned to meet national outcome targets and local outcomes. Staffing allocations additional to the core allocations can, however, be deployed flexibly by headteachers to meet wider school educational and learning priorities.

An effective DSM scheme will ensure that headteachers can manage their resources to best meet local school and community needs, thereby maximising the learning experiences and outcomes for all young people. Furthermore, DSM schemes should focus on the nature and range of service functions rather than the devolved percentages of budgets. Their



management should be accountable to local councils since probity and efficiency in the use of public monies are essential.

Local Flexibility

As the financial year does not run concurrently with the academic year it is considered good practice to allow establishment headteachers the ability to carry forward funds. Any decision by a headteacher to notify a carry forward of funds from one financial year to the next must be supported by a sound educational business case and, if required, by local authorisation.

It is a matter for individual councils based on local circumstances to agree the percentage limits to be applied to the amount of funding able to be carried forward by headteachers. This funding carried forward by headteachers should allow them to accumulate resources to secure key educational outcomes for learners. It should be recognised that schools may wish to use this carry forward facility not only for on-going revenue expenditure but may also wish to save towards a longer term planned objective such as school refurbishments etc. Therefore, any scheme should allow such flexibility where possible.

THE DSM SELF EVALUATION TOOLKIT

SUBSIDIARITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Local Authority	Establishment
What arrangements are there in place to discuss future Education Service budgets and any impact on delegated school budgets?	Are school spending plans consistent with the local authority's DSM Scheme along with any other strategic policy decisions of the council?
Are there clear and transparent formulae in place to distribute staffing and non staffing budgets?	Are decisions on resource use at establishment level based on actions that will best contribute to the educational outcomes of pupils? Are these decisions based within a best value context?
Are headteachers, depute headteachers, heads of establishments (nursery and special schools) and officers with delegated finance responsibilities provided with training on the local authority's DSM Scheme and financial management?	Are all of the relevant staff in your establishment aware of their role in financial management?
Does your Council operate 3 year indicative budget cycles?	Can you reasonably project what the school budget will be, if budgets formulae remain constant, over a 3 year period?
Are your Education Service financial plans linked to Corporate and Departmental plans and do they reflect national and local strategic priorities?	
Are headteachers and other staff involved in discussions on DSM? Is the LNCT consulted?	
What criteria are used to create budget formulae in your local authority? For example, do formulae take account of school roll, deprivation factors, the numbers of young people at each stage in the school and rurality issues?	
What criteria are used to create budget formulae in your local authority? Do budget formulae take account of school roll, deprivation factors, the numbers of young people at each stage in the school and rurality issues? Are these criteria agreed by elected members in consultation with all appropriate stakeholders i.e. schools, parents and Parent Councils?	
	Do you, as a headteacher, have control over how to spend your budgetary allocations within agreed council policies?
	Are there arrangements in place to delegate spending decisions to the appropriate level in your establishment?
	Are Departmental and Faculty Heads within schools aware of the key aims and principles associated with any devolved funds they manage?

Are you aware of where the current financial risks or pressures exist within your devolved budget?

And, if so can you demonstrate what steps have been taken to help reduce/mitigate these risks or pressures?

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Local Authority	Establishment
Is there an appropriate framework in place to deliver strategic outcomes and local priorities?	
Do schools contribute to partnership working?	
Is there an appropriate consultation mechanism to engage with relevant stakeholders when the Council sets its Revenue Budget?	
Do schools link with other services and agencies in line with the principles outlined in Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the Early Years Framework?	
Are headteachers, other staff and parents involved in discussions on DSM?	Do you consult with staff on budgetary matters and how often? For example, does your establishment have a DSM Committee to oversee spending decisions?
Are consultation arrangements in place to ensure that relevant stakeholders are involved in setting the Education Service budget as part of the wider Council budget, in terms of likely impact on the level of resources delegated to schools?	How do you consult with Parent Councils, parents and the wider education community on budgetary matters and how often? Do you consult with Student/Pupil representative bodies and local employers on appropriate or relevant issues?
	What arrangements are in place to alter spending plans, having taken stakeholder views on board?
How do the objectives of your Corporate Plan and / or Community Plan promote cross sectoral working?	To what extent have you considered pooling resources with other schools within your Learning Community (school clusters) to achieve better educational outcomes for learners?
Is there a framework at authority level that sets out clearly how schools will work with other schools and agencies?	Has consideration been given to sharing teaching or support staff with other schools in your Learning Community?
As part of the budget setting process, does your local authority create separate budgets at Learning Community level (school clusters) which can be accessed by all establishments collaboratively to ensure successful outcomes?	How closely do you work with other council departments and external agencies (Social Work, NHS, Leisure etc) to ensure the best possible outcome for all learners?
	How often do you optimise opportunities to pool resources with other council departments and external agencies to meet the needs of your young people?

ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Local Authority	Establishment
Is the content of the Corporate Plan / Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement shared with headteachers?	Has the School Improvement Plan followed local authority guidance?
Is elected member training on DSM offered?	
Have the Education Service Plan objectives been discussed with headteachers?	Does the School Improvement Plan have clear links to the Corporate Plan, the Education Service Plan, the Single Outcome Agreement and national targets and outcomes?
Does your scheme set out a policy on deficits, carry-forwards and virement?	Do your spending plans promote and focus on positive outcomes for all learners and meet the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence?
Does the scheme encourage responsible use of these flexibilities in line with the principles of DSM?	
Do school leaders have access to local and / or national leadership programmes and training which ensures an approach to DSM that encourages enterprising decision-making to promote better outcomes?	Are school budgets broken down to Departmental or Faculty level?
	What control do departmental or faculty heads have over spending decisions?
	If the above applies, are those responsible for departmental budgets trained in planning and monitoring?
	How are staff made accountable for spending decisions?
Has the local authority given clear guidelines to headteachers on how to prepare School Improvement Plans?	Has the School Improvement Plan been discussed with staff and the Parent Council?
Have Parent Councils been given training on their role?	Does the School Improvement Plan set clear unambiguous objectives for the academic session?
	Do spending priorities match the objectives of the School Improvement Plan?
	Is progress towards the School Improvement Plan targets monitored throughout the year?
	Has the devolved budget been aligned in such a way that allows allocated resources to be clearly shown, monitored and reported against key targets within your establishment?

LOCAL FLEXIBILITY

Local Authority	Establishment
<p>An underlying principle should be that devolution should be meaningful and allow headteachers genuine flexibility.</p> <p>Does your local authority scheme follow these guidelines?</p>	<p>How well as headteacher are you able to meet your establishment's local needs using the resources allocated?</p>
<p>Once the budget is set, and in the context of 3 year indicative budget horizon, councils should seek to avoid mid year reductions to school budgets.</p> <p>Is this the case in your local authority area?</p>	<p>Are you limited in the amount of funding you can move between budget lines?</p>
	<p>Are you able to carry forward funding between financial years, including deficits? If so, is there a limit on the funding which can be carried forward?</p> <p>Are you able to deposit funds to save towards long term bigger spend items e.g. school refurbishments etc?</p>