

Unit 3, Section 4

Monitoring and Evaluation

Key Issues

- The school's gifted and talented policy should make clear the school's philosophy and procedures for monitoring and evaluating it. These should be reflected in all individual departmental policies.
- As part of the school's overall plan for self-evaluation, the policy for gifted and talented pupils should contain details of how provision for them is to be evaluated.
- All self-evaluation by departments should contain an element that relates to gifted and talented pupils and how the subject, etc, provides for them.
- The role of the co-ordinator in respect of monitoring and evaluation whole school provision will vary from school to school; some may be directly involved, others may have a role in ensuring that systems are in place and used
- All co-ordinators should feel confident in monitoring and evaluating particular aspects of provision for which they are responsible
- There are a range of monitoring and evaluation tools which can be used to give evidence of progress and impact

Background

The distinct policy statement for the education of gifted and talented pupils should also serve to ensure a shared understanding of how the provision is to be put into practice and how it may be monitored and evaluated. Thirdly, it is a means by which a school may measure its progress in curriculum development.

Policy statements are now part of the fabric of every school, and they are a focus for scrutiny in OFSTED inspections. The quality of a policy is judged on the extent to which it guides the teaching of the subject or the aspect which it represents, and the contribution it makes to the overall school development plan. The latter, in turn, should be a coherent whole, and ensure that all the policies relate well to one another in the interest of the pupils, both as individuals and collectively. That is not as easy as it sounds, since many school policies are often self-contained to the extent that they do not take account of the benefits they can derive from others or confer upon them. This is perhaps particularly true of the relationship between policies devoted to subjects and those devoted to aspects, eg personal and social development, and gifted and talented pupils. The quality of individual policies, and the extent to which they are carefully dovetailed and mutually supportive, is an indicator of the quality of leadership and management in the school.

It is interesting to note that OFSTED's 'Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools' gives inspectors specific instructions for looking at a school's provision for the gifted and talented; for example, 'To judge the achievements of gifted and talented pupils, find out if the school uses its assessment data to identify and make provision for these pupils.' Page 34 of the Handbook gives an extract from an inspection report which contains the following words: "The school's programme of support has a set of rigorous criteria for identifying the more able very able, and those with particular talents. Each subject department has developed and shared the characteristics of high attainment in that subject.' On page 57 of the Handbook, inspectors are told:

"You need to explore:

'the awareness of the teachers of the needs of these pupils'.

'the school's strategies for ensuring that all teachers are able to share in providing the level of subject support needed.'

'how the school draws on sources of support for gifted and talented pupils.' "

All these points have a bearing on the need for the school to have a clear policy in which such features are documented. Responsibility for this policy will lie, in the first instance, with the co-ordinator, who will need to liaise extensively with colleagues charged with producing policy documents for their own subjects, etc. How these policies are ultimately made to cohere and to relate to the school development plan is for the school itself to decide, but it is common for a curriculum co-ordinator at senior management level to guarantee the overall framework.

The policy

A policy for gifted and talented pupils may be developed in a variety of ways. Many schools choose to produce the policy through a school focus group which studies 'best practice', drawing upon LEA guidance and work in the wider field, and taking account of the particular context of the school. The resulting draft is then put out for consultation. Others gather evidence of good practice from within the school, by way of collaboration between the staff, and incorporate the conclusions into the policy. These are only two of the methods one encounters, and there are, of course, many individual initiatives. It is likely that in 'Excellence in Cities' schools the co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils will take responsibility for drafting the policy, by whichever means it comes in to being. When a policy is put into practice, it will be at its most successful where it has involved a wide range of people in the process of consultation - staff, pupils, parents, governors, and 'critical friends'.

Researchers in the field are commonly agreed that a policy for gifted and talented pupils should have certain key features. They are as follows:

1. General Rationale

- why such a policy is needed
- where it links into the school's general aims and philosophy

2. Aims

What the school aims to provide for the pupils, eg.

- Work at higher cognitive levels
- Opportunities to develop specific skills or talents
- A concern for the whole child - social and intellectual.

3. Definitions

An agreement by the school on a working definition of the gifted and talented.

4. Identifying pupils and monitoring their progress

Schemes for identifying the pupils and monitoring their progress, eg meeting individual needs and addressing underachievement.

5. Organisational responses

- Acceleration and fast tracking
- Working with older pupils
- Withdrawal across year groups
- Provision for exceptional pupils, e.g. mentoring

6. In-class approach

- Enrichment/extension
- Working with others of like ability
- Differentiation
- Challenge within subject areas
- Differentiated homework

7. Out-of-class activities

- Enrichment days or residentials
- School clubs
- Musical or sporting activities

8. Personal and social education

9. Responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring progress, e.g. named co-ordinator

10. Process for review and development

11. Use of outside agencies for training, provision etc.

Evaluation

All policy statements, if they are to be complete, have to contain a rationale for evaluating the development of the subject or aspect they represent. This is an important element in a school's overall plan for self-evaluation. In a paper delivered at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association in September 2000, Rudd and Davies, of NFER, said: '...it is apparent that the processes and frameworks used as a basis for inspection have been modified so as to take greater account of a growing drive for internal, *self*-evaluation, arising from the desire of schools and teachers to assess for themselves how well they are doing.'... They added: '...recent publications from *Ofsted* such as *School Evaluation Matters* (1998) have focused directly upon self-evaluation and have offered advice to schools about the processes involved in carrying out evaluation. It is clear that *Ofsted* now views external inspection and self-evaluation as complementary activities.'

This is not the place to go into the issue of school self-evaluation at large, but it is worth setting out the components of 'School Self-evaluation in a Nutshell' contained in the OFSTED Handbook referred to above.

- Start now
- Accept that we can all improve
- Place the raising of standards at the heart of all your planning
- Measure standards
- Compare yourself with others
- Regularly observe each other teaching to a set of agreed and rigorous criteria
- Evaluate the effect that teaching has on learning
- Be completely open in feeding back what you find
- Think, discuss and consult
- Set targets for everyone's improvement
- Ensure that action is supported, monitored and reviewed
- Never stop evaluating.

This is not to suggest that OFSTED's model for self-evaluation is the only one, or is necessarily the one that every school would want to adopt. Indeed, Rudd and Davies went on to say:

'...it is true that a majority of schools view the inspection criteria as being a suitable basis for self-evaluation, but our research revealed that some difficulties still remain, arising from the fact that self-evaluation and school inspection *are not the same thing*.... This is why a number of schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have made use of frameworks other than that supplied by *Ofsted*, including quality assurance standards, such as 'Total Quality Management', British Standards indicator BS 5750, 'Investors in People' and school-driven frameworks such as that suggested by MacBeath (1999) in his influential work "*Schools Must Speak for Themselves*".'

That said, the components listed above, or something very like them, would feature in any programme of self-evaluation, and they pertain as much to an individual subject or aspect as to a school as a whole. As remarked earlier, all departmental policies should explicitly feature provision for gifted and able children, and the means by which they will evaluate that provision. The importance of this cannot be overstated, and it should be jointly recognised as essential by senior and middle management. When evaluating the school's overall provision for gifted and talented children, the co-ordinator should feel confident that he or she can draw upon the self-evaluation which has taken place within departments.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the need for a distinctive whole-school policy for G&T pupils to guide provision
- Understand the need to monitor and evaluate how policy is implemented in practice
- Recognise that the policy must form part of the school's overall development planning
- Recognise the value of departmental and school self-evaluation in relation to policy for the G&T

References

Eyre, D. (1997) *Able Children in Ordinary Classrooms* London: Fulton

MacBeath, J. (1999) *Schools Must Speak for Themselves: The Case for School Self-Evaluation*. London: Routledge.

Office for Standards in Education (2000) '*Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools, with guidance on self-evaluation*'. London: The Stationery Office.

Rudd, P. and Davies, D. (2000) *Evaluating School Self-Evaluation*. Paper delivered to the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, 7 September, 2000

Additional Readings

Heller, K., Monks, F.J. & Passow, A.H., (eds.) (1993) *International Handbook of Research and Development of Giftedness and Talent* London: Pergamon Press

Websites

Scottish model for self-evaluation:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/qmie.pdf>