

National Standards for Educational Improvement Professionals

These updated Standards are designed to help educational improvement professionals improve their professional practice and effectiveness in a changing educational context. They are intended to be used as the basis for individual and/or team review to identify professional development priorities and for accreditation.

Foreword

National professional standards play an integral role in supporting improvements to service provision. They also assist with the development of individual roles and skills and enhance the professional reputation of highly-skilled workers.

The onset of the Government's far-reaching *Every Child Matters* agenda – which aims to improve the well-being of all children and young people – means that all professionals in education and children's services will soon be working in a markedly different context.

As the professional organisation representing professionals working in educational improvement and related children's services, the Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (Aspect) is firmly committed to developing the skills and status of these professionals.

It is in response to this commitment, and to the demands of meeting the objectives of the *Every Child Matters* agenda and other policy initiatives, that these Standards have been produced.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at Aspect who helped to formulate these new Standards, particularly Aspect's head of professional development, Judith Hibbert.

I hope they will prove useful to both individual practitioners and organisations seeking to improve the quality of services they provide to all children and young people.



John Chowcat
General secretary

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Background

The National Standards for School Improvement Professionals

Formally launched in June 2003, the *National Standards for School Improvement Professionals* have had a major influence on both the definition and development of the roles of school improvement professionals and their services.

In particular, the Standards have been used to:

- Target continuing professional development for staff in local authority advisory services and in private sector education organisations
- Support recruitment processes
- Refine performance management systems for school improvement professionals
- Support the induction of staff.

The changing context

Policy developments in education are leading to a broadening of the roles and responsibilities of those engaged in educational improvement, and there is now a much greater emphasis on working in partnership with other organisations and agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people. Within the context of the 'New Relationship with Schools', educational improvement professionals will be providing more focused challenge and support for schools.

As a result, the Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (Aspect) – in consultation with members and a number of local authorities – has undertaken a revision of the *National Standards for School Improvement Professionals*. These updated Standards are designed to reflect the changing roles and responsibilities of those working in educational improvement.

The Standards embrace the need for educational improvement professionals to influence organisational change and development. They emphasise the importance of offering professional leadership to schools and their communities, as well as to other organisations and teams of professionals engaged in improvement. The Standards recognise that capacity building is central to the work of educational improvement professionals, and that individuals and organisations concerned with improving the quality of education and well-being for all children and young people need to learn how to adapt to rapidly-changing contexts in order to sustain system-wide improvement.

Supporting improvements in the learning and well-being of children and young people is fundamental to the future work of educational improvement professionals. The Standards

take account of the Government's 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners' and the five outcomes for all children and young people which are set out in the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* Outcomes Framework and lie at the centre of the Children Act 2004.

Aims of the Standards:

- Further improve the quality of work undertaken by individual educational improvement professionals in their key roles of professional leadership, ensuring accountability, advancing effective learning and promoting effective partnership working
- Support the development of skills needed to operate effectively in newly-defined working environments and serve as a basis for cross-service working
- Complement existing frameworks of competencies and accountabilities, and make them applicable to both the private and public sector
- Provide a clear framework for performance management to enhance the professional competency and confidence of educational improvement professionals
- Support the development of a framework for continuing professional development for serving educational improvement professionals and those aspiring to become educational improvement professionals.

Using the Standards

The Standards are relevant to the work of a wide range of professionals involved in educational improvement including: local authority advisers, inspectors and consultants; those working for private companies; independent consultants; workforce reform advisers; and School Improvement Partners.

Educational improvement services can use the updated Standards in a range of different ways including:

- Recruitment and selection processes
- The induction of new staff
- Performance management
- Continuing professional development
- The collection of evidence of competencies for portfolio development and accreditation
- Monitoring of individual and team performance.

The National Standards

Six dimensions are identified which reflect the working practices of educational improvement professionals. These are:

- Developing self and others
- Professional leadership to build capacity
- Accountability – evaluating practice
- Promoting learning
- Working with and developing organisations
- Developing and sustaining partnerships.

Each dimension consists of three elements:

- **Actions**, which represent the core functions of the educational improvement role
- **Areas of knowledge and understanding**, which underpin effective performance
- **Professional qualities**, capacity of educational improvement professionals to fulfill roles and responsibilities and commitment to underpinning values.

Figure 1: The three elements of the Standards



1 Developing self and others

Educational improvement professionals interact with others in diverse contexts and for multiple purposes. To engage successfully, the educational improvement professional recognises the feelings of others as well as their own, and can manage resultant emotions. In facilitating self-development, educational improvement professionals use a range of approaches – including facilitation, mentoring and coaching – to help to identify needs, priorities and actions. They are sensitive to context when weighing their responsibility to negotiate approaches which impinge professionally on others, and set this against the need to act decisively.

Educational improvement professionals have a responsibility to develop themselves professionally in order to improve service provision. Organisations employing educational improvement professionals have a responsibility to ensure access to appropriate professional development opportunities on a regular basis.

Knowledge and understanding

Knows and understands:

- The nature of emotional intelligence and its importance in learning and developing professional relationships
- Negotiation and ways of positively influencing others
- Coaching and mentoring in different professional contexts
- The nature of adult learning
- The implications of partnerships formed across professional boundaries.

Actions

- Manages emotions so they enhance rather than hinder performance
- Senses what others are feeling and takes their perspective(s) into account
- Reads social situations accurately, and interacts smoothly in building bonds and managing conflict
- Interacts positively with a broad range of people from all cultural backgrounds and in a range of services
- Is resilient in the face of challenge
- Balances the need for challenge and support
- Is resourceful in suggesting positive courses of action
- Coaches and mentors others effectively

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- Makes appropriate choices to move and guide colleagues towards agreed goals, taking the initiative and exercising leadership where appropriate
 - Manages own time, priorities and work-life balance in an effective manner.

Professional qualities

Is committed to:

- Enhancing the life chances of all children and young people
- Improving educational opportunities, outcomes and well-being for all
- Continuing lifelong learning, particularly professionally
- Working collaboratively to raise educational standards
- Facilitating improvements in the understanding, knowledge and skills of those with whom they work.

Is able to:

- Assess own abilities and approaches to enhance and develop own repertoire
- Communicate in an open and honest way, conveying 'hard messages' when necessary
- Inspire, challenge and motivate others
- Build professional relationships with a range of specialists
- Respond well to challenge and show a determination to overcome obstacles
- Operate effectively as a member of a team and in leadership roles.

2 Professional leadership to build capacity

Educational improvement professionals work with a range of agencies, partners and school leaders to influence the creation and implementation of a long-term vision for education which is shared by all stakeholders. This vision is underpinned by a strong belief in the ethical purpose of advancing effective learning.

Educational improvement professionals adapt to changing circumstances and new ideas. They encourage others to do likewise, and support organisations and individuals to build capacity to sustain improvement as circumstances change and new demands are placed upon them. Educational improvement professionals help to identify trends and assess progress, they moderate and validate self-evaluation, and help to establish priorities as a basis for effective strategic planning.

Knowledge and understanding

Knows and understands:

- What constitutes high quality educational provision at all levels and in different contexts
- Local, national and global trends in education
- Key national initiatives and their relationships to each other
- Theory and practice of approaches to development which build capacity
- Ways to build, communicate and implement a shared vision
- Strategic planning processes
- Effective change processes and their impact on creativity and innovation
- New technologies, their use and impact on learning, and on the quality of services.

Actions

- Conveys a coherent long-term vision for high-quality education for all learners
- Supports schools, local authorities and other service providers in implementing change and adapting to new ideas
- Works with schools and their communities to provide support and challenge
- Interprets both quantitative and qualitative data and other indicators, and frames hypotheses to promote activity by schools and other service providers to bring about improvements
- Motivates and works with others to create professional learning communities within and beyond schools, characterised by clear ethical purpose, and shared values and beliefs
- Works with schools and other organisations to explore creative approaches to education and to develop appropriate use of new technologies.

Professional qualities

Is committed to:

- Improving service provision to the public
- Equity and impartiality in all aspects of educational provision
- Providing leadership in implementing strategies to improve the quality of education
- Working collaboratively with educational services and other partners to ensure high standards for all
- Setting and achieving ambitious and challenging targets for improvement
- A problem-solving approach
- Using appropriate new technologies to advance learning and improve the overall quality of services.

Is able to:

- Think strategically, building and communicating a coherent vision in a range of compelling ways
- Work with organisations using appropriate leadership approaches
- Inspire, challenge, motivate and empower others to carry the vision forward
- Command credibility and influence others in leading educational improvement
- Listen actively, ask searching questions, clarify points, and check understanding.

3 Accountability – evaluating practice

Educational improvement professionals hold individuals and organisations to account for the quality of experience provided for children and young people in their care, and the contribution these organisations make to the achievement and well-being of all children and young people. Educational improvement professionals monitor and evaluate educational provision in different contexts – from individual learners to organisations, whole communities and regions.

Professionals working in educational improvement need to possess a thorough understanding of the learning process and how the skills of observation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback can improve the learning process as well as add breadth to it. Educational improvement professionals view evaluation as both an individual and a corporate activity. They support self-evaluation by individuals, schools and other organisations, in ways which help to build system-wide capacity.

Knowledge and understanding

Knows and understands:

- The characteristics of high-quality educational provision at all levels and in different contexts
- Principles underpinning evaluation processes
- The theory and practice of approaches to evaluation in an educational context, including school self-evaluation
- Analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data
- The range of data management systems used by educational organisations
- How outcomes and process targets are set to advance learning and the well-being of all children and young people.

Actions

- Carries out direct observation based on rigorous criteria
- Provides constructive feedback to individuals on the basis of evidence and seeks to explain interpretations and identify appropriate changes to provision
- Relates judgements to contextual data and data relating to the performance of particular groups of learners
- Uses data to judge the performance and challenge underachievement of groups of learners by gender, ethnicity, special educational needs and prior attainment, and which is benchmarked against local and national norms
- Moderates self-evaluation processes and outcomes to help to bring about improvements
- Helps to build the capacity of organisations to evaluate their own performance effectively.

Professional qualities

Is committed to:

- Raising educational standards in a wide range of contexts
- Evaluating educational provision objectively, on the basis of evidence
- 'Intelligent accountability' throughout the education system.

Is able to:

- Distinguish between the use of evaluation for the purposes of accountability and development
- Gather and analyse relevant evidence from a range of sources, both within the organisation and from the wider context
- Analyse performance data relating to individual learners, to groups of learners, and to educational organisations and communities
- Judge levels of significance of data
- Formulate clear, secure judgements, and make recommendations based on evidence
- Identify and explain strengths and weaknesses in a range of educational provision
- Provide constructive feedback that forms the basis for future improvement
- Build the capacity of others to carry out self-evaluation.

4 Promoting learning

Educational improvement professionals are familiar with what is understood about the process of learning. They see learning holistically and recognise that a wide range of stakeholders contribute to the development of children and young people. Educational improvement professionals use their understanding of learning to inform policy and practice, and to identify and disseminate effective practice. Educational improvement professionals model good practice in teaching and learning when they lead professional development activities.

Knowledge and understanding

Knows and understands:

- How pupils learn and how teaching impacts upon pupils' achievement
- The role of emotional intelligence in facilitating effective learning
- Statutory requirements, including provisions made in the national curriculum
- Strategies for meeting the learning needs of individual pupils ('personalised learning')
- Strategies for 'assessment for learning'
- Analysis and use of data in supporting and shaping learning
- The use of targets and benchmarking to raise aspirations and promote achievement
- The monitoring and evaluation of achievement
- How to develop the culture of a 'learning organisation'
- Effective learning environments
- The use of new technologies as learning tools.

Actions

- Promotes individual and organisational learning
- Promotes the use of strategies for 'assessment for learning' to raise achievement
- Demonstrates how national and local initiatives can improve teaching and learning and raise standards
- Suggests appropriate changes in teaching approaches to engage learners more fully and support their achievement.

Professional qualities

Is committed to:

- Equality of opportunity for all learners
- Finding ways to motivate and engage all learners
- Lifelong learning as an activity for all
- Seeing the learning process in a holistic way, involving parents and/or carers and the wider community
- Recognising, rewarding and celebrating all forms of achievement
- Seeking and disseminating examples of effective practice.

Is able to:

- Recognise and analyse aspects of good practice which will transfer to other learning contexts
- Initiate and support action research into effective learning
- Synthesise knowledge from a range of sources to improve learning
- Use ICT in learning and evaluate its impact.

5 Working with and developing organisations

Educational improvement professionals work to build capacity within schools and other organisations, and can support others in managing and sustaining improvement. They understand the connection between personal and organisational development, and the complex web of forces that influence education. Capacity is built by creating learning organisations – a process educational improvement professionals facilitate by working with leaders at all levels and in challenging and supportive partnerships.

Educational improvement professionals understand organisational development. They work alongside schools, other organisations, agencies and individuals to promote local partnerships so that resources are deployed effectively to improve educational outcomes for all children and young people.

Knowledge and understanding

Knows and understands:

- Principles and systems that promote and sustain a learning organisation
- Different models and structures of learning organisations and their values/belief systems, and how they build capacity for sustainable development
- The impact of legislation and current Government initiatives
- Strategic planning and systems thinking for capacity building
- External and internal factors which impede or enhance organisational effectiveness
- Methods of working collaboratively with multi-agency stakeholders in order to deliver outcomes for all children and young people
- The use of project management as a tool for managing coherent and focused development
- Effective models of self-evaluation at all levels
- The construction, validation and use of indicators to guide and evaluate organisational development
- Leadership styles and approaches and their impact on development strategies
- Effective financial management and the principles of 'best value'
- Performance management and the role of continuous professional development in capacity building.

Actions

- Helps individual organisations and groups of organisations to develop systems thinking and to improve strategic planning and partnership working

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- Supports and moderates organisational self-evaluation
 - Works alongside leaders to develop strategic planning capacity, appropriate leadership styles and approaches and management systems
 - Promotes and supports effective multi-agency interventions
 - Leads and manages projects that support individual, team and organisational improvement
 - Identifies, analyses and shares good practice within organisations and between partner organisations.

Professional qualities

Is committed to:

- Development of learning organisations with the objective of building capacity for sustained improvement
- Identifying and realising potential in order to raise achievement
- Approaches to leadership which build capacity
- Collaborative working and development
- Holding people accountable for the development of themselves and others.

Is able to:

- Think creatively and help others to do the same
- Think systemically and make useful connections
- Apply knowledge of the broader context in which organisations function
- Manage complex projects to meet timescales and deadlines and secure improvement
- Analyse, interpret and apply qualitative and quantitative data
- Work effectively and equitably with colleagues from a wide range of organisations
- Make informed professional judgements which respect the viewpoints and perceptions of others
- Model effective leadership behaviours
- Provide evaluative and developmental reports both verbally and in writing.

6 Developing and sustaining partnerships

Networks and partnerships are an important means by which an individual organisation can harness additional ideas, resources and approaches; such partnerships benefit from external brokering and support. Educational improvement professionals have an important role to play in identifying when such networks and partnerships will be beneficial, and in helping to create the conditions in which a partnership can better serve the community as a whole.

Local authority responses to the Children Act demonstrate the need to embrace partnership working across a diverse group of professionals to improve the quality of services to children, young people, families and communities. As specialists in providing external advice and support, educational improvement professionals will be key members of such partnerships, and often take on a leadership role within this context.

Knowledge and understanding

Knows and understands:

- The conditions necessary to build and sustain effective partnerships
- Models of partnership working
- Potential barriers to effective partnership working and how to address these
- The roles and responsibilities of the range of agencies working within the community
- Strategies for communicating across a wide, and sometimes disparate, range of agencies
- The wider context in which stakeholders and partners are working.

Actions

- Shares evidence appropriately with key partners in order to gain a fully informed basis for proposing action and making decisions
- Articulates a clear vision for organisational improvement in specific contexts
- Works with partnerships and networks to advance effective learning and development of all children and young people
- Works with schools, local authority, communities, partners and agency stakeholders in order to develop and implement integrated strategic plans
- Works with voluntary and community organisations in the development and evaluation of non-formal learning contexts
- Ensures that legal and regulatory responsibilities are being met.

Professional qualities

Is committed to:

- Working in constructive ways with a wide range of professionals
- An enquiry or research-based approach to promoting change
- Establishing and supporting existing and new networks across schools and other organisations, and supporting the agencies that work with them.

Is able to:

- Be creative in solving problems
- Think systemically about change
- Be sensitive to the impact of change on different stakeholders and different parts of the system in which they are working
- Work effectively with a range of people in other agencies to support educational improvement
- Read social situations and networks accurately, interact smoothly, manage conflict and build bonds
- Promote innovation and researched-based approaches to evaluating outcomes.

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