

Oddments

Self-evaluation phrases

Many schools create self-evaluation documents which demonstrate a lack of understanding because:

- They contain no evaluation (quite often, it is literally none)
- They evaluate only the things the school does well
- It reads like an advertisement for how wonderful the school (and sometimes the headteacher) is
- It does not link to the school improvement plan as it does not identify weaknesses
- It looks at Ofsted categories, rather than the areas the school would most benefit from analysing.

The school self-evaluation (SSE, not SEF, which is old Ofsted terminology) should be concise – probably a maximum of eight sides of A4 in Calibri 11/ Arial 10 – and should consider its audience, which is likely to be governors and leaders. Therefore, context is not required, because the audience already knows the context, and the detail of the context is already to be found elsewhere. All sentences should contain an evaluative word, should avoid description, and should make judgements based on the consequent (real or potential) rise in pupil progress and attainment. Statements must be evidenced. So, for example, ‘Power Maths was introduced.’. So what? What was the impact? Has Power Maths led to a rise in progress and attainment? A statement describing what has been done is not an evaluation.

Raising the bar at each Ofsted level

Ofsted reports are written so that they are coherent with the school’s overall judgement. Judgements will not vary by more than one grade. This is because only pupil progress and attainment really counts (once good safeguarding practice is established).

- All pupils learning all of the time = outstanding
- Nearly all pupils learning all of the time, or all pupils learning nearly all of the time = good
- Nearly all pupils learning nearly all of the time = requires improvement
- Anything less = inadequate

A judgement cannot be ‘very good’, it can only be one of the four judgement categories. There is little point in aiming for outstanding when the school is RI. It tends to take eight to twelve years, usually with the same headteacher, to get there. Therefore, it is best to work

to move from RI to good, good to securely good, then securely good to outstanding. Classroom observations need to focus on the test above. It is striking how what is seen in one classroom in a school, tends to be replicated in all classrooms. The skill of leadership is in breaking this cycle and moving on. The language of leadership is important at each stage, and can be practiced by leaders, particularly the head and Chair of Governors:

- The language of inevitable improvement – outstanding
- The language of evidenced judgement – ‘This is good because...’; ‘This is not as good as we’d like because...’ – good
- The language of excuse – ‘The reason we didn’t...’; blaming individual pupils for their performance – RI
- The language of stuck – ‘We don’t need to change’ - inadequate

Frameworks and Domains

There are now a number of frameworks in place, of which most are new, and will introduce new ideas to schools. In each, content is set out in domains. In each framework some, but not all domains coincide with other frameworks. The frameworks include:

- Headteacher standards
- Ofsted
- ITT (Initial Teacher Training)
- ECF (Early Career Framework)
- EYFS (Early Years)
- NPQ (National Professional Qualifications)
 - NPQEL (Executive Leadership)
 - NPQH (Headship)
 - NPQSL (Senior Leadership)
 - NPQLT (Leading Teaching)
 - NPQLTD (Leading Teacher Development)
 - NPQLBC (Leading Behaviour and Culture)*and, from September 2022*
 - NPQLL (Leading Literacy)
 - NPQEYL (Early Years Leadership)

In most frameworks, there is a ‘golden thread’ which run through all programmes, meaning that teachers who follow ITT-ECF-NPQ specialist-NPQ leadership programmes will be on a developmental journey, which is sequential and non-repetitive. The main outlier in the way domains are framed is Ofsted, where only behaviour ties in closely to other frameworks.

New terminology

As teachers in your school return from training (currently fully-funded for state schools), so they will introduce new language, terminology and thinking. For example, what may have previously been referred to as ‘coaching’ becomes ‘expert-led conversations’. This is because coaching should only be carried out by a qualified coach, otherwise it tends to be mentoring. All schools can hold ‘expert-led’ conversations, where the ‘expert’ is the one who is the most knowledgeable in the school. Another example is the focus on the purpose of teaching as ‘knowledge, skills, understanding, concepts, values’ in different places throughout the frameworks. Here are some examples from NPQLT, with definitions added from other sources:

Word or phrase	Example of use	Definition or clarification within NPQLT framework
Purposeful practice	‘Purposeful practice of what has previously been taught’	For practice to be purposeful, several characteristics must be in place. It must have a specific goal or purpose. It is focused. The learner receives feedback. The learner is pushed outside their comfort zone.
Mental models	‘Organising this knowledge into increasingly complex mental models’	Frameworks for thinking. They simplify complex situations so a pupil can reason them through easily. They help the pupil to make good, long-term decisions without needing to know everything about a situation.
Classroom talk	‘Increase the quality of classroom talk’	Through discussion and scaffolded dialogue, talk moves from exchange of words to development of ideas from interaction to shared social meaning from knowing to understanding. Classroom talk should not be used simply for the teacher to instruct but for the learner to develop.
Beliefs about learning	‘Pupils’ knowledge, capabilities and beliefs about learning.’	Refers to a pupil's subjective judgments about a relation between learning and his or her values or attributes
Components of effective lessons	‘Providing examples of how components of effective lessons might interact’	Planning; managing; delivering; evaluating. This is broken down into: deciding what to teach; deciding how to teach; communicating realistic expectations. This includes consideration of: assessing, sequencing, groupings, gaps, setting objectives, methods, pace, monitoring, involving students, expectations and high standards.
Flexible grouping	‘Flexibly grouping pupils within a class to provide more tailored support’	A data-driven teaching practice. Pupils are put into temporary groups to work together for only as long as is needed for them to develop an identified skill or to complete a learning activity.

EYFS Framework

The EYFS framework, and its associated documentation, such as Development matters, introduce some interesting concepts, which may have wider implications across a school. For example:

- For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.
- The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is not used to make judgements about early years provision, either current or retrospective. It is solely intended for use within the primary school progress measure.
- The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals (ELGs) (*which*) should not be used as a curriculum or in any way to limit the wide variety of rich experiences that are crucial to child development (*but*) should support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development, and their readiness for year 1. Sources of written or photographic evidence are not required, and teachers are not required to record evidence.
- Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals. Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). (*But not whether they are above/ beyond expected levels*)

Ofsted Annual Report

The Chief Inspector's [Annual Report](#) says that nearly all children and learners have been affected by the pandemic, with long-term consequences unknown.

Tutoring

All schools face the dilemma of using tutoring funding wisely, whilst trying to keep pupils in the classroom so that they do not miss other lessons. There is no easy solution to this, and various schools are working in different ways. For example, by planning lessons where it is easy to catch up, and combining this with short, ten-minute boosts to core subjects outside the classroom. Others have identified the absolutely essential learning for each pupil, then worked out the gaps, and prioritise the pupil's time where it is most important.

Many schools are now planning across the curriculum, to work out within their sequenced curriculum, where subjects can be combined in their teaching, to both save time, and allow teaching of subjects in greater depth.

Vehicle for learning, and 'essential ingredients'

This concept is a useful one from the new frameworks. For example, where history is being taught through the Victorians, the Victorians may not be studied again, and so are not a part of the sequenced curriculum in the same way. However, the historical concepts and skills are, and are the 'active ingredients'. The Victorians are the vehicle for the learning of the key historical skills, which will be developed in the next sequenced historical topic.

However, The Victorians may become an active ingredient if, for example, a Victorian artist is studied, as it then offers an explanation for how to understand the art which was produced.

The headteacher's office

Headteachers often spend every penny available in classrooms, and often neglect their own space. However, this is the room which sells the school. It is where parents and prospective parents go to talk to the head, where inspectors hold conversations and where the chair and senior staff need to have a good working space. It is worth thinking about what gives the best impression, making sure it is well-decorated, with good-quality furniture. Always make sure there is pupil's work on the walls, and avoid pinning up timetables or other documents for adults, such as policies.



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*Get in touch to book
an appointment in the spring term*

- ❖ Head teacher performance management
- ❖ Safeguarding/ governance reviews
- ❖ Self-evaluation/ SIDP review
- ❖ Pre-Ofsted checks/ 'mock inspection'
- ❖ Training, staff meeting input, etc.
- ❖ Leadership development
- ❖ School improvement