Standards Monitoring in Schools

A Guide to School Review

Final Draft

V013

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STANDARDS MONITORING IN SCHOOLS

A GUIDE TO SCHOOL REVIEW

School review provides an opportunity for independent verification of a school's analysis of its performance and practice. It is also an opportunity to provide advice that will help build the school's capacity to improve student achievement.

School review assures stakeholders that the school has conducted a rigorous and comprehensive self–assessment, reported the outcomes to their stakeholders and responded with appropriate plans.

The key review areas provide school heads and reviewers with a consistent vehicle for interaction when undertaking school self-assessment and review whilst taking into account of the different circumstances of schools across Fiji.

Preparation for a Review Visit

1   The School

The school should have completed a self-assessment, analysed the data, drawn conclusions and developed a school plan. Student participation with responsibilities and rights need to stand out in this process.

In preparing for a school review visit the school should consider how it will demonstrate the validity of its self-assessment and the appropriateness of the subsequent planning. That is, it should consider what information the reviewer will require and which individuals or groups could be involved in the school review visit.

As a consequence the school should organise a schedule for the visit that will enable the reviewer to validate:
- That the school is focussed on the holistic development of the child.
- The process and evidence the school has used in its self-assessment.
- The school's analysis of its data, self-assessment and subsequent planning for improvement during the three year period. This includes validating the integration of student participation in the process.
- The mechanisms and effectiveness of the school's reporting to stakeholders, and
- The school's responses to previous school review reports.

While it is expected that the school head will lead the process, the reviewer will typically meet with teachers, parents and students; visit classes and consider the school's documentation of meetings, policies and plans.

The school should organise the agenda well in advance and ensure all people involved are well briefed as to what is the purpose of the visit and their responsibility to take an active role in discussions and to have all relevant materials on hand.

2   The Reviewer

The reviewer should discuss with the school the proposed agenda and where necessary make suggestions for it to be changed.

The reviewer should be well informed about the school before he or she arrives. This will mean reading previous school review reports and any other relevant documents.

Conduct of a Review Visit

The reviewer's task is to be assured that the school is engaged in a thorough self-assessment, is identifying and taking positive action in areas in need of improvement, and is reporting to its stakeholders. This should be carried out in a process characterised by professional collaboration, trust, openness and mutual respect.

The reviewer should validate the school's claims by consulting a range of stakeholders, including the school leaders, staff, members of the school management committee/board, members of the PTA and students where appropriate. The school's documentation should also be considered.

The following questions provide an insight as to what might be pursued in this regard:

- What process did the school use to undertake the self-assessment and analysis of performance?

- What are the identified areas of strength across the school? What factors may account for these areas of strength?

- What is unique about this school? What are the doing differently to others?

- Are there any areas of poor performance or under-performance? What factors may account for these levels of performance?

- To what extent does the performance reflect on changes made since the last self-assessment against that outcome?

- What trends have been determined over the past four or five years?

- What conclusions have been drawn regarding the level of performance?

- How is the school responding to these trends?

- What evidence is there that whole-school and individual subject area analysis of performance information informs planning for improvement?

- What targets has the school set; for this year, mid-term, long-term?

- What strategies are planned to improve performance against each key review area in the years to come?

- How are students at educational risk identified? What are the school's intervention programs? How is the effectiveness of interventions evaluated?

- How does the school track individual students' performance (academic achievement and other aspects) through until they exit from this school?

A rigorous review of a school's self-assessment and planning process will also inform the extent to which a school is meeting its reporting obligations and the degree to which it's planning is consistent with the Ministry of Education's *Strategic Plan*

Reporting

1   School Review Reports to Schools

At the end of the school review cycle each school will receive a formal report from the reviewer in relation to:

- The school's self-assessment. This will provide an external perspective on the school's self-assessment of its performance.

  The reviewer's comments will:
  o identify both the strengths and weaknesses of the school's self-assessment process and analysis of achievement data including the degree to which students and other stakeholders were consulted.
  o note trends in school achievements.
  o recommend how future self-assessments could be strengthened.

- The school's planning. This will verify that the school has responded to its self-assessment with appropriate improvement actions using a planning process that reflects the needs of the school.

  The reviewer's comments will:
  o identify both the strengths and weaknesses of the school's planning framework.
  o note the degree to which the school has responded to its self-assessment with appropriate improvement actions.
  o recommend how the school's planning could be strengthened.

- The school's reporting. This will verify the extent to which the school is reporting the outcomes of its self-assessment and the external review to all relevant stakeholders.

  The reviewer's comments will:
  o substantiate if the reporting contains information about the school and its context, information about student achievement and information about school management.
  o substantiate the extent to which the information that has been reported presents an accurate picture of the aspects of the school's performance that are reported upon.
  o provide suggestions as to how future reporting could be presented to make it more informative or more user-friendly for the intended audience.

- The consistency of school planning with the Ministry of Education's *Strategic Plan*

  The reviewer's comments will:
  o confirm the extent to which the school is addressing the areas of strategic priority.
  o provide advice on how system priorities and initiatives could be better integrated into the school's operations.

2   School Review Reports to Ministry of Education

Reviewers will report the performance of schools to the Ministry of Education on the basis of the four ratings: *Very Good, Good, Fair* and *Unsatisfactory.*

In addition reviewers will note and report trends and patterns of outstanding performance and areas of concern with particular reference to the key review areas.

Appendix 1

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS A REVIEWER MIGHT USE TO SHAPE HIS OR HER THINKING WHEN REVIEWING A SCHOOL.

NOTE: A reviewer does not need to use all of these nor confine themselves to these alone.

1. What are the priority areas for improving student achievement?

2. In what ways do the staff work together to ensure that they have the necessary flexibility to work productively in changing environments?

3. How does the process of school self assessment find expression in the classroom at this school?

4. What data does the school gather: what data helps it to ensure student progress, what data most convinces it of student achievement and what data convinces it that its programs are working well?

5. What beliefs, systems, and structures best ensure strong leadership at every level in the school?

6. How is leadership distributed throughout this school?

7. What characterises a supportive and caring environment that encourages everyone to recognise their uniqueness and self-worth in order to reach their potential?

8. How does the school produce strong staff-student teamwork?

9. How do the staff work together to develop a culture of innovation, self-reflection and best practice in teaching and learning?

10. What are the essential components of the communication system and structures in the school where all voices are equally heard and equally respected, and where everyone receives rich growth-producing daily feedback?

11. What new systems and structures would result in sounder management at the school and bring a stronger focus onto high quality teaching and learning?

12. What are the main characteristics of teaching which is connected to a student's experience, stage of development and background?

13. What are the key beliefs and values that the school holds about curriculum and teaching strategies to be flexible enough to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all its students, their interests and post-school aspirations?

14. What innovations in teaching, curriculum and school philosophy will best help the school meet individual learning needs and produce deep learning for students and staff?

15. What curriculum and teaching approaches most help students to develop the broad range of skills needed to be lifelong learners and to transfer these across all learning areas?

16. Which components of the curriculum and pedagogy most contribute to deep learning by students and to their development as self-motivated, independent life-long learners?

17. How does the school ensure supportive environments for all its students?

18. What professional development opportunities does staff have to ensure they master the key skills, learning beliefs and teaching strategies they want at this school?

19. How does the school encourage students and staff towards personal responsibility, creative problem solving and participatory decision-making?

20. How are teachers assisted to perform at the highest possible levels?

21. How does the school ensure the development of outstanding, relevant courses and materials for students?

22. What systems, structures and processes are central to ensuring a coherent and a seamless transition from primary to secondary education?

23. What should be the major characteristics of how the staff collaborate with one another, the parents/caregivers, and the wider community?

24. What are the key elements in the development of a quality learning community?

25. What is the school doing to promote the school to the wider community?

26. How responsive is the school to its community?

27. What are the beliefs and values are held to ensure that the school is responsive to changing needs through flexibility in thinking, planning and organisation?

28. In what ways is transparency ensured in all aspects of the life of this school?

29. What systems and structures are in place to ensure the mental and physical health and well-being of students and teachers?

30. What systems, structures and shared beliefs are in place to ensure that the school models its desired outcomes in all of its actions?

31. How does the school ensure teaching and learning processes are provided to engage students in higher order thinking and reflection about learning?

32. How does the school ensure that they adopt use of educational technologies?