

Effective use of Data

Every School a Good School – a policy for school improvement emphasises the importance of the effective use of data in informing action to bring about improvement. This will be particularly important in informing self-evaluation and target-setting and facilitating the monitoring of progress. Data is not an end in itself; the focus is on making use of the data to identify areas for improvement and to inform actions to improve outcomes for pupils.

When analysing the available data, it may be helpful to consider the following:

Standards

- How does our present performance compare with the achievement of the school in previous years?
- Is performance in any area(s) of the curriculum significantly lower or higher than in others?
- In looking at pupil performance in any area of the curriculum over time, are there any steady trends, e.g. upward or downward?
- Is the performance of a particular year group or key stage significantly lower or higher compared to their expected achievement or to the performance of the previous cohort(s)?
- Is the performance of a particular class significantly lower or higher compared to another class in the same year group?
- Are some groups of pupils performing better than others? If so, why?

Learning, teaching and intervention strategies

- What systems and practices in our school are influencing our pupils' learning and achievements, positively and negatively?
- What specific strategies appear to be working well and what strategies less well?

Contextual factors influencing pupil achievement

- What factors from outside the school may impact on our pupils?
- What trends do we see in our pupil populations with regards to identified additional or special education needs?
- How do our literacy and numeracy scores correlate with attendance?
- What areas of literacy and numeracy are the most difficult for our pupils?
- How does the performance of boys compare to that of girls across the curriculum?
- Are there significant performance discrepancies among the general population of pupils and pupils who have special or additional educational needs, Newcomers, etc?
- Do we have overlap among sub-groups of our pupils? (For example, how many of our pupils with special education needs receive free school meals? How many of our Newcomer pupils are on our SEN register?)

Comparison with other schools

- How does our performance in literacy and numeracy compare with other schools?
- How does it compare with schools of a similar size?
- How does it compare with schools in the same Free School Meal band?
- How does our performance in literacy and numeracy compare with the averages for the Board area and for NI?

Tools available to support effective use of data – C2k and eSchools

Schools can access a range of data and report-producing facilities through their C2k SIMS system and through eSchools that will support their school development planning.

The eSchools online data warehouse was introduced to improve access to a range of reliable and accurate data across the education service and to support planning for improvement.

eSchools provides schools with monthly reports containing a range of data that enables them to identify trends in performance and compare themselves with schools

in similar circumstances. Schools can then use this data to inform their self evaluation, benchmarking, planning for improvement and monitoring of performance.

eSchools reports have provided contextual data (e.g. enrolment, attendance, FSME, SEN and EAL) that will be useful to schools in their self-evaluation. From September 2010 examinations-based reports will also be available. eSchools is therefore an increasingly important resource for schools and a key tool in promoting the effective use of data across the education service.

A number of case-studies, illustrating how some schools have used data to support their improvement, have been developed and are available via ESaGS.tv and http://www.rtuni.com/conferences/page.php?page_id=14.