



Guidance

Curriculum and
Standards

Secondary
National Strategy
for school improvement

Middle leaders' self-evaluation guide

**Secondary school
middle leaders**

Status: Recommended

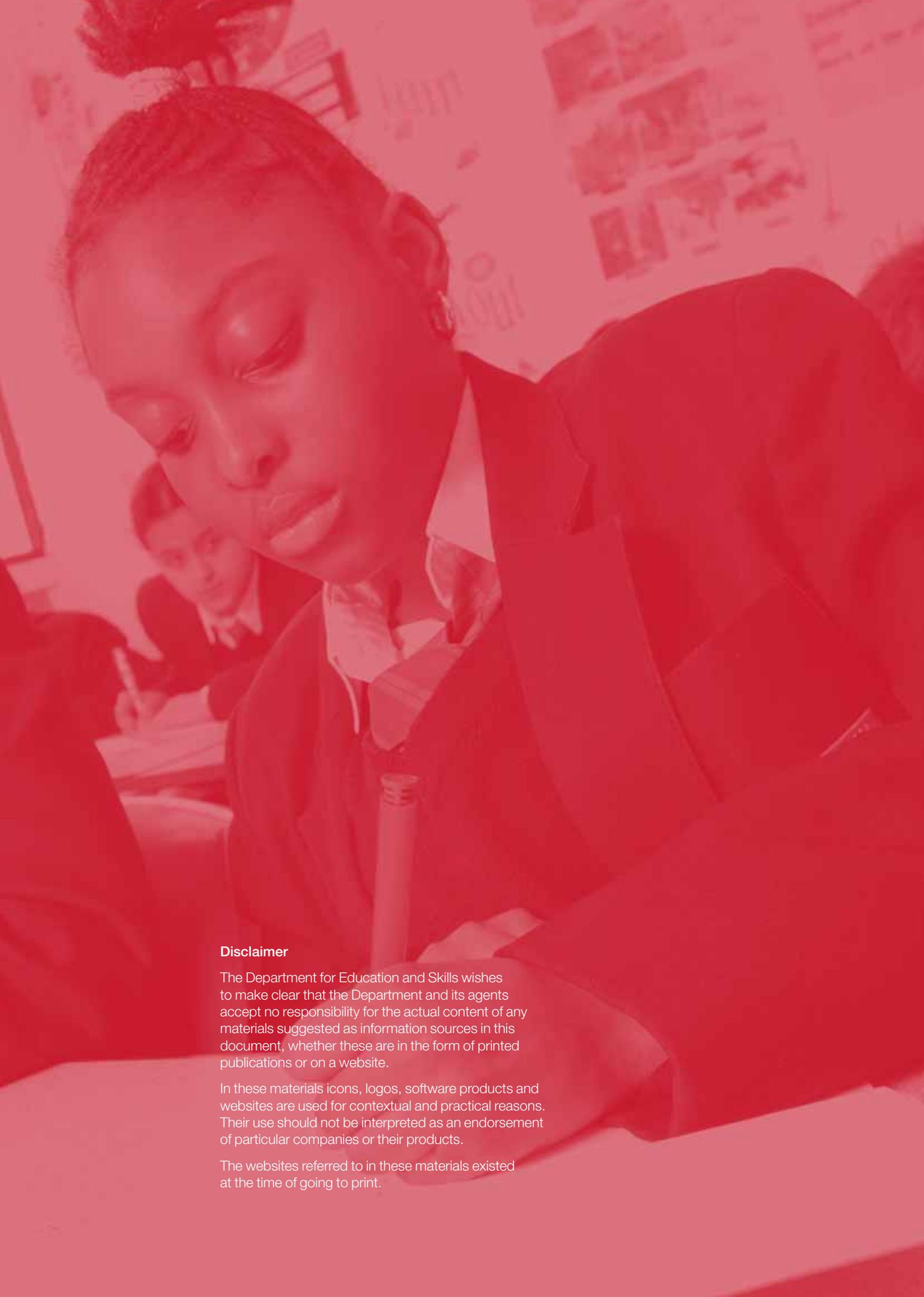
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A young woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a school uniform, is focused on writing in a notebook. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red color. In the background, other students and classroom posters are visible but blurred.

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About this guide

This guidance is aimed at middle leaders in secondary schools: subject and year leaders, SENCOs and other coordinators of aspects of school improvement. It provides guidance for middle leaders in evaluating the performance of their teams and the teams' impact on pupils. It is designed to support middle leaders' contribution to the school self-evaluation process, and the inspection process, through evidence gathering and making judgements. Middle leaders play a crucial role in developing and sustaining the nature and quality of pupils' learning experience. Within their area of responsibility, they shape and lead the quality of provision and standards pupils achieve. They influence outcomes in other areas of the school. They can act as the gatekeepers of standards and innovation; they are the leaders closest to the classroom.

It is essential to school improvement that they participate fully in school self-evaluation to decide priorities and next steps for the school improvement plan.

Self-evaluation is fundamental to school improvement and raising standards. It is also now a significant aspect of school inspection. This guide helps middle leaders to develop and refine their evidence and analytical processes. This can ensure that leadership, management, teaching and learning are systematically monitored and evaluated and findings acted upon, and that this leads to further improved outcomes and raised standards for pupils. Middle leaders will wish to contribute to senior leadership teams' monitoring and evaluation processes.

This guide:

- sets out some underlying principles in relation to the inspection self-evaluation guidance and requirements;
- sets out the responsibilities of middle leaders in contributing to school self-evaluation and in using it to ensure improvement;
- provides examples and guidance on self-evaluation.



Middle leaders' role in school self-evaluation

Effective school improvement through self-evaluation is essential in promoting the achievement of high standards.

A New Relationship with Schools: Improving Performance through School Self-evaluation (DfES 1290-2005DOC-EN) explains the role of self-evaluation in school improvement as follows.

- Rigorous self-evaluation helps schools to improve; it should not be undertaken solely for the purpose of inspection.
- Schools should shape for themselves a process that is simple and integrated with their routine management systems.
- Schools must listen to and do something about the views of their stakeholders.
- The school's recorded summary of its self-evaluation process (the inspection's self-evaluation form) should be updated at least annually and include information about the impact of its action on learners; assertions and lists of initiatives are unhelpful.

The new inspection framework requires schools to undertake a process of annual self-evaluation, recording this by completing a self-evaluation form, the SEF. This SEF is made available to the inspection team at the time of inspection, but will contribute to annual discussions of the school improvement plan.

The SEF is 'a summative document, intended to record the outcomes of this rigorous process'. A school will fit this process in with the normal cycle of review and planning. It needs to be an accurate diagnostic document supported by evidence. It should indicate strengths and weaknesses, and what needs to be tackled to improve.

The SEF asks the school to grade itself on aspects 2–7 below.

Key aspects

- 1 The main characteristics of the school
- 2 The views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders
- 3 Achievement and standards
- 4 Personal development and well-being
- 5 The quality of provision
- 6 Leadership and management
- 7 Overall effectiveness and efficiency

Grades

- 1 Outstanding
- 2 Good
- 3 Satisfactory
- 4 Inadequate



The middle leader's role is to contribute to the evidence, comments and judgements needed for their area of responsibility.

Middle leader roles can vary, as they can centre on subject or faculty, year or key stage, and different aspect coordination such as special educational needs (SEN), gifted and talented (G&T), literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum, English as an additional language (EAL)/ethnic minority achievement (EMA), intervention programmes, or careers. Subject and year leader roles are clearly identified in the booklet. However, other roles are explored. Each middle leader can identify their roles from this booklet as appropriate to context and need.

Recent research has found that:

- Middle leaders have a vital role in sustaining and developing all pupils' learning experiences and achievements and raising standards for all
- Senior leader teams need and expect all middle leaders to be engaged in whole-school developments
- The most effective schools have leadership that stretches beyond the senior team and includes various levels of leadership within the school

Ofsted has said of subject areas where practice is effective:

- there is a systematic approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning and of progress in implementing action plans;
- departments evaluate regularly and pupil progress data is routinely analysed;
- there are clear lines of accountability and the structures for performance management are known, understood and implemented;
- senior leaders support departments with planning, training and observation;
- analysis of pupils' performance has improved and targets are set for individual pupils, validated against previous results;
- underperformance is tackled promptly and rigorously.

However, the use of a range of evidence including pupil progress data to monitor subject performance is still undeveloped in many schools.

These subject area comments apply to other areas led by middle leaders.

Essentially, the middle leader contributes to whole-school self-evaluation by:

- judging standards;
- evaluating teaching and learning;
- securing improvement.

Individual middle leaders will have different perspectives on these three areas.

Key questions are always: **How well are we doing?** and **How can we do better?**



In their area of responsibility, middle leaders assess the impact on pupils and standards of:

- provision – teaching, curriculum, care, guidance, support;
- levels of management;
- aspects special to a school, e.g. ethnic diversity, specialisms, religious character;
- links between the school and other agencies.

Middle leaders develop monitoring processes to provide information on pupils and provision that significantly contribute to whole-school self-evaluation. They ask the following key questions.

- How well does the aspect (subject, year, initiative) serve its learners?
- How does it compare with the best schools and the best comparable schools?
- Is it integral to the school's key management systems?
- Is it based on a good range of telling evidence?
- Does it involve key people in the school and seek the views of parents/carers, learners, staff, external agencies?
- Does it lead to action and fit the school's longer-term development goals?

All staff will contribute to an understanding of and information about the characteristics of the school (SEF 1). They will do this partly through evidence gathered for the other questions. The following sections explore how middle leader roles and evidence contribute to the other questions and school evaluation. It is important to make connections between the evidence and analysis necessary in each SEF question. To support this process, one section combines two questions: views of stakeholders and pupil well-being (SEF 2 and SEF 4).



Roles and responsibilities

The following **Table 1** outlines key roles and responsibilities for senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers in contributing to school self-evaluation.

Table 1 – Roles and responsibilities

Senior leaders	Subject leaders	Year leaders	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse and present key school contextual factors that frame development priorities Gather, analyse and take into account views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders from a range of sources Provide overall judgements of achievement, standards and cross-curricular aspects based on examination results, teacher assessment, PANDA, the PAT, lesson observation and other sources Gather a range of data on learners' personal development, including behaviour and attendance, progress and achievement in curricular and extra-curricular activities and judge the provision against the quality of this development Analyse hard evidence on the quality of provision (teaching, resources, guidance) linked to the quality of learning and pupil outcomes, e.g. subject and aspect reviews 	<p>Judge standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse and interpret data on pupils' attainment in the subject Review with teachers their assessments of progress for classes, identified groups and individuals Sample pupils' work Discuss work, progress and attitudes with samples of pupils Construct and monitor strategies to gather the views of other stakeholders <p>Evaluate teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate schemes of work to ensure that they focus on consistent and effective teaching and learning Observe teaching and feed back to colleagues Review teachers' planning Provide evidence of subject contributions to learners' personal development (pupil interviews, pupil peer assessment and self-assessment, links with other subjects, promoting independent learning) 	<p>Judge standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the use of pupil transfer data across years, key stages and subject areas Lead the use of data within the school's academic review cycle Feed back implications from assessments, reports, communications with parents/carers to subject areas Analyse pupil assessment data across subjects to establish cross-curricular provision for additional support, intervention or extension Lead on supporting standards of pupil well-being <p>Evaluate teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with other middle leaders to support good, consistent teaching Communicate outcomes of pupil reviews to other middle leaders Monitor the impact of teaching and provision across groups of pupils and subject areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take into account and constantly review school contextual factors and prior attainment when planning and teaching lessons Provide means of gathering stakeholder views in line with subject and year policies – pupil self-assessment, questionnaires, interactive lessons, fostering pupil viewpoint Keep records of test results and teacher assessments to contribute to school and subject/year evaluation Set pupils' targets and ensure that progress is tracked through a range of strategies in line with the school-wide system Reflect on the effectiveness of teaching strategies, individual lessons and schemes of work in meeting the needs of all pupils and ensuring that progress is made



Senior leaders	Subject leaders	Year leaders	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judge the leadership and management of the school through the impact on pupils and staff • Ensure that the range of evidence is strong • Ensure consistency across judgements • Provide systems and processes that support middle leaders and teachers in gathering and analysing evidence, setting targets and prioritising improvements • Bring together all the above evaluations to judge the overall effectiveness of the provision, determine the steps needed to improve and build capacity for further improvement • Locate self-evaluation outcomes within the school improvement plan 	<p>Lead sustainable improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead discussion about priorities • Agree targets for raising attainment within the context of whole-school targets • Lead improvement in teaching • Lead the review, construction and resourcing of the curriculum • Liaise with other middle leaders and teachers to share and collaborate in approaches that will support success in your own area for pupils • Liaise with and keep informed school leaders • Identify and provide for staff training and development needs 	<p>Lead sustainable improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure partnerships with parents/carers in raising attainment • Set targets for pupils' achievement across the year group and work with subject areas to organise appropriate intervention to address underperformance • Lead on securing positive attendance, attitudes and well-being to support learning and attainment • Liaise with other middle leaders and teachers to share and collaborate in approaches that will support success in your own area for pupils • Liaise with and keep informed school leaders • Identify and provide for staff training and development needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply established guidance on effective teaching to your lessons, to ensure use of appropriate pedagogy, teaching repertoire and resources and feed back to colleagues on their effectiveness • Evaluate lessons, incorporating pupils' views and responses, in order to reflect and act on strengths, achievements and areas for development • Adapt lessons and identify next steps in response to monitoring and evaluation, performance management processes, school policy and findings from any other review processes • Engage in action research in the classroom to develop and improve practice • Encourage colleagues to observe your lessons and be prepared to observe others to identify and share good practice • Deliver agreed schemes of work, lessons and pedagogy and ensure that agreed pupil learning outcomes are met • Contribute to subject, year and other reviews of provision – teaching, use of ICT, homework records, mentoring



Views of stakeholders and pupil development (SEF 2 and SEF 4)

- What are the views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders?
- How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?

When schools make efforts to consult with and take note of 'the pupil voice', pupils tend to be more positive in their approach to learning and to school. The relationship between a school and the community is most effective when parents/carers are supportive contributors and partners rather than passive recipients and helpers.

Middle leaders can gain insights into the quality of provision in their subject or pastoral area by eliciting pupils' views through informal and formal routes:

- pupil interviews, surveys and focus groups and the school council;
- homework diaries;
- parents' evenings/progress and target-setting meetings;
- questionnaires;
- self-evaluation activities embedded in schemes of work;

The process should involve a variety of approaches to gathering views and perceptions from pupils, parents/carers and other stakeholders. It may involve:

- conversations about teaching and learning;
- seeking advice about new initiatives;
- inviting comment on ways of solving problems;
- inviting evaluative comment on recent developments in school or classroom policy and practice.

The important issue is not **how** a school collects evidence, but what it already does and the actions that are taken as a result of gathering the evidence.

In October the Year 7 coordinator sent a questionnaire to parents/carers to canvass views on how well their children had settled into school, whether the induction process had been successful and how their children were coping with the transition. One question was: *On average, how long does your child spend each evening completing their homework?*

Replies were received from a large proportion of the parents/carers. Responses to this question varied so significantly that the year leader investigated further. He monitored homework diaries from each teaching group to check when homework had been set, what had been assigned and whether there were any differentiated tasks. He talked to a sample of pupils from each Year 7 teaching group. The process revealed that some teaching groups received much less homework than others and there were a number of homework assignments set that simply required 'finishing off'. The year leader worked with the subject leaders and senior management team to ensure that the quality and consistency of homework improved.

A spring term survey of parents'/carers' views showed improved consistency in time spent on homework. The parent/carer surveys provided valuable information that fed into the school self-evaluation process.



The following **Table 2** explores questions and evidence relevant to gathering, analysing and acting on the views of stakeholders (SEF 2) and pupil development (SEF 4).

Table 2 – Views of stakeholders and pupil development

SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
<p>2 What are the views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders and how do you know?</p> <p>2a How do you gather the views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders, such as those accessing additional services? How often do you do this and how do you ensure the impartiality of information?</p> <p>4 How good is the overall development and well-being of learners?</p> <p>4a To what extent do learners adopt healthy lifestyles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do learners take adequate physical exercise and eat and drink healthily? Do learners understand how to live a healthy lifestyle? <p>4b To what extent do learners feel safe and adopt safe practices?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do learners feel safe from bullying and racist incidents? Do learners have the confidence to talk to staff and others when they feel at risk? <p>4c How much do learners enjoy their education? Take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learners' attitudes, behaviour and attendance learners' spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development. 	<p>Do you have any formal processes for collecting pupil views about your subject or development area or year group experience?</p> <p>What do you do with the information that you collect?</p> <p>Do parents/carers feel welcome in the school and in your area?</p> <p>What percentage of parents/carers attend parents' evenings or pupil review interviews?</p> <p>What percentage of parents/carers attend the annual report of governors? How many parents/carers attend PTA meetings or fundraising events? How does this compare with meetings or events pertinent to your area of responsibility that you have organised?</p> <p>What do parents/carers and learners think of your school or curriculum area?</p> <p>How do you collect evidence about your pupils' attitudes to lessons in your curriculum area? Do pupils enjoy coming to learn in your subject or year?</p> <p>Do year coordinators routinely analyse attendance data and identify internal and external truanting? How are these issues followed up at pupil level?</p> <p>Do particular individuals or groups of pupils reveal negative attitudes or poor behaviour? How have you investigated the causes?</p> <p>Do year leaders promote healthy choices through assemblies, PHSE programmes and tutor time?</p> <p>Have you identified those aspects of your curriculum area that can contribute to developing healthy lifestyles?</p>	<p>Consult form groups, year or school councils to gain information and pupil perceptions. Build opportunities for representatives to air views with their peers before and after meetings. Instigate action based on the opinions gathered.</p> <p>Use surveys, questionnaires or pupil interviews to collect formal feedback.</p> <p>Ensure that you consider a variety of sample sizes and collection methods, e.g. organise a written evaluation or questionnaire from a small sample, a tick box questionnaire from a whole group of pupils, a conversation with pairs of pupils.</p> <p>Invite parents/carers and other stakeholders to contribute to subject or year reviews.</p> <p>Invite parent/carer feedback on initiatives you have instigated.</p> <p>Collect behaviour and attendance data as additional evidence of pupils' enjoyment of school.</p> <p>Keep records of incidents and issues dealt with at year leader level and analyse for patterns.</p> <p>Tackle negative attitudes to school through a variety of strategies, e.g. assemblies, PHSE programmes, mentoring and buddy systems. Monitor the effect and impact of your interventions.</p> <p>Ensure that you ask supply teachers about their views of the work set and the response of the pupils. An outsider's perspective, particularly where the supply teacher has worked in several other schools, may help to identify issues and solutions.</p>



SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
	<p>What do pupils and other stakeholders feel needs improvement and what action is being taken?</p> <p>How do supply teachers feel about the school and your curriculum area in particular?</p>	<p>Undertake a mapping exercise with year and subject leaders to ensure that aspects of diet, nutrition and health are identified and omissions addressed.</p>
<p>2b What do the views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders tell you about learners' standards, personal development and well-being and the quality of provision?</p> <p>4d How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do learners understand their rights and responsibilities and those of others? • How well do learners express their views and take part in communal activities? 	<p>Do you involve and inform parents/carers fully as partners in providing for the particular needs of their child?</p> <p>Are parents/carers provided with good quality information about your subject or aspect and how well their child is making progress?</p> <p>Is the school code of conduct based on rules, rights and responsibilities? How is this applied in your area?</p> <p>Do links with parents/carers, such as the use of home-school agreements, contribute to policy and practice in your subject or area of responsibility?</p> <p>Do you arrange regular pupil progress reviews involving learners and their parents/carers?</p> <p>How is active participation in school life encouraged at subject, year or other levels? What specific activities do you organise or contribute to?</p> <p>Is the school council a genuine forum for discussion and potential change?</p> <p>Are pupils involved in staff appointments?</p> <p>Are there opportunities for learners to contribute to writing their own reports and for parents/carers to comment?</p> <p>Are pupil self-assessment and peer assessment regularly incorporated into schemes of work and lesson planning?</p>	<p>Give parents/carers an opportunity to feed back and comment on the reporting process and what they think of the quality of information they receive.</p> <p>Encourage a dialogue between home and school by inviting parents/carers to write in homework diaries/logs and exercise books, where appropriate.</p> <p>Ensure that lines of communication are open.</p> <p>Build pupil self-evaluation activities into schemes of work in order to provide feedback on the curriculum and pedagogical approaches and their effectiveness.</p> <p>Conduct sample interviews and discussions with groups of pupils on key aspects of school.</p> <p>From lesson observations, identify views on learning and attitudes to inform future planning.</p> <p>Year or subject group representatives and school councils can explore and comment on pupil involvement in the community.</p> <p>Keep records on the involvement of pupils in events and school life.</p> <p>Keep records of all visitors' views of your school and area of responsibility and how you followed them up where appropriate, e.g. LA advisers, community visitors.</p>



SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
<p>2c How do you share with parents/carers and other stakeholders the collated findings about their views?</p>	<p>Is there regular communication with parents/carers and the wider community such as through newsletters or a school website?</p> <p>Do pupils have responsibility for communication, for example by managing some pages of the school website?</p> <p>How do you seek out and share success in your subject or area of responsibility?</p>	<p>Make sure that you make a regular contribution to newsletters about the area for which you have responsibility.</p> <p>Inform parents/carers, governors and other stakeholders of matters of interest, successes and results of surveys.</p> <p>Use the school website to establish a partnership in learning with parents/carers. Publish homework assignments and give advice to parents/carers on how they can support their child to complete these.</p>
<p>2d Can you give examples of actions you have taken based on the views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders, with an evaluation of the effectiveness of what you did?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there examples of actions you decided not to take (and why)? • Are there examples of ways in which your stakeholders have influenced priorities? 	<p>When developing your curriculum action plans, at what point in the process do you canvass the views of all stakeholders?</p> <p>When and how might you adapt a scheme of work, a policy or approach as a result of stakeholders' views?</p> <p>At what point in the school year do you review progress and how do you build into the process further opportunities for communication with other stakeholders?</p> <p>How do you demonstrate to stakeholders that their views are valued and that you will act upon them?</p>	<p>Build stakeholders' views into the annual review of your subject or area of responsibility. Reflect on the evidence and ensure that the information informs your action plan.</p> <p>Organise events designed to inform parents/carers about key issues in your area of responsibility, e.g. hold a meeting to inform parents/carers of the demands and expectations of a particular course or to familiarise them with aspects of learning in which pupils will be involved.</p> <p>Invite governors to attend assemblies or events that you have organised in your area.</p> <p>Include external support in any action plan and evaluation, e.g. consultant support for teaching, LA review of your area.</p>



Achievement and standards (SEF 3)

- What are the standards that pupils reach in your subject or area of responsibility?
- Do learners achieve their targets and are the targets adequately challenging?
- How well do learners progress relative to their starting points and capabilities?

There is a range of indicators and evidence that might be used to help you to evaluate outcomes for pupils. In particular, you should investigate any differences in standards attained by different groups of pupils in your area of leadership, such as year, sets and classes, girls, boys, pupils with SEN or EAL, G&T pupils, and pupils from particular communities. Consider trends over time and compare the standards attained by these groups with national and LA information as well as their achievements in other areas within your school. The important point here is that, once you have asked the questions, undertaken the analysis and investigated your hypothesis, some action related to teaching and learning is taken as a result.

The new head of history in school A undertook a detailed analysis of standards in history with the support of a senior leader. A variety of evidence was used, including numerical assessment data, information from pupil work scrutiny and lesson observations. The data analysis revealed some large discrepancies in standards between some classes in Years 8 and 9. Further investigation showed that standards overall were, in fact, in line with the rest of the year group and with school and national expectations. However, two members of the department required support with assessing pupils' work. As a result, the head of department organised departmental moderation meetings to ensure more robust assessment and to develop clearer team understanding of standards and progression within the subject.

The head of Year 8 reviewed progress across the year group in preparation for parents' evening. All subject staff completed reports which included assessment information as well as comments on progress, approaches to learning, homework and behaviour. The school used a software package for analysing numerical assessment data and tracking progress. The head of year and school data manager produced additional analysis of information about pupils' progress from Years 6 to 8, and the progress of different groups of pupils. Having read through all the subject reports and considered the numerical data analysis, the head of year identified two main issues. A significant number of boys, particularly those in two teaching groups, were not making progress across a number of subjects. There was also one subject where pupils' attainment was significantly below attainment in other subjects.

These two priorities were investigated more thoroughly through discussions with staff, lesson observations, work scrutiny and pupil interviews. An action plan was put in place in order to address the issues of boys' underachievement

The head of department, a new member of staff, was supported by his line manager to develop the action plan to address the issues.

The EAL coordinator used the PAT to review assessment data across each year group. This process enabled him to prioritise a particular group of pupils who would require additional support. It also demonstrated that some work in one subject area in the previous term had had a significant impact on results in that subject. This confirmed that the additional intervention should continue in the coming academic year.



The following **Table 3** explores questions and possible sources of evidence to support middle leaders' contribution to SEF 3, the evaluation of achievement and standards.

Table 3 – Achievement and standards

SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
<p>3 How well do learners achieve?</p> <p>3a What are the learners' achievements and standards in their work? Take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the standards learners reach as indicated by their test and examination results significant variations between groups of learners, subjects, courses and key stages; trends over time; comparisons with other schools; whether learners reach learning targets the standards of learners' current work in relation to their learning goals learners' progress relative to starting points and capabilities. <p>3b Where relevant: how well do learners achieve in the sixth form?</p> <p>3c On the basis of your evaluation, what are your key priorities for improvement?</p>	<p>What are the standards reached in your subject, year or aspect?</p> <p>Is attainment in your subject area in line with expectations and other subjects in your school?</p> <p>Compared with other areas in the school, are there individual pupils or groups of pupils who are achieving less well in your subject?</p> <p>What range of evidence is being used to monitor pupils' progress in your subject or year group?</p> <p>What does analysis of assessment information tell you about pupils' learning in your subject or year group? Are any strengths or weaknesses revealed?</p> <p>Do reviews highlight individuals or groups achieving above or below expectations? Consider SEN, G&T, EAL, gender, ethnic community, teaching or form groups. What actions are taken to support and challenge these pupils?</p> <p>Do teaching programmes give opportunities to address all areas of weakness identified? If not, how will you address this?</p> <p>Can weakness be addressed through cross-curricular links with other areas or staff in the school?</p> <p>Do your subject, year or aspect meetings allow time for discussion of information on pupil outcomes and how it is used to improve progress?</p>	<p>Collect evidence, such as PANDA, FFT (Fischer Family Trust) benchmarking data, subject systems for tracking, school and curriculum targets, analysis of IEP targets and achievement, subject residuals.</p> <p>Use the PAT or similar tools to analyse statutory test results including item level analysis. Interrogate the data from other forms of assessment such as optional tests, progress tests and accreditation. Use value-added information. Benchmark performance. Analyse attendance figures.</p> <p>Include other assessment information, such as end-of-term unit assessments, mock examinations, coursework, portfolios of work, Yellis, CATs, - to give a more accurate snapshot of attainment. Use information from peer assessment and self-assessment activities.</p> <p>Complete a subject, year or aspect audit to identify strengths, weaknesses and next steps, e.g. Key Stage 3 subject audit, ICTAC review, assessment self-evaluation.</p> <p>When appropriate, consider the last Ofsted inspection judgements. How have you acted upon them?</p> <p>Undertake a review of day-to-day marking and assessment by completing a pupil exercise book and work scrutiny.</p> <p>Use review findings to identify weaker aspects of provision, e.g. teaching, learning, guidance, welfare, and recommend adjustments to programmes as necessary. Provide leadership and support for teachers where appropriate.</p>



SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
		<p>Work with teachers and tutors to ensure that they understand the nature of pupils' progression and expected standards and are provided with the data to inform that understanding.</p> <p>Monitor pupils' progress towards targets regularly, using comparative data, work sampling, lesson observation, pupil interviews.</p> <p>Work with teachers and senior leaders to provide intervention programmes where pupils' needs are not met within normal lessons or programmes.</p> <p>Work with tutors to review pupils' progress across the school and across a range of expectations.</p> <p>Use information from academic review days and academic mentoring to inform action.</p> <p>Set up and/or support systems and opportunities for pupils to discuss specific and overall progress with tutors or teachers.</p>



The quality of provision (SEF 5)

- How well do teaching and resources promote learning, address the full range of learners' needs and meet National Curriculum and course requirements?
- Is suitable and rigorous assessment used in planning and monitoring learners' progress?
- How are additional learning needs diagnosed and provided for?

As a middle leader you will need to consider:

- how well teaching and resources promote learning, address the full range of learners' needs and meet course requirements;
- the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning and monitoring learners' progress;
- the diagnosis of, and provision for, additional learning needs;
- how you are going to get the evidence;
- what you are going to do.

A well-planned and detailed self-evaluation is essential to identify where strengths and weakness in teaching and learning lie, and to identify the right priorities for action. The key aspects of improvement that are prioritised will then form part of the action plan, linked with the school improvement plan, for your subject, year or area of responsibility. Collecting and making sense of your findings, diagnosing the precise nature of the strengths and weakness and the implications for change and then setting priorities can be a complex task. However, the effective middle leader can develop a detailed understanding as part of a continuous, structured cycle over time if the approach is systematic and integrated into the routine management systems.

The G&T coordinator was asked to review the progress of G&T pupils as part of the annual school review process. Data analysis formed part of this review and the school data manager was helpful in providing a range of evidence that looked at the progress of the identified pupils against their peers. The G&T coordinator also arranged interviews with a sample of pupils and teachers and some lesson observations. What emerged was that a number of the G&T pupils did not feel challenged or engaged in their lessons. Their teachers often recognised this but were unsure how to tackle the issues.

The coordinator worked with a focus group of teachers to develop some teaching strategies and resources as exemplars of good practice. The teachers presented their ideas in a staff meeting and departments were asked to include the issue in their next meetings. The G&T coordinator worked with heads of subject to ensure that schemes of work and teaching plans addressed the needs of the most able pupils. The G&T coordinator also observed a sample of lessons and supported one particular department in developing the schemes of work to address the needs of the pupils.

This process was followed up by further pupil interviews which revealed some improvements. The G&T coordinator recognised the need to revisit the issue frequently.



The following **Table 4** identifies questions and possible sources of evidence middle leaders can use to contribute to SEF 5, the quality of provision.

Table 4 – The quality of provision

SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
<p>5a How good is the quality of teaching and learning? Take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well teaching meets the needs of the full range of learners and course requirements • the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning learning and monitoring learners' progress • the diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs • the involvement of parents/carers in their child's learning and development. 	<p>Is pupils' achievement in your area high?</p> <p>Do pupils show engagement, application and concentration?</p> <p>Do pupils acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding?</p> <p>Are pupils able to discuss and develop their ideas?</p> <p>Are pupils able to work both collaboratively and independently?</p> <p>Are there good relationships in the classroom?</p> <p>How well is pupils' progress assessed and monitored?</p> <p>Are lesson plans adapted to take account of assessment information?</p> <p>Do teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understanding? Are they able to make this accessible to pupils?</p> <p>Do lessons have clear learning objectives and use a wide range of teaching strategies to address the needs of learners?</p> <p>Is classroom management consistently good with well-established routines?</p> <p>Do pupils understand what is required of them, how well they are doing and how they can improve?</p>	<p>Organise regular observations of lessons or specific parts of lessons.</p> <p>Arrange for year leaders to shadow a class across a number of subjects. Focus on themes such as consistency across and between subjects in managing behaviour, lesson structure, pedagogy, expectations, pace and challenge.</p> <p>Ensure regular discussion with your team about teaching and learning. Ensure that it is a standing item on team meeting agendas.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for teachers to share good practice with other members of the team.</p> <p>Create opportunities for formal feedback from pupils about teaching and learning in your subject area or year group.</p> <p>Clarify CPD requirements for staff in your subject or year team through performance reviews.</p> <p>Ensure that CPD contributes to improvements in teaching and learning. Create feedback time for the subject or year team.</p> <p>Build in time to share practice. Set up coaching pairs or trios to work on particular teaching techniques.</p> <p>Invite team members to deliver training, thus building capacity and utilising skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Scrutinise lesson plans and schemes of work; organise collaborative planning sessions to address the weaknesses identified.</p> <p>Ensure that learning objectives and success criteria are clear to pupils.</p>



SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
		<p>Visit several lessons over the course of a week, a few minutes into the lesson or at the end. On each occasion, ask pupils what they are learning today and how they will know they have succeeded.</p> <p>Monitor and review the work of teaching assistants in your subject. Talk to pupils about how effective they find any support given.</p>
<p>5b How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? Take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extent to which the curriculum or activities match learners' needs, aspirations and capabilities, building on prior attainment and experience how far the curriculum meets the external requirements and is responsive to local circumstances the extent to which the provision enables and encourages learners to be healthy and stay safe the extent to which learners have opportunities to develop enterprise and financial skills and work in teams the extent to which enrichment activities and, where appropriate, extended services contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement where appropriate, the extent to which employers' needs are met through developing work-related skills. 	<p>Are lessons well paced and appropriately pitched?</p> <p>Are activities and demands matched to pupils' needs?</p> <p>Is teaching stimulating and challenging for all pupils?</p> <p>Is a variety of teaching methods used?</p> <p>Are lessons appropriately differentiated to address the full ability range in your subject area?</p> <p>As a year leader, are you confident that the needs of particular groups of pupils are met across the curriculum, e.g. G&T?</p> <p>Are there opportunities to enrich the curriculum by bringing in expertise and experience from outside the school? What specific activities have you organised in your subject area or year group?</p> <p>Have you made specific links with work experience in your subject? Do you build on or incorporate any activities related to work experience into your subject area? How does your subject contribute to the development of relevant work-related skills?</p>	<p>Scrutinise schemes of work and subject planning.</p> <p>Regularly monitor a selection of pupils' exercise books and conduct work scrutiny.</p> <p>Monitor homework diaries and planners.</p> <p>Create opportunities for discussion with pupils.</p> <p>Give parents/carers opportunities to contribute their views.</p> <p>Investigate and review specific themes, e.g. 'opportunities to work in a team'. Year leaders are well placed to look at cross-curricular issues which may not be addressed in single subject areas. Shadowing pupils, scrutinising books, pupil interviews and focus groups allow a range of evidence to be gathered on specific themes.</p> <p>As a year team, identify activities, trips and events involving outside expertise or links with the wider community. Map which classes, form groups, individuals or groups have been involved. Have all pupils had opportunities to participate?</p> <p>Ensure that curriculum and pastoral support for absent pupils are followed up and recorded.</p>



SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
<p>5c How well are learners guided and supported? Take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the care, including as appropriate integrated day care, advice, guidance and other support provided to learners to safeguard welfare, promote personal development and allow them to make good progress in their work • the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to course and programme, and, where applicable, career progression • the extent to which the school and any additional services contribute to learners' capacity to be healthy, including vulnerable groups such as looked-after children. 	<p>How does your team collaborate with mentors, support assistants and other professionals?</p> <p>As year leader, how do you ensure that school policies are implemented across the curriculum?</p> <p>What arrangements are in place for children who require counselling or other support services?</p> <p>Are teaching assistants effectively deployed to support learning?</p> <p>Are teaching assistants well coordinated and involved in lessons?</p> <p>In your area of responsibility how do you support the most vulnerable pupils? Do you know which learners are looked-after children?</p> <p>Are there clear lines of communication and responsibility between subject, pastoral and other development areas?</p>	<p>Ensure that middle leaders meet as a team and that there is not a pastoral/curriculum divide that impedes communication.</p> <p>Plan strategies so that your team communicates and acts upon any information received from the SENCO, year leader and form tutors regarding issues of pupil welfare.</p> <p>Map opportunities in your area of responsibility for ensuring that pupils receive appropriate careers guidance.</p>



Leadership and management (SEF 6)

- How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

This is a complex area for self-evaluation. Rigorous analysis and judgements need to be made. This includes making judgements on staff and organisational outcomes, and, importantly, pupil outcomes. All or most aspects of the area of responsibility must be effective for leadership and management to be judged effective.

Effective leadership entails a wide range of aspects that drive improvement and contribute to evidence of school self-evaluation, including:

- having a long-term view;
- inspiring and enthusing colleagues and supporting professional development;
- evaluating schemes of work and curriculum provision;
- agreeing targets to raise pupils' attainment;
- interpreting pupil attainment data and performance;
- evaluating teacher performance and feeding back;
- ensuring that school policies are applied;
- reporting to governors on standards;
- coordinating reporting to parents/carers.

Middle leaders need to explore, develop and make clear the strategies they use to monitor and evaluate their own leadership and management.

Many schools use external agency monitoring and evaluation to support their own:

- inspection reports;
- LA reviews of whole-school aspects or subject areas;
- LA advisers and consultants, e.g. in the areas of teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance, SEN, EAL and EMA, assessment, welfare;
- other 'independent' advisers or inspectors, e.g. those involved in HMI good practice or subject visits, bought-in consultants.

Appropriate inclusion of these in any action plans will contribute to self-evaluation.

A school's recent Ofsted inspection report identified two areas to improve – standards and teaching in a core subject, and attendance across Years 9 and 10. School self-evaluation relied on evidence from middle leaders to record improvements. The core subject received support from a LA secondary consultant, working with teachers on key teaching strategies and team consistency, and with the subject leader to develop monitoring of lessons. The subject leader collected evidence of improvements through lesson observation and the PAT to analyse results class by class. The year leaders implemented strategies through tutors and subject teachers to identify earlier patterns of poor attendance or disengagement, including learning targets for underperforming groups of pupils. They worked with the LA attendance consultant and EWO to target key classes where groups of pupils disengaged and lacked parent/carer support. Certain parents/carers were contacted more frequently to enlist support. The evidence was collected through a range of sources: attendance records, consultant monitoring, subject leader/teacher comment.

Both year and subject leaders monitored the impact of the external agents and their own strategies, supported by the SLT termly progress review. LA improvement agreements also included consultant and LAI contribution to the school's evaluation.



The following **Table 5** explores middle leaders' contribution to evaluating leadership and management, SEF 6.

Table 5 – Leadership and management

SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
<p>6a What is the overall effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management? Take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement, and promote high quality of integrated care and education • how effectively performance is monitored and improved to meet challenging targets through quality assurance and self-assessment • how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential (i.e. inclusion) • the adequacy and suitability of staff, specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation • how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money • how effectively links are made with other providers, services, employers and other organisations to promote integration of care, education and any extended services to enhance learning • the extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities. 	<p>Is there sufficient staffing in place to support the curriculum and meet pupils' learning needs?</p> <p>Are staff training needs identified?</p> <p>Are training, follow-up and outcomes monitored and evaluated?</p> <p>Is performance management of staff in line with school procedures and systematic? Does it produce improvement for staff and pupils?</p> <p>Are there sufficient resources to support the curriculum, effective teaching and the learning needs of pupils, e.g. in ICT?</p> <p>Are parents/carers systematically provided with useful, relevant information, e.g. aims, programmes of study, expectations, standards and progress, guidance?</p> <p>Are parents appropriately contacted to convey extra information or seek further support, e.g. on intervention, attendance, underachievement, homework, attitude and behaviour?</p> <p>Does your aspect provide a resource for or draw from the local community?</p> <p>Do you contribute effectively to school transfer of pupils to ensure strong continuity of learning and support?</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for regular and systematic team review of progress and priorities, e.g. team meetings, group or one-to-one discussions.</p> <p>Use a range of strategies to monitor and evaluate lessons, e.g. as part of performance management, other observations related to school developments.</p> <p>Support and follow up external agents' comments and activities.</p> <p>Involve others in aspects of leadership and management, ensuring a sense of teamwork and collaboration.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for identification of training needs; follow these up with CPD (internal or external).</p> <p>Support strategies for dissemination of good and consistent practice.</p> <p>Devise a development action plan based on pupil outcomes as part of the school improvement cycle.</p> <p>Ensure that the school vision and policies are implemented consistently and thoroughly.</p> <p>Follow up any key issues arising for low performance among teachers or other staff.</p> <p>Liaise with other middle leaders to share and use information.</p>
<p>6c On the basis of your evaluation, what are your key priorities for development?</p>	<p>Do you hold regular team meetings?</p> <p>Does your team contribute to leadership and management? How do you foster collaborative approaches in your aspect?</p> <p>Do you show clear vision, a sense of purpose and high expectation for the aspect and staff you lead?</p>	<p>Work with colleagues to develop a shared understanding of school and aspect vision and policies, including a shared understanding of teaching and learning expectations, e.g. National Curriculum levels, GCSE grade criteria, pupil profiling, care and guidance, procedures for pupil absence, homework, classroom management.</p>



SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
	<p>Do you inspire, motivate and influence staff and pupils? Do you seek their views?</p> <p>Do you systematically review progress against a range of evidence and set priorities for improvement?</p> <p>Do you and your team monitor qualitative and quantitative performance data, review patterns and take appropriate action?</p> <p>Are these priorities set within whole-school priorities and the school improvement plan?</p> <p>Do your policies and practices support inclusiveness, where individuals matter?</p> <p>Do you provide a good role model for other staff and pupils?</p>	



Overall effectiveness and efficiency (SEF 7)

- What are your strengths? How will you sustain, secure or further develop them?
- What are your weaknesses? What strategies will you use to address them and how and when will you monitor and judge success?
- On the basis of your evaluation, what are the key priorities for development and what are your next steps?

If self-evaluation processes are effective, middle leaders will have gathered and used all available evidence to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum area. Year leaders will wish to undertake the analyses from a different perspective, looking at particular form groups and year-related issues such as the well-documented 'Year 8 dip', but nevertheless, will still be able to identify issues to be addressed. From this, the important next step is to prioritise actions and resources. The results of your analysis may reveal that some issues require further investigation and some of the following areas may need to be considered.

- Schemes of work – are the necessary learning objectives covered appropriately? Are objectives matched to pupils' standards and needs?
- Resources – how are you deploying your resources? Do particular year groups or classes need additional resources to support their learning needs?
- Teaching and learning – are differences in standards attained by different groups related to the quality of teaching and learning in those classes? Year leaders may be interested in background learning issues that emerge across several subject areas, such as behaviour for learning, study skills, literacy.
- Additional support – how are teaching assistants or other forms of support deployed? Are they used in areas of maximum need?
- Curriculum planning – are the proportion of the school week and the timing of lessons in your area impacting on attainment of particular groups?

Whether you are a subject leader, a year leader, a SENCO or are responsible for an aspect of the school such as EAL/EMA or G&T, it is important to view overall effectiveness through a combination of the other strands of self-evaluation:

- characteristics of the school;
- views of learners, parents/carers and stakeholders;
- achievement and standards;
- personal development and well-being;
- quality of provision;
- leadership and management.

Essentially, this can be reduced to the three main questions rehearsed in *A New Relationship with Schools: Improving Performance through School Self-evaluation*.

The middle leader needs to contribute to the school's understanding and response to:

- the overall effectiveness of the provision, including any extended services, and its main strengths and weaknesses;
- the effectiveness of actions to promote improvement since the last inspection;
- the school's capacity to make further improvement



The following **Table 6** identifies questions and sources of evidence that support middle leaders' contribution to evaluating overall effectiveness and efficiency, SEF 7.

Table 6 – Overall effectiveness and efficiency

SEF question	Questions for middle leaders	Possible sources of evidence
7 How effective is the provision of education, integrated care and extended services in meeting the needs of learners and why?	Do you liaise with the SLT to ensure clear aspect priorities related to whole-school improvement priorities?	Collect the other self-evaluation comments and judgements and analyse them for consistency and substantial evidence, both qualitative and quantitative.
7a What is the overall effectiveness of the provision, including any extended services, and its main strengths and weaknesses?	Is there a clear review process of leadership and management, teaching and learning, standards, guidance and care and any other key aim of your aspect?	Be robust and candid about the extent to which proposed improvements have taken place, particularly since the last inspection.
7b What is the effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection, and as a result of your self-evaluation?	Do the plan and the monitoring and evaluation processes identify sources of evidence including pupil outcomes?	Make a clear and considered judgement on next steps, concentrating not only on what needs to improve as a next step but on the capacity of staff and other resources to meet those expectations.
7c What is the capacity to make further improvement?	Are there clear priorities established in plans to ensure realistic outcomes?	Ensure that the judgements and action plan for improvement present the next steps in as much detail as possible, indicating strategies for achieving success and monitoring and evaluation processes.
7d How effective are links with other organisations to promote the well-being of learners?	Do you contribute to school recruitment and retention and staff training and support to ensure capacity for improvement?	Explore the rigour and continuity of your self-evaluation processes in line with school evaluation processes.
7e What steps need to be taken to improve the provision further?	Do you take into account and try to compensate for any capacity issues?	Take advantage of opportunities to seek a range of views, including stakeholders, the SLT and external agencies.
	Have you monitored and provided evidence of improvement on all recommendations made during the last school inspection?	
	Have you addressed recommendations made by school internal reviews (SLT), reviews by external agencies (LA adviser or consultant) or self-evaluations?	



Further reading

A New Relationship with Schools: Improving Performance through School Self-evaluation (DfES 1290-2005DOC-EN)

Ofsted inspection framework and guidance 2005: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Tracking for success (DfES 1545-2005FLR-EN)

Subject Leader Development Programme (DfES 0389/2002)

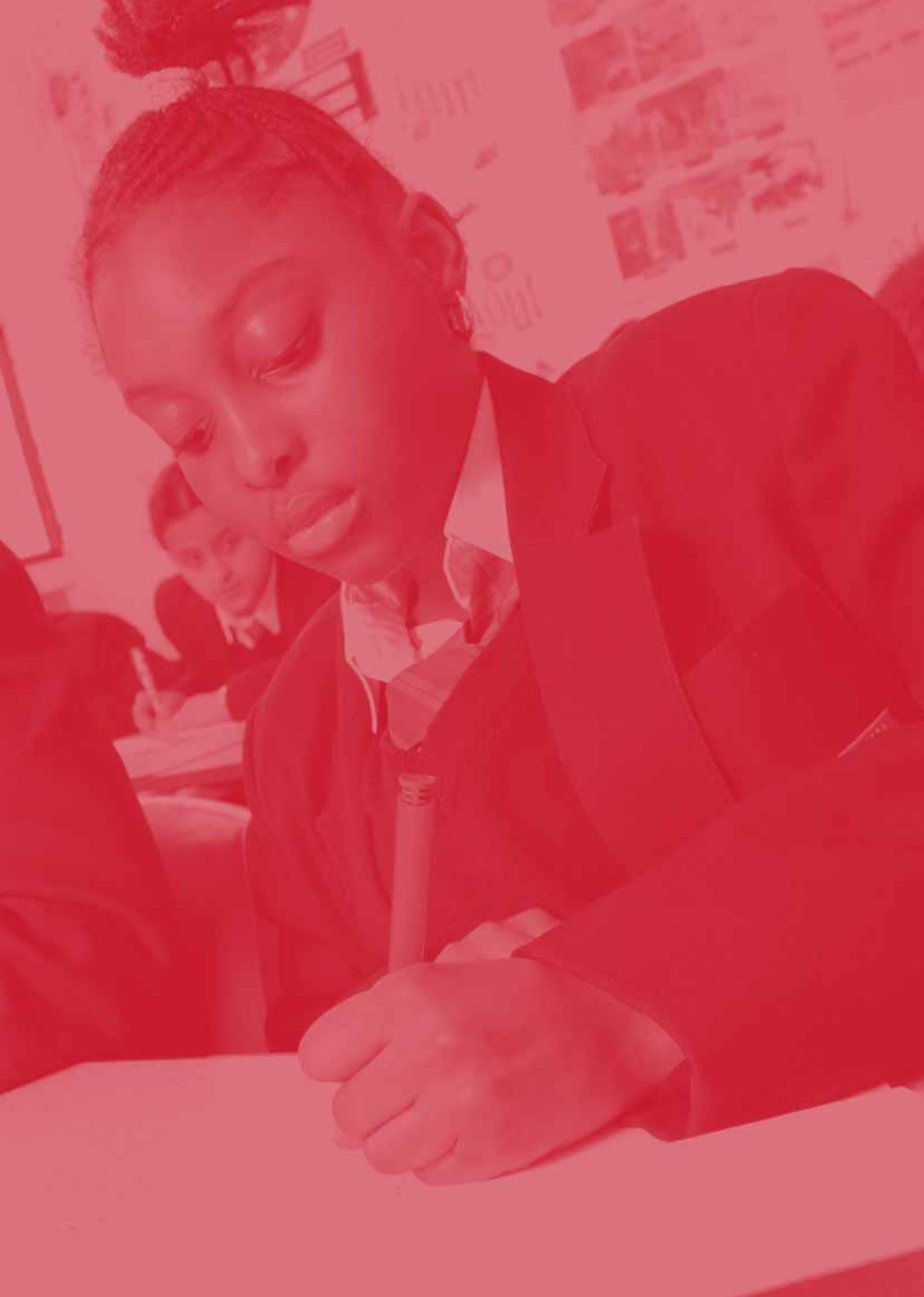
Secondary National Strategy for school improvement: senior leader and subject area publications for English, mathematics, science, ICT, foundation subjects, inclusion and whole school initiatives: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

Leading from the middle: www.ncsl.org.uk

Self-evaluation: a guide for school leaders: www.ncsl.org.uk

Teachers' Standards Framework: www.teachernet.gov.uk

Local Authority publications, guidelines and CPD programmes to support middle leadership



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