



MINUTE of the Excellence in Professional Learning Award for Schools and Learning Communities panel meeting held at Riverside Primary School, Stirling, on Thursday 7 June 2018 at 9.30am.

Present: Lillian Field, GTC Scotland Council Member (Chair)
David Graham, Senior Education Officer (GTCS Servicing Officer)
Susanne Dunne, Operational Lead, North Ayrshire Professional Learning Academy
Mary Kerr, Depute Headteacher, St Ninian's High School, Kirkintilloch
Ruth Mackay, Head Teacher, Portobello High School, City of Edinburgh Council
Louise Yuile, Depute Headteacher, Torbain Primary School, Fife Council

1 Introduction and Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and made the introductions.

The panel assessed the application from Riverside Primary School.

The 'come and see' approach to the event enabled the panel to gain insight into the school as a learning community. The structure of the day enabled the panel to observe a wide range of aspects of excellence in professional learning and an opportunity to meet with the following teams/groups:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Staff
 - Model for Improvement – featuring test of change (Stirling Council Programme)
 - Lead Next Programme (Middle Leadership Programme, Stirling Council)
 - NQTs and teaching staff – professional enquiry
 - Professional Reading
 - PT re Nurturing Principles and Approaches
 - Developing Leaders Programme
 - School Assistants
 - Staff from Autism Provision – PRD process
- Pupils
 - Pupil Leadership Group
 - Nurture Group

In addition, key documentation and visual presentations were provided outlining:

- RPS video clip supporting submission
- Examples of collegiate meeting overviews/agenda
- HMle report September 2017
- PT leadership material
- Model for Improvement Example – Raising Attainment Champion Programme
- Example of Ditch, Defend, Dissect
- Education Scotland video clip – School Improvement Planning (partner engagement)

2 Outcome of Panel

The panel agreed that Riverside Primary School should be awarded the GTCS Excellence in Professional Learning Award. The award is granted for a 3 year period.

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3 Key Strengths

The panel enjoyed the structure of the day and would like to commend Riverside Primary School on the following observed key strengths:

Prior to the event the documentation and the visual materials provided the panel members with a brief insight to Riverside Primary School and gave a flavour of the excellent professional learning opportunities available for staff and pupils.

The panel were very appreciative of the open, honest and reflective nature of the school community. All staff and pupils spoke of their pride in the school as a learning community and a place to learn.

Leadership of and for learning

Through the various conversations it was very evident that the whole school community appreciate the inspirational leadership of the Headteacher, supported by her Senior Leadership Team, and consider them to be quality role models for professional learning. Together they have established a culture and ethos where all members of the school community are supported, and feel able to take measured risks, in their professional learning. The support, from the point of induction onwards, received by staff was widely acknowledged and appreciated. Coaching and mentoring approaches are used implicitly by the Senior Leadership Team.

The Headteacher and her Senior Leadership Team communicate a clear strategic vision where professional learning supports the school on its continuing journey of change. The school vision of 'Be the best you can! (Dèan do dhicheall)' is shared and enacted by the wider school community.

Children are aware that their teachers are also learners, continuing to build their own knowledge and further develop skills and expertise. Pupil led initiatives e.g. 'Achievement Afternoons' provide opportunities where children can clearly articulate their own learning and demonstrate where they have, and continue to, lead the learning of others. One pupil group described their own learning opportunities within Riverside PS as inspiring, exciting and inclusive.

Professional Standards & Policy

Professional Standards and educational policies are used both to support and inform professional learning, most notably to self-evaluate and engage in critically reflective dialogue about practice as part of the ongoing PRD process. Principal Teachers (and those aspiring to the role) make good use of the Standards for Leadership and Management within their forum.

Learning-as-collaborative

There is a very strong sense of collegiality within the school community with collaborative learning embedded at all levels, with a clear focus on the intended impact on children and young people. There are many opportunities for rich professional dialogue, which is often linked to professional reading, and for staff to share learning and practice. Staff are supported to take leadership roles where innovation and creativity is actively encouraged.

Learning by enquiry

There is a commitment from the Senior Leadership Team that all significant changes adopted as part of the School Improvement Process will be based on research. Staff engagement continues to develop with teachers supported to undertake enquiry which is relevant to the context of their class or stage. Enquiry also has a clear focus on enhanced outcomes and/or experiences for children. Staff refer to the ethos of trust and support which empowers their commitment to this approach which may involve 'stepping outwith their comfort zone.'

Learning/...

Learning that deepens knowledge and understanding

The supportive ethos which is evident through the positive relationships between the Senior Leadership and wider staff team, encourages staff to engage fully in professional learning. This is acknowledged and valued by staff who feel that they are actively encouraged to take ownership of their own learning and to be reflective practitioners. The Headteacher knows the strengths of each member of her team and is well placed to provide the appropriate balance of support and challenge when encouraging next steps in their professional learning.