

2012

How well are we doing?

*Self assessment standards for Community
School improvement*



**Written in partnership by the
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* Community active schools in Ukraine and Moldova, Community Schools in Hungary and Russia, community focused schools in Wales, community centers/schools in Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and other countries of former Yugoslavia, , and Extended Schools in England and Northern Ireland.

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How will schools benefit from using these Standards?

Conducting self-assessment can be a key element in making a school stronger and more effective. It establishes a clear process for self-review, evaluation and recognition of achievement.

These Standards help you to:

- identify strengths and weaknesses to inform your strategic planning
- take action based on identified needs and priorities to support learning and raise achievement
- consider appropriate success criteria and evidence of impact
- provide a focus for working with other stakeholders and agencies
- evaluate and report on the quality of links with the community
- identify common principles in the provision of extended activities and services

They will help pin-point areas for development and set priorities for future action; ensure that all stakeholders, including parents, governors, community members and young people, are involved in decision-making processes; encourage greater parental involvement in, and support for, the life and work of the school.

They also help to get ongoing feedback from learners and families and to build and maintain strong relationships and a productive dialogue between the Community School and its local community.

Finally, they will help you to demonstrate to your communities, local authorities and others that you are delivering high quality work that is making a difference to the experience of learning in your community.

You can use this as an opportunity to gather pupils' views on several of the indicators.

In a more complex world we are recognizing that schools need not be the only locus of learning. Indeed, we find more pupils voting with their feet and staying away from school. A more personalized learning program can be designed with community partners making a contribution to learning provision.

The process is important

Bringing together teams of staff, parents, pupils and other agencies to consider your work against each of these Standards is a valuable process in itself. It will build the skills and knowledge of your team members to undertake evaluations, reviews and gather evidence. It will help you build relationships and your team members will become ambassadors for the work you are doing.

What is in this pack and how will you use it?

The process

It is essential that a team is brought together to consider the Standards. It will not make sense to consider how well your school builds partnership if other

agencies are not present when you discuss your performance. Likewise, it makes sense to consider the engagement of parents together with them. This may seem a little daunting at first, but our experience has shown that most school leaders have been pleasantly surprised by the positive responses they have received and the realistic suggestions for improvement that have been agreed. Working in a creative and dynamic way with partners in teams is an important part of the development and improvement process. It will build the capacity of staff, pupils, parents and other agencies to understand what you are hoping to achieve and how this can be assessed. It will also make your mission transparent and will be very good process for building the confidence of staff, pupils, parents, partner agencies and others in the work you are doing. It is helpful for public accountability so you can show how well you are doing.

The process is an opportunity for you to work in partnership with parents, with pupils and with other agencies. This way you can have a range of perspectives on the work that you are doing and the way in which you may develop. You may choose different teams for different Standards. It is always a good idea to find ways to reach out and engage those who you don't already work with. For example, parents who are already involved will tell you that you are doing very well, but what about those who are not? Is it their own fault, or are there other approaches that you could try – unless you ask them you won't know.

Standards

Each area of work that features in a Community School is described and accompanied by a form which will help you to consider how well developed you are. We have used the word *Standards* for these descriptions however, it is important to remember that this is a self assessment tool and **not an inspection tool.**

Each section gives a heading which we believe is a key area:

- leadership
- partnership
- social inclusion
- services
- volunteering
- lifelong learning
- community development
- parent engagement
- school culture

For each Standard there are **key indicators** and schools, together with their partners, can assess how well they are doing. There are **descriptors** of these key indicators which will help to clarify the list on the form. There is a blank space for you to include a key indicator of your own if you wish.

There is a **comments** section and you can use this to register any areas of particular concern or make notes about people you should talk with.

From this information you can identify priorities for action. Against each of the key indicators, you may want to collect **evidence** which shows, how well you are

progressing. For example, a key indicator is that there is a strategy for your Community School. The written document could be included as evidence.

The Big Picture

This is a summary sheet that you can use so that you can see quickly how well you are doing across all the Standards. It is very likely that for some Standards you will be doing really well and in others you can see room for improvement.

Action plan

After assessing all indicators you might find that there are a few Standards or particular indicators, which your school needs to improve. This page will help you to work out your priorities since you may not be able to take action in all areas at the same time. You will be able to decide which actions you will take first.

Introduction to the standards

Each Community School develops in its own way because schools are organic structures, shaped by the enthusiasm of their staff, the vision of its leadership and the needs of the local community. Even so, we believe that all Community Schools share common key characteristics. These Standards are a list of these together with indicators for each standard. This will help provide you with a checklist of best practice and a focus for improvement.

When you have discussed each indicator then you can award yourself a score from 1- 4. The score of 1 represents no development as yet, a score of 2 means that you are in the early stages of development, award yourself a score of 3 if you are showing a strong performance and 4 if you believe that your work is outstanding.

Leadership

Good leadership will build the capacity of all staff so that the school can develop and improve. Good leadership means that a vision is agreed with partners so that everyone is clear about where the school is heading. Good leadership will also ensure that staff have clear responsibilities, support and resources to do the work required.

Partnership

A good Community School builds solid partnerships with other professionals and organizations from the wider community. Partnerships allow the different agencies working with children, their families and the wider community to work together in harmony so that individuals experience seamless services and each member can support the other. It involves being clear about who is responsible for what, attracting and sharing resources and a good flow of information. This helps schools ensure that their pupils have the best conditions in which to thrive.

Social inclusion

A good Community School creates conditions and opportunities for all learners irrespective of their gender, religion, ethnicity, social class, family income level, physical ability or sexual orientation. Community Schools challenge stereotypical views about people so that all sections of the community have access to learning and other support services. In this way, the school contributes to community cohesion, helping conflicting sections learn more about each other and to co-exist harmoniously. Irrespective of personal views on such issues, the professional will ensure that all have access to learning. To do otherwise, restricts the ability of a

community, a group or individuals to realize their full potential. It is essential to the creation of a good learning environment in the classroom where children are discouraged from holding stereotyped or negative images of each other.

Services

A Community School is a central resource in its community and offers a range of services. These are determined according to need but usually include support for families, learning opportunities for adults and community organizations, health and social services. Schools which provide, or perhaps host, services delivered by other agencies can support families so that children can have all round support. The school itself might not provide all the services, but will encourage other agencies to provide services either at the school site or located in the community. It will actively support and promote the services.

Volunteering

Pupils are encouraged to participate in the life of their community. This helps them to apply learning in the classroom into real life situations. It also develops their sense of citizenship and builds their skills, self esteem and confidence; often pupils who struggle to attain high academic standards can shine as volunteers. Enjoying relationships with adults other than parents and teachers is an important element of their development. A good Community School also encourages parents and community members to volunteer and ensures that they have support and training.

Lifelong learning

Learning throughout life is essential for people to cope with a rapidly changing world. It is important for children to see that learning is a lifelong activity and that schools are only one setting where learning can take place. It is important that adults are role models for children so that they can see that learning is for work and for pleasure. Schools promoting adult learning help create a learning climate in the wider community in which their pupils can flourish.

Community development

All Community Schools are involved in community development. In some countries schools are the main catalysts for change and development in their locality. In others there are other agencies carrying this responsibility. The Standard and Indicators here are for those schools that are the local leaders in community development.

In this case they will be helping community groups to build their strengths to take action, engage with their communities and to deliver services to local people. For example the school may help them learn how to arrange meetings, how to conduct surveys, help them analyze results etc. For schools in countries where community development is carried out by other agencies, then the school may be a partner for some activities.

Parent engagement

Pupils learn best when their parents support their learning. To do this parents need to understand their children's developmental needs and also how best to create a learning environment at home. When the school engages parents then they are likely to understand what the school is trying to achieve and to support its policies. They are also able to make practical suggestions to schools. The word engagement means that there should be an active dialogue between parents and teachers.

School culture

Sample pages from *How well are we doing? Self assessment*

standards for Community School improvement.

A Community School is open and receptive to change. Democratic principles are applied to all spheres of school life. School staff listen to children, parents, partners and the community, adapting its practices as appropriate. The culture of the school encourages creativity, initiative and participation and this climate extends to the management of the learning environment in lessons. In this way the community and parents have confidence in the school and pupils develop the skills and the confidence to practice transferable skills.

The following pages offer Standards for each of these areas and with a set of indicators for you to discuss how well you are doing against each. For each indicator there is a set of descriptors on the following page which give you an idea about the work you would be doing to meet those Standards. You may not be able to progress on all issues at once and so you may decide to choose two or three priorities this year and return again next year to check progress and set new priorities. Remember this is your own tool. It is designed to be used flexibly and to help you develop and not to restrain you.

SAMPLE PAGES

Sample pages from *How well are we doing? Self assessment standards for Community School improvement.*

Standards

Top tip

Bring together a team before you start. You may want to include 2 pupils, a teacher, school administrators, a community representative, parents and practitioners from other agencies.



Remember that your school may not always be the provider – sometime your partner agencies will take responsibility. As long as you are working in partnership you can claim to meeting the standards.

Sample pages from *How well are we doing? Self assessment*

standards for Community School improvement.

1 = no development 2= early stages 3 = strong performance 4 = advanced (outstanding)

Leadership (<i>There is a vision, strategy, support and resources allocated to this work.</i>)	1	2	3	4
Our mission has been agreed with the full involvement of pupils, parents, the wider community and other agencies				
We make strategic plans taking into account interests and needs of pupils, teachers, parents and significant stakeholders				
We allocate resources – people, places, equipment and where possible, funds for this work				
We ensure staff acquire skills to involve people and lead development and manage initiatives				
We promote and value high levels of achievement and the improvement of individual progress and personal development				
Our leaders encourage the generation of new ideas, new ways of working and new responses to challenges and support others in taking responsibility for decision-making and action				
You can add an indicator of your own here				
Comment				
Priority actions				

Leadership

Our mission has been agreed with the full involvement of pupils, parents, the wider community and other agencies

- We engage with those parents who do not traditionally take an interest in the school
- We have taken the views of children who are 'disaffected' or 'disengaged'
- We have consulted with many different groups and factions within the community
- We have consulted with a wide range of other agencies active within the community

We make strategic plans taking into account interests and needs of pupils, teachers, parents and significant stakeholders

- We have a strategic plan consisting of vision, mission, long term goals and activities which can be monitored and evaluated
- Goals which we have set have taken into account the needs of the whole community
- The strategic plan is informed by regular evaluation of existing activity and changing local needs
- Strategic planning is a priority at a regular time each year
- The plan is made public at all times and regularly communicated to all those who are interested

We allocate resources – people, places, equipment and, where possible, funds for this work

- We can show the reasons we have allocated resources
- It is clear who is responsible for making sure the plan is implemented and the timescales they have available
- We have a supportive structure (eg mentors or access to specific skills/equipment/services) for individuals and groups who are seeking resources from beyond the school

We ensure staff acquire skills to involve people and lead development and manage initiatives

- We have a clear skills audit for staff that identifies existing skills and where support is required
- We have access to varied training programs for staff that will enable them to work effectively
- Specific training is available which includes bid writing, managing projects, management of change, risk management and, where appropriate, financial management
- We have a regular staff appraisal system which values existing knowledge and practice and monitors performance against agreed targets

We promote and value high levels of achievement and the improvement of individual progress and personal development

- We celebrate achievement regularly, publicly and promptly in different ways
- We acknowledge a wide variety of achievements beyond academic attainment and for the whole community
- We track achievement and progress as key outcomes against the goals set in the strategic plan

Our leaders encourage the generation of new ideas, new ways of working and new responses to challenges and support others in taking responsibility for decision-making and action

- There is a clear focus on meeting the goals of our plan with an emphasis on removing barriers to participation

Sample pages from *How well are we doing? Self assessment*

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- Our leaders encourage generation of new ideas, new ways of working and new responses to challenges and support others in taking responsibility for decision-making and action
- We have evidence of new and innovative developments taken from the ideas of staff, pupils and the community
- People from our community are involved with teachers in identifying problems and working out solutions together and corporately
- We encourage members of the community to work alongside teachers in classrooms or to lead after school activities

SAMPLE PAGES

Sample pages from *How well are we doing? Self assessment standards for Community School improvement.*

1 = highest priority 2= priority for this year 3 = priority for next year 4 = satisfied with our work

The Big Picture	1	2	3	4
Leadership				
Partnership				
Social inclusion				
Services				
Volunteering				
Lifelong learning				
Community development				
Parent engagement				
School culture				

Example

	1	2	3	4
Leadership		X		
Partnership				X
Social Inclusion			X	
Services	X			



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standards for Community School improvement.

Summary action plan <i>This is an overview of what you intend to tackle now, this year and next year.</i>					
Priority levels 1= highest priority, 2= a priority for this year 3=a priority for next year					
	Actions we will take	Priority level 1-3	Who will take the lead?	Date to finish	Resources /support needed
Leadership	•				
Partnership	•				
Social inclusion	•				
Services	•				
Volunteering	•				
Lifelong learning	•				
Community development	•				
Parent engagement	•				
School culture	•				