

VSE: an overview

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The Council Context

- Small Council; high levels of deprivation
- Council priority: to improve the life chances of children and young people
- West Dunbartonshire CPP: Children and Families Development and Improvement Group
- Educational Services: leading role with partners across and beyond the Council



Educational Services Priorities

- Raising Attainment and Achievement
- Implementation of CfE, GIRFEC and the Early Years Framework
- Improve self-evaluation processes & systems
- ICT strategy: learning with technologies
- Continued regeneration of the schools' estate



Educational Services Context

- Significant budget pressures/cuts over several years
- Closing the Gap agenda
- Complete restructure of Senior Management Team
- Need to re-examine departmental priorities
- New blood: new ideas



VSE: Scoping

- 2012: biggest survey of Education stakeholders in WDC's history
- Large samples of staff, parents and young people surveyed on wide range of issues
- Generally positive; some key messages
- Positive staff views reflected in recent biennial Council staff survey



VSE: 4 Themes

- Raising Attainment and Achievement
- Transitions
- Health and Wellbeing
- Partnership working and planning in the Vale of Leven Learning Community

- 4 Thematic groups  Project Board



Raising Attainment & Achievement

- Strong political lead on & financial commitment to closing the gap
- Standing item: Education Committee
- Initial focus on STACS/SQA results
- Question: effectiveness of strategies?
- Lessons for Senior Phase & for raising attainment/achievement 3-18
- 3 main sub-themes



Transitions

- Initially looked at transitions generally
- Main focus on Primary/Secondary as crucial stage in learner journey
- Curricular & individual learner transitions
- Links to raising attainment & achievement
- Lessons for transitions at other stages
- Key element in ensuring all staff are working to a common agenda



Health & Wellbeing

- Initial focus on H&W generally
- Narrowed to focus on emotional wellbeing for 3-8 year olds
- Links to national agenda (e.g. EYC)
- Evidence of good practice
- Links to raising attainment, transitions and partnership working



Vale of Leven Learning Community

- CLD moved from Education to CEO and then Corporate Services
- CLD's self-evaluation in 2013: issues with joint planning and delivery
- CLD work ongoing in Vale of Leven
- How can joint planning & delivery be improved in a learning community?



VSE thematic groups

- 4 thematic groups, led by officers from outwith senior management
- Close scrutiny of policy, practice and leadership
- Rigorous, challenging approach
- Process has taken staff outside their comfort zones: they have blossomed



What have we learned?

Key Strengths

- Partnership working
- Strong relationships showing trust and respect
- Commitment of staff, communities and elected members to improving outcomes for children
- Openness to robust self-evaluation to bring about improvement
- Workforce development opportunities
- Openness to adopt innovative practice



What have we learned?

Areas for improvement

- The need for consistency
- The need for effective communication at all levels
- The need to inculcate a common agenda across the service
- The need to ensure that our new structure delivers the corporate & departmental priorities at a time of financial challenge



Timetable for the week

- Wide range of groups, stakeholders and activities
- Too much to see in a week
- Team to work with thematic groups this afternoon to decide on details for week
- May change in course of week in response to events & observations



Conclusion

- VSE is not an exercise
- VSE has made us examine critically our structures and processes
- VSE will lead to service improvements
- Self-evaluation does not end with the publication of the report
- VSE now an integral part of improvement & service planning processes

