

**Validated Self-evaluation  
West Dunbartonshire Council  
20 May 2014**



# **Validated self-evaluation in West Dunbartonshire Council : Education Department**

## **Commentary by Education Scotland**

### **Introduction**

West Dunbartonshire Council seeks to drive continuous improvement for learners and ensure it delivers best value. The Council invited a team from Education Scotland, including HM Inspectors and Associate Assessors to work with them on a validated self-evaluation (VSE) exercise between January and March 2014. The VSE was conducted as part of West Dunbartonshire's on-going approach to improvement through self-evaluation. Further details on the themes examined through the VSE can be found in the West Dunbartonshire VSE report.

### **What has the VSE achieved?**

The Education Scotland team of HM Inspectors and Associate Assessors are confident that the overall quality of West Dunbartonshire Council's self-evaluation is accurate and robust.

All the themes chosen demonstrated a strong focus on improving the lives of learners, particularly the most disadvantaged. This links clearly to key Council and Community Plan objectives. The focus on preventative and restorative work and building resilience in learners was a consistent thread running across all themes. Council officers and their partners, including elected members, engaged strongly throughout the VSE process. All participants involved demonstrated a strong commitment to ensure that their evaluative approaches were rigorous and were focused upon securing improvement for the learners and communities of West Dunbartonshire.

The Education Scotland team provided support and challenge to each theme group to help build their capacity. This involved looking at documentary evidence, observing practice, and engaging in focus groups of staff and partners. The Education Scotland team engaged in professional dialogue activity at all stages. This approach provided feedback to confirm evaluations and strengths and identify areas for further development. This support and challenge has supported their continued development of self-evaluation.

West Dunbartonshire ensured that the themes chosen and the VSE process also provided opportunities for theme groups to work together in new ways. This included working with other professionals that they had not worked with before. This broadened their thinking and strengthened their approach to support and challenge. This capacity has now been extended to multi-agency partners who were involved in the theme groups. This resulted in a stronger and well organised evidence base. The VSE has strengthened and built further capacity in staff who were already strongly committed to improvement and skilled in reflecting on their practice.

## **Looking ahead**

The VSE has built further capacity to deliver change and improvement. West Dunbartonshire Council has planned a number of improvements which are detailed in the authority's VSE report. These are focused upon the theme areas. In the next year, Council officers will extend this work through working groups and staff development and the development of new theme areas for improvement. These approaches will apply the support and challenge methodology used in the VSE, working directly with schools and their partners in the community.

## **Next steps**

Education Scotland will continue to work in partnership with the authority to continue to build capacity and support West Dunbartonshire's ongoing drive for change. This will be delivered through a Local Partnership Agreement between Education Scotland and West Dunbartonshire Council.

**Philip Denning**  
**HM Inspector**

**Education Scotland**  
**20 May 2014**

## **How can you contact us?**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of validated self-evaluation you should write to Mr Alastair Delaney, Strategic Director, at Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. Alternatively, if your query is related to this report, you may also write to Ms Joyce White, Chief Executive, West Dunbartonshire Council, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU.