**REPORT** of the Excellence in Professional Learning Award (Schools and Learning Communities) Panel meeting held at Eyemouth High School, Eyemouth on Tuesday 5 June 2019 at 9.00 am

**Present:** John Rodger, GTCS Council Member (Chair)

Paul McLaughlin, HT St. Ninians HS, Kirkintilloch

Christine Grace, Leadership and Professional Learning Development Officer, North Ayrshire

Caroline McDaid, Service Manager BGE, Stirling Council

Alison McLellan, Education Officer, Inverclyde

Julie Auld, Principal Teacher & Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, North Ayrshire

**In Attendance:** Charlaine Simpson, GTCS Senior Education Officer (Servicing Officer)

**Introduction and Welcome**

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

1. **Summary of Event**

A GTCS Panel was convened at Eyemouth High School, Eyemouth to review their nomination for an Excellence in Professional Learning Award.

The open and inclusive approach to the event enabled the panel to gain insight into the school as a learning community. In addition to key documentation submitted in advance, the panel members were provided the opportunity to join the following focus groups: -

* Principal teachers
* NQT’s/ RQT’s
* Students
* Shared reading volunteer group
* Community and partnership group
* Members of LTIG
* Duke of Edinburgh team
* Professional Reading group
* Teachers
* Learning zone
* PT L&T and DHT L&T
* Green power car
* Chill ’n’ chat
* Pupil leadership

1. **Background**

The Excellence in Professional Learning Award is now in its third year and recognises the central role that leadership at all levels plays in creating and sustaining professional learning environments where teacher professionalism can flourish and bring about sustained impact on learning and learners. The GTCS Award will be held for a 3-year period and celebrates and recognises schools and learning communities which promote, support and lead professional learning which has significant and sustained impact on teachers, classroom practice and pupil learning.

1. **Key Strengths**

The following key strengths were noted:

1. The Professional Standards

National, local and school education policy is threaded through the professional learning opportunities. This ensures that the professional learning community is contemporary and responsive but also reflects the context and informs planning for improvement.

Professional Standard’s, along with HGIOS 4, underpin the learning and teaching policy which informs the lesson evaluation toolkit, which is the prominent focus for all teachers to use as a tool for self-evaluation and improvement. Feedback from the recent HMIe inspection report has been used to inform further improvement in the lesson evaluation toolkit which has recently been implemented.

There is strong engagement with literature, and this is used to critically reflect on policy and critically inform improvement. This criticality of policy and literature pervades the professional learning of all staff and is considered as a major strength by the panel. The critical use of literature and policy is excellently modelled by the Senior Leadership team and creates a very strong identity for the school and the ‘Eyemouth way’ for improvement. This is strengthened by strong leadership by the Senior Leadership team.

1. Leadership of and for learning

The leadership team are very humble about their own achievements in creating a very positive learning culture but should be congratulated. The professional learning is clearly evidenced throughout the learning community and strive for improvement. It is also evidenced through clear links to the School Improvement Plan, to create a coherent and cohesive strategic plan that is shared and then translated into practice.

There is a strong vision that support staff to engage in professional learning to support continual improvement. The Senior Leadership team clearly demonstrate their commitment to professional learning through the investment of time for staff, resources and through the extensive use of lesson observation. Lesson observations are also enhanced through a coaching approach to feedback, this should continue to be developed to build capacity in coaching approaches across the school.

Building leadership capacity has been developed through a steady process over a number of years. Teacher agency has been developed through small tests of change and SLT supporting teachers to take ‘safe’ risks. Staff are demonstrably empowered and there is clear evidence of leadership at all levels.

Authentic teacher leadership has had a profound effect on teachers as learners and subsequently on the children as learners. Staff are deeply engaged in professional learning opportunities in and beyond their school community. This model of building leadership capacity is a strong sustainable model which empowers teachers as leaders.

The learning culture is clearly underpinned by the professional courage of staff who ask critical questions. This builds an ‘authentic community of learning’, where teachers work with, and for, each other in a culture of trust. Professional dialogue is privileged and through flexibility of the working time agreement, space and time has been created for professional learning. All teachers are now in a position where they willingly undertake, share and provide professional learning opportunities for each other. Collaborative approach should continue to be developed to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and learning.

1. Learning by enquiry

Enquiry as a stance pervades the Eyemouth culture. There is a supportive and empowering culture and a clear articulation between professional reading and practice. Staff and pupils feel empowered to take risks and through this feel their needs are being met. It is evident that the teaching staff have an enquiry-as-stance approach to teaching and learning.

This professional learning model actively promotes opportunities, formal and informal, to share professional learning. The learners are involved in enquiry by giving feedback to support the learning of their teachers.

1. Learning that deepens knowledge and understanding

There is a wide diversity of professional learning opportunities which promotes teacher agency and pervades the learning community. Professional reading and the lesson evaluation toolkit are very helpful for staff to reflect on, demonstrate and celebrate their progress and to define their next steps in their professional learning journey. Teachers as learners is a very positive role model for all learners. The value placed on professional learning is demonstrated by all staff who show a commitment to improving their own learning so they can impact in a positive way on the learning of their learners.

1. Learning as collaborative

There is a strong collaborative approach to professional learning at Eyemouth High School which should be continued to be further developed. There is a very strong community of learners where teachers’ successes are regularly shared. Staff self-evaluation, reflection, coaching and mentoring and external speakers is also used proactively to enhance the learning of teaching staff. The panel was impressed by the initiatives that involve parents and the wider community to support learners in many wider aspects of learning.

The voices of partners and young learners are listened to and taken account of, developing a positive ethos which builds an authentic learning culture. The language used across the school community is consistent and understood by all; it is forward thinking and empowers all the members of the school community. The care of pupils is also underpinned by literature and pupil voice.

Partnership working is also highly valued. The school has worked closely with partners to ensure the pupils at Eyemouth High School appreciate the wider aspects of education.

1. **Conclusion**

The panel would like to thank Eyemouth High School for the work they put in preparing for our visit and the warm welcome and hospitality we received throughout the day. We appreciated the honest and professional input and the willingness to engage with us as we built up a picture of the school community. The voice of the teachers was clearly heard and the pride in their schools was consistently demonstrated.

1. **Outcome of Panel**

The panel agreed that Eyemouth High School be successfully awarded the Excellence in Professional Learning: Award for a School.