

Customer Service Excellence Commercial in Confidence



Assessment Report

Date:

Organisation	Mintlaw Academy
Certificate Number	16/2481
Date of next Surveillance	07/03/2018
Duration of next Surveillance	1.25
Legal Status	Public

Assessor name
On behalf of Centre for Assessment Ltd



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Introduction

Mintlaw Academy is a 6-year local authority comprehensive secondary school with a current roll of approximately 750 pupils. It serves the rural area of Central Buchan in which are a number of villages, namely Mintlaw, Longside, Strichen, New Pitsligo, New Deer, Maud, Old Deer, Stuartfield, Auchnagatt and Fetterangus.

The people of Central Buchan appreciate the fact that there is a secondary school to serve their community and hold the school in high regard. It is a co-educational, non-denominational school and does not teach by means of the Gaelic language.

The school was opened in 1981 with a projected roll of approximately 600 and expanded steadily through the 1980s and 1990s up to 990 in 1995.

The Young People who study at the School are the primary customers with Parents/ Carers and the wider community also being key customers or stakeholders.

The key objective for the assessment was to establish whether or not Mintlaw Academy meets the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

No additional objectives were agreed with the client. The assessment covers Mintlaw Academy in its entirety.

Executive Summary

Overall impression

It was the Assessor's opinion that having conducted the assessment that Mintlaw Academy was meeting the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard. The assessor found a strong correlation between documentary, verbal and observed evidence during this assessment process.

The organisation continues to demonstrate a very clear focus on understanding and meeting the needs and preferences of customers and Mintlaw Academy is a service that provides high levels of customer service.

Mintlaw Academy has high levels of customer satisfaction and academic achievement and attainment and this was confirmed by a range of surveys, other consultative methodologies and in discussion with a wide range of stakeholders during the assessment.

Stakeholders were pleased to note that the School has become increasingly successful over the past few years and that its status in the wider community has grown as a result of this. During the assessment, stakeholders wished to stress that the 'newly' appointed Head Teacher has settled well into the post and was performing well, having developed a clear vision for the future and involving parents/ carers, pupils and staff in developing the vision and strategic plan for the School.

The leadership of the School is very supportive of raising the aspirations of pupils, staff and the wider community and this is having a positive impact through a strong ethos of target setting, review and continuous improvement at all levels.

Staff are encouraged to take leading roles in this continuous improvement culture and to look at ways of improving the teaching and learning taking place at the School. Staff discussed how the distributive leadership style was developing them and involving them in improvement activities.

In terms of engagement and involvement of customers both parents/ carers and pupils expressed a view that they have a meaningful input to the decision making process in a variety of ways.

Throughout the assessment, the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team, as well as other staff, were keen to learn from any issues coming from the Customer Service Excellence process.

Strengths

1. Delivery Standards (4.1.2) - Compliance Plus You have further improved your Quality Assurance and evaluation of performance in relation to learning and teaching over the past year. There is a strong ethos of measuring current attainment and achievement and comparing this to projections and targets then developing any action plans required.

A key factor here is that you are monitoring existing performance at all levels from School level, through faculties, subjects and to individual teaching and learning interventions as well as for pupil cohorts and individual pupils.

In the past year, you have extended the learning visits to include input and evaluation from pupils to assist in the further development of learning and teaching in ways that are meaningful to customers.

Even before becoming a pupil at Mintlaw Academy, staff are working more closely with Primary Schools to better understand any particular needs of groups and individual pupils and understanding their 'performance'.

You have involved a wide range of stakeholders including parents/ carers and Community Learning and Development partners in the evaluation of the School against all 15 of the 'How Good Is Our School' (HGIOS) 4th Edition and this has been fed into the Strategic and Three Year plans.

Pupils will be involved in March 2017, in evaluating the School against the HGIOS indicators and this will also be used in the monitoring and development process.

In summary, you clearly monitor performance at all levels within the School and then set appropriate and challenging targets which are monitored and remedial action taken wherever required.

Your academic attainment has also been improving on a consistent basis over the last few years and this continues

2. **Customer Insight (1.1.1 and 1.1.2)** In discussions with a full range of stakeholders and from evidence provided to the assessor, it was clear that staff have a detailed awareness and understanding of the needs and preferences of individual pupils. This included the ongoing development of the transition arrangements with feeder Primary Schools prior to pupils joining Mintlaw Academy and continues throughout their time at the school. Pupils mentioned that the increasingly comprehensive transition programme including the 'Trust Programme' was increasingly effective. Pupils noted that they believed staff knew and treated them as individuals and often tailored teaching to meet their specific needs
3. **Engagement and Consultation (1.2.2)** Pupils are consulted with and involved in the running of the School in a number of ways including the Pupil Senate, Annual Pupil Survey, Follow-Up pupil surveys, course/ unit evaluations, learning charter development and the learning visit process conducted by the Senior Leadership Team
4. **Engagement and Consultation (1.2.2)** Parents/ carers are involved through parents evening surveys, parental comment slips, Parent Council, Head Teacher regular and planned surgeries and the Parent Conference
5. **Engagement and Consultation (1.2.2)** A number of stakeholders praised the Head Teacher for her effective leadership and willingness to involve the whole School community
6. **Customer Satisfaction (1.3.5)** You were again able to provide evidence to demonstrate that you have made changes to your service as a result of analysing the customer journeys undertaken by customers. There were many examples of this, such as the closer relationships between the School and the feeder primaries that were effective in making the pupil transition to High School more effective and less stressful
7. **Leadership, Policy and Culture (2.1.1)** A number of stakeholders discussed the ways in which you worked with others such as Further Education Colleges to ensure that pupils receive teaching in ways that are more meaningful and that meets their specific needs and preferences
8. **Leadership, Policy and Culture (2.1.2)** You have continued to use customer insight from a variety of sources including staff, parents and the pupils to prioritise developments. A number of examples were evidenced including the feedback from the Pupil Senate/ Council that directly influenced refurbishment work on the toilet facilities, the School vision, Three-Year Plan and other refurbishment works. A number of pupils informed the Assessor that the Head Teacher openly communicated with pupils and this was felt to improve her awareness of any challenges facing individual pupils
9. **Leadership, Policy and Culture (2.1.6)** You empower and encourage employees to actively promote and participate in the customer-focused culture of your organisation. An example of this is the way in which staff at all levels are positively encouraged to lead up groups looking at a variety of aspects of the teaching and learning experience. This was mentioned when the Assessor was speaking to staff as being increasingly positive and having a positive impact on staff and their careers. There are also several career development opportunities available at the School which is supported by the Senior Leadership Team

10. Quality of Information (3.2.1). Pupils indicated that several staff were using e-communications effectively and allowing pupils to send study questions to them through e-mail and they were having responses back quickly
11. Quality of Information (3.2.3) Parents/ carers and pupils mentioned the increasing use of Twitter and the School Website to provide and host information, which was universally welcomed
12. Quality of Information (3.2.3) Pupils spoke very favourably about a supportive learning community where younger pupils were supported by more senior pupils. Senior pupils believed that the more comprehensive and longer term transition arrangements were increasingly effective and noted that the 'Trust Programme' would potentially offer increasing value over coming years as those involved make their way through the School
13. Access (3.3.1) You have continued to offer various ways in which pupils may access your services through improved subject choice as well as in terms of accessing provision from other sources including colleges and other providers. You have made use of the School portacabins to provide additional choices by working alongside Community Education partners
14. Access (3.3.1) Pupils spoke favourably about the support offered by teaching staff in terms of additional study and help with homework. Many of pupils and parents/ carers acknowledged that staff often provide support over and above that expected
15. Access (3.3.1) Pupils spoke of a wide range of extracurricular activities available to them and felt this was of great importance to them
16. Access (3.3.3) You have installed additional CCTV cameras in stairwell areas to improve and monitor safety
17. Co-operative working with other providers, partners and communities (3.4.1 and 3.4.2) You have developed many partnerships to improve the service available to your customers and where relevant have clearly articulated processes, responsibilities and time frames to ensure all parties have a shared view of progress and accountability. The Assessor was able to discuss this during the Assessment and was able to speak with staff from Community Education who are based 'on campus' and who provide educational opportunities to some pupils
18. Timely Outcomes (5.2.3 and 5.2.4) You have worked to provide effective joined up working with partners both inside and outside of the school to support pupil learning and teaching in the best way for that individual. You have, through your guidance system, provided a 'one stop shop' approach to pupils and parents to prevent 'customer shuttling' and improve accountability. The accessibility and effectiveness of your guidance and support systems was mentioned by both parents/ carers and pupils at this assessment
19. You have benefited from a range of additional equipment such as audio-visual equipment, lighting and workshop machinery over the past year
20. You have installed a new laser printer in the Faculty of Technology

Areas for Development

Mintlaw Academy should be congratulated on its performance against the CSE Standard. The Assessor however would like the organisation to examine the following areas prior to the next visit in March 2018.

1.3.1 – (Partial Compliance) - Customer Satisfaction. Although you have measures or proxies for 'satisfaction' in place, you do not directly measure customer satisfaction

2.1.5 – (Partial Compliance) - Leadership, Policy and Culture. You should protect customer data and information that you store. During the assessment, the Assessor observed that the Medical Room door was unlocked and within the room there was personal data and information that was readily accessible

5.3.3 – (Partial Compliance) – Achieve Timely Delivery. You were not able to fully demonstrate that your performance in relation to timeliness and quality of service compares well with that of similar organisations

1.2.1 - (Development Area) – Engagement and Consultation. Some pupils felt that meetings of the Pupil Senate and other similar bodies should be programmed for the full academic year and only changed in emergencies to allow pupils to better prepare for the meetings and to demonstrate their importance

1.2.1 - (Development Area) – Engagement and Consultation. You may wish to further develop the planned nature of your consultation through the development of a consultation and engagement planner to support your consultation and engagement strategy

3.2.1– (Development Area) – Quality of Information. Some pupils felt that there is a need to refresh pupil knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities and School Values on a more frequent basis

3.3.3 – (Development Area) – Access. You should consider improving the availability of running water and soap products in pupil toilets as this may represent a hygiene risk

3.3.3 – (Development Area) – Access. You should consider improving the initial impression of your building through replacement of a cracked door glass panel and School sign

3.3.3 – (Development Area) – Access. All stakeholders agreed that the School Library represented a resource that should be modernised and developed as soon as possible. The Senior Leadership Team is aware of this challenge and has provisional plans in place to address this

3.3.3 – (Development Area) – Access. Some pupils indicated that you should look to improve the flow of pupils around the School perhaps by emphasising any 'one way' systems or improving directional information

Additional areas for development not assigned to CSE Elements

1. Pupils indicated that they felt the Library should increase its holdings of such as Exam Papers (Past Papers) and resources to aid study

2. Pupils expressed a view that Internet provision for pupils should be extended as the current provision is not sufficient to meet their needs. In addition, pupils felt that there were insufficient Personal Computing resources available to meet the demands of classes and individual learners. The Senior Leadership were aware of this and had some actions planned to address this issue

Surveillance Visit 2 On the next surveillance visit, the Assessor would like updates on the following areas:

- a) The partial Compliances noted above
- b) The development areas noted above
- c) Changes to your website and social media
- d) Changes to the use of GLO and other similar tools
- e) Upgrade of library facilities into a learning hub
- f) Enhanced toilet facilities particularly in relation to accessible toilets
- g) Arts and F3 Smartboards
- h) Drainage works at Football pitches
- i) Therapeutic Garden developments

Summary of findings against Customer Service Excellence

Criterion 1 - CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Throughout the surveillance visit, it was clear from observation, discussions with the Head Teacher, the Senior Leadership Team, staff, pupils and parents/ carers that there are high levels of customer insight at Mintlaw Academy. Staff at Mintlaw Academy have a very high level of understanding in relation to the needs and preferences of both customer groups and individual customers. The organisation consults with customers before they become a customer, often through the evolving and comprehensive transition programme, and throughout the ongoing customer relationship whilst a pupil or parent/ carer is at the School. In this way and in observing socioeconomic and demographic data as well as through effective partnership working with other partners, the organisation has good insight into both potential and existing customers. Pupils highlighted the fact that the Head Teacher knew them and that staff personalised the service delivered to meet their needs.

In discussions with a range of staff, the Assessor continuously saw evidence of staff making decisions influenced by their customer insight in ways that would best meet the customer's needs and preferences. Their detailed insight is also used when working with partner organisations to ensure a strong customer focus is also prevalent when work is conducted by others. Some examples of this included School staff advocating for customers and ensuring that their needs and preference were understood by other providers and delivered in meaningful ways. There was strong evidence of working to best meet the changing needs of individual pupils.

The School continues to use a range of baseline, monitoring and tracking tools to ensure, where possible, that their service is tailored.

There are some opportunities for development around the measurement of 'satisfaction' across the full breadth of your customer base.

Criterion 2 - THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

The organisation is led by a senior team that is committed to customer service and excellence. In discussion with the Head Teacher it was clear that she wishes to use the Customer Service Excellence Standard as a framework to drive excellent customer service and to raise aspirations and performance in this area of work alongside his overall continuous improvement journey for the School. The Head Teacher has involved a number of stakeholders in developing the vision, aims and objectives of the School and in the development of a Three-Year plan.

All stakeholders advised the Assessor that there is a very open culture and one where staff are encouraged to speak openly about any challenges and to put forward ideas for service improvement. There is a 'no blame' culture supported by an organisation that is committed to 'learning from mistakes'. This is supplemented by several staff across the School being given development opportunities in leading groups looking at continually improving the learning and teaching taking place. There is a strong distributive leadership ethos in place that empowers and develops staff

Criterion 3 - INFORMATION AND ACCESS

You have made increasing use of your website and Social Media where appropriate to communicate and provide easy access to information. You make use of a range of leaflets and brochures as well as noticeboards to cascade information to stakeholders.

Pupils and parents/ carers mentioned the increased use of such as the website, Twitter and email and were very supportive and welcoming of this.

You work closely with appropriate partners to improve pupil access to wider learning opportunities and in providing the most flexible pathways possible to suit the needs and preferences of pupils. This is a strong point within the School where it is recognised that learning and development should, where possible, be tailored to the needs of individual pupils. The Assessor was able to discuss this with a staff member from the Community Education service during this visit.

There are some areas for development around property and estates issues.

Criterion 4 - DELIVERY

You continue to perform well against your key performance targets/ indicators and monitor these on a regular basis. The School reports on performance and any performance dips together with remedial action if appropriate.

You use the 'Learning Visits' which consist of classroom observation and resultant feedback to identify and learn from Good Practice as well as to inform staff development opportunities.

There was a further strengthening of a culture of self-evaluation this year as well as greater involvement of pupils in providing feedback in a variety of ways including involving them in the learning visits system.

In terms of academic attainment School performance overall continues to improve.

In general terms, it was pleasing to note that staff, pupils, parents/ carers and other stakeholders all confirmed that the School’s attainment and achievement levels had improved quite considerably over recent years and this has led to improved confidence and a sense of achievement across the School community and beyond.

Efforts are made to use reliable data to set appropriate targets for pupils that are stretching but achievable and to help pupils monitor performance as a means of refining their own learning.

Criterion 5 - TIMELINESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICE

The organisation clearly values its pupils and other stakeholders and as such has developed customer service targets and has good performance against these. The further development through the ‘Mintlaw Charter’ which involved stakeholders in a meaningful and detailed way has been maintained.

There is some scope for further benchmarking of your performance against your quality of service standards compared to other similar organisations

Scoring

- To achieve Customer Service Excellence an organisation may not have any non-compliances
- To achieve Customer Service Excellence organisations must demonstrate compliance with each of the criteria. To do so the organisation must achieve full compliance or compliance plus in at least 80% of the elements contained in each of the criteria
- The maximum number of partial compliances allowed within each criterion is shown in the table below

Criterion	Number of Elements	Maximum number of partial compliances	Actual number of partial compliances	Actual number of major compliance plus elements
1	11	2	1	0
2	11	2	1	0
3	12	2	0	0
4	13	3	0	0
5	10	2	1	0

Conclusions

Assessment

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for assessors by the Cabinet Office the Assessor was satisfied beyond any doubt that Mintlaw Academy meets the requirements of Customer Service Excellence. The Assessor recommends to the Panel that Mintlaw Academy, be recognised under the standard. On behalf of Centre for Assessment Ltd. the assessor would like to congratulate all the staff of Mintlaw Academy on their achievement.

Assessor Name: Robert Sullivan

Date of report: 11 March 2017