

Customer Service Excellence



Assessment Record and Reports



Assessment Overview

Name of Organisation
MINTLAW ACADEMY

Scope of Assessment
The Scope of the Assessment was to establish whether or not the organisation meets the requirements of the standard.

This document will be the key record of your organisation's assessment and surveillances. It will cover the whole of your organisation's journey from the first desktop review to the final surveillance activity of this assessment cycle.

Record of visits

Assessment Reference	Assessment Type	Desk Top Analysis date(s)	Date(s) of Assessment	Name of Assessor
18/1019	3 Year Assessment	05/03/2019	19/03/2019	Robert Sullivan
Click here to enter text.	Surveillance 1		Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.
Click here to enter text.	Surveillance 2		Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.

Section 1 - Initial/ 3 Year Assessment Report

Introduction

Mintlaw Academy is a 6-year local authority comprehensive secondary school with a current roll of approximately 770 pupils. It serves the rural area of Central Buchan in which are several villages, namely Mintlaw, Longside, Strichen, New Pitsligo, New Deer, Maud, Old Deer, Stuartfield, Auchnagatt and Fetterangus.

The School area is such that 10% of young people are entitled to free school meals, Mintlaw Academy receives a substantial degree of Pupil Equity Funding from the Scottish Government. In May 2018, it was allocated £58,800 and these monies contributing towards a full-time Acting Depute post with a focus on “Closing the Attainment Gap”, a two days per week, Acting Cluster Numeracy post to raise attainment in Numeracy across the Mintlaw Cluster and funding to enhance the Health and Wellbeing provision, specifically targeting attendance.

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 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.

Mintlaw Academy continues to demonstrate a very clear focus on understanding and meeting the needs and preferences of customers is a service that provides high levels of customer service. Throughout this assessment visit, stakeholders noted that staff had a good understanding of the needs and preferences of both individual pupils and year groups.

Mintlaw Academy has increasingly 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.

Pupils and parents/ carers 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 because of this. During the assessment, stakeholders wished to stress that the Head Teacher has continued to set a clear direction for the School and is ambitious in achieving her vision.

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 self-assessment and continuous improvement culture and to look at ways of improving the teaching and learning taking place at the School. At this assessment, staff again discussed how this distributive leadership style was developing them and involving them in improvement activities. The Assessor saw evidence of non-promoted staff being supported and encouraged to take on leadership roles.

It was very clear at this assessment, that staff feel empowered to take on specific tasks that add value to the School and that help develop both staff and pupils.

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. Parents/ carers spoke of an open and accessible leadership style. Pupils and parents felt that their input through the Pupil Senate and Parent's Council was worthwhile, welcomed and taken full account of in the decision-making process.

Pupils were impressed that the issues raised by them as part of the CSE process had been successfully addressed by the leadership team. As an example of this pupils spoke of the improvements to the availability of soap products within toilet areas.

In terms of ongoing estate improvements, the planning and funding for the extensive development of the Learning Plaza was spoken about enthusiastically by all stakeholders during this visit. The Learning Plaza was visited at this assessment and its light, airy and colourful environment appears conducive to effective learning, creativity and innovation. All pupils, parents and staff spoken to were very pleased with this area.

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. It is again commendable that great efforts were made to benefit from the Areas for Development identified in the last report and these have been implemented successfully.

The school leadership has a strong continuous improvement ethos that permeates throughout the school.

Strengths

Compliance Plus Elements

Customer Identification (1.1.2) You use a range of opportunities and techniques to gather information about the needs and preferences of pupil cohorts, year groups, subject specific and individual pupils. Prior to attending Mintlaw Academy, you work with colleagues in Primary Schools through an effective and longitudinal transition programme to determine specific needs. The involvement of pupils in target setting and monitoring and in the quality assurance process also feeds into your customer insight

Customer Identification (1.1.3) You make particular efforts to identify and support those hard-to-reach and disadvantaged pupils and develop your service in response to their needs. Your guidance service works closely with the staff team to ensure that appropriate insight into the needs and preferences of such pupils is shared leading to a more supportive service. You make use of your pupil monitoring systems to identify any required interventions to support the learning and teaching process. Where pupils require additional support to improve educational access and opportunity you take appropriate action

Leadership, Policy and Culture (2.1.1) There is a strong leadership focus of Quality Standards and Service. This is demonstrated by the articulation of a clear vision for the school driven from the Head Teacher. Pupils and others discussed their involvement in the rationalisation and refinement of the Core Values of the school. These are very customer focused and involved stakeholders in their development. Stakeholders described the leadership as stable whilst being creative and innovative and very pupil focus which a strong ethos of aspiration. You advocate for pupils even when they are prospective customers at Primary School and take early action to plan for changes to facilities, teaching and other services to support their learning. You have practices in place to support those with additional support needs of varying types

Leadership, Policy and Culture (2.1.6) You are very enthusiastic and diligent in developing staff and increasing job satisfaction through empowerment. There is a strong focus on employees taking part in the customer-focused culture of your organisation and making best use of their skills, knowledge and experience. An example of this is the way in which staff are positively encouraged to lead up groups looking at a variety of aspects of the teaching and learning experience. Staff described how the majority of your Teaching and Learning Groups are led by non-promoted staff. In addition, staff are encouraged to develop ideas for improvement and are to take this forward within agreed parameters

Information and Access (3.2.3) - Compliance Plus You have again significantly improved the range, content and quality of information provided to ensure it is relevant and meets the needs of customers. Once more stakeholders were impressed and the detail and diversity of your information provision and its ease of access.

The stakeholders mentioned the increased use of electronic communications and such as the Groupcall Xpressions as being important and very welcomed. An important aspect of this is that parents/ carers can utilise this technology to communicate quickly with School staff, it is genuinely an enabler to two-way communications. The rural location of many pupil's home made this form of communication important. Some noted that this had been particularly useful where the rural nature of the School and poor weather

conditions had made attendance and school opening particularly challenging. Pupils discussed the use particularly of Twitter, e-mail and MS Teams and how they often communicated with staff in relation to such as homework and often received fast responses from teaching staff. Staff are increasingly using multimedia and making this available to pupils to enhance the learning experience

Information and Access (3.4.1) - Compliance Plus You have increasingly effective partnerships with a wide range of partner organisations to the benefit of pupils. You have significantly built on your relationships with the wider business community that offers pupils opportunities to experience the workplace across a variety of business environments. You have increased opportunities for work experience and for vocational education opportunities too. Pupils spoke of the excellent opportunities to take part in business competitions, spend time in large and small organisations and how they benefited from these excellent opportunities. In addition, your ongoing work with Colleges and other providers has improved the choice of relevant opportunities for your customers. Your work with partners in the Higher Education sector was also worthy of note. At the assessment, the Assessor was able to speak with providers of vocational opportunities, work experience and employers

Delivery Standards (4.1.2) - Compliance Plus You have continued to develop and enhance 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. Your use of data and interrogation of that data was worthy of note.

You monitor 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. Pupils are involved in this process making it more meaningful to them.

You continue 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. This involvement of pupils in the evaluation of the learning and teaching process and related standards is key to the ongoing enhancement of customer insight and continuous improvement. Stakeholders spoke of the detail and importance given to professional and pupil feedback.

Even before becoming a pupil at Mintlaw Academy, staff are continuing to work closely with Primary Schools to better understand any needs of groups and individual pupils and understanding their 'performance'. This also improves customer insight.

Pupils are involved in leadership groups feeding into whole-school developments and improvement actions.

In summary, you continue to proactively monitor performance at all levels within the School and set appropriate and challenging targets which are monitored, and remedial action taken wherever required. You have a continuous improvement ethos and are working to improve the use of performance data in Years 1-3.

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

Strengths

1. Customer Insight (1.1.1 and 1.1.2) In terms of understanding both current and prospective customers, the characteristics and needs, the Assessors benefited from an in-depth description from the Head Teacher. Through the use of Local Authority and other partner data, the Senior Leadership team have a clear understanding of the socio-economic and demographic environment that the school serves. The Assessor spoke with a range of stakeholders and from this, 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 includes the continually evolving transition arrangements with feeder Primary Schools prior to pupils joining Mintlaw Academy and continues throughout their time at the school. Stakeholders were able to compare and contrast this with other schools and found the Mintlaw experience to be better. 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. Pupils mentioned their involvement in the understanding and practical implementation of the School's Values as important. Your recent work on rationalising and improving understanding of the Values was discussed by staff and pupils during this visit.
2. Customer Insight (1.1.3) You identify pupils who have particular needs and adapt your service to meet these needs. Even as prospective customers, you identify pupils and amend your transition and support arrangements. At school, you assess pupil needs and make changes to support those pupils. This was evidenced and discussed with staff and parents at this assessment visit. Several parents volunteered details of the enhanced and tailored support afforded to their children and were very satisfied with that support
3. Engagement and Consultation (1.2.2) Pupils continue to be consulted with and involved in the running of the School in several ways including the Pupil Senate, Pupil Survey, Follow-Up pupil surveys, course/ unit evaluations, learning charter development and the learning visit process conducted by the Senior Leadership Team. Pupils and parents spoke of their input and of the fact they felt it to be worthwhile and meaningful.
4. Customer Satisfaction (1.3.5) You have a strong culture of self and peer evaluation and you act to improve the service as a result of your evaluations. You were able to provide significant and varied evidence to demonstrate that you have made changes to your service because of analysing the customer journeys undertaken by customers. This includes such as the significant redevelopment of the School Library area into a new Learning Plaza which arose from constructive feedback on the previous Library provision
5. Leadership, Policy and Culture (2.1.1) Stakeholders discussed the ways in which you worked with others such as Learning and Development and Further Education Colleges to ensure that pupils receive teaching in ways that are more meaningful and that meets their specific needs and preferences. In addition, there has been significant work put into developing relationships with Business Partners as well as Work

Experience opportunities. The Assessor spoke with stakeholders involved in these areas of work at this assessment visit and these partners had a good understanding of pupil needs and how they could best develop meaningful ongoing partnerships to the benefit of pupils

6. 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. Several examples were evidenced during this assessment visit. These include the development of a Learning Plaza, the extension of Wi-Fi, the use of 'bring your own device' policies and practice, introduction of a 'taxi rank' and bus management systems, ongoing refurbishment and redecoration and the funding of improvements to the playing fields
7. Leadership, Policy and Culture (2.1.6) There is a strong focus on employees actively promoting and participating in the customer-focused culture of your organisation. An example of this is the way in which staff 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. Staff spoken of the ways in which the majority of your Teaching and Learning Groups are led by non-promoted staff. In addition, staff are encouraged to develop ideas for improvement and are to take these forwards within agreed parameters.
8. Quality of Information (3.2.1). All stakeholders mentioned that information has further improved over the past year. There has been a significant increase in the use of e-communications where appropriate to improve on the speed and flow of information internally within the School as well as to pupils, parents and carers. This, and the use of Twitter, was also mentioned by parents/ carers who noted that pupils often received very speedy responses from teaching staff even outside of normal working hours. The Assessor viewed the website and social media channels at this assessment
9. Quality of information (3.2.3) You have further improved your communications through a refreshed website which involved consultation with stakeholders in its development and is now more comprehensive and easily accessible. You have also improved and expanded the use of MS Teams as a way of communicating with pupils in particular. Pupils spoke about the use of MS Teams enthusiastically and noted it gave them access to staff even outside of school hours where needed
10. Quality of Information (3.2.3) Pupils re-iterated this year that the School is a very supportive learning community where younger pupils are supported by more senior pupils. Senior pupils believe that the more comprehensive and longer-term transition arrangements were increasingly effective and noted that the 'Trust Programme' is now delivering a better experience as pupils make their way through the School. They spoke of how the introduction of the School Values at an early point is useful in establishing rights and responsibilities
11. 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. The the ongoing development of vocational education, work experience and the better links with business partners is delivering added value and increased ways for pupils to access better education and vocational opportunities relevant to their needs and preferences and to the marketplace
12. Access (3.3.1) Pupils spoke enthusiastically and 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. The increased

use of e-communications appears to have further improved the opportunity to access teaching staff and the speed of response. Pupils spoke of how MS Teams was being used to really improve pupil-staff communications

13. Access (3.3.1) Pupils spoke with vigour and enthusiasm about the diverse range of extracurricular activities available to them and felt this added value to the school experience
14. Access (3.3.3) You continue to redecorate and refurbish areas of the school as well as to carry out required maintenance. This year, the completion of your new Learning Plaza including the Library and learning and teaching space requires a mention in this report. Stakeholders were involved in the planning of this space and spoke very enthusiastically about the result and its impact on the pupil and staff experience
15. Access (3.3.3) The Assessor was able to see the development of the outdoor garden area following its recent development and opening
16. Co-operative working with other providers, partners and communities (3.4.1, 3.4.2) You continue to work with a wide range of partners to support your pupils. At the parent/ partner session, the Assessor was able to hear from several stakeholders involved in apprenticeship schemes and work experience placements. In addition, you work with a wide range of partners to develop improved insight and use this to provide more tailored and personalised services where appropriate
17. Delivery Standards (4.1.2) You monitor your achievements for attainment and achievement and do so in an increasingly refined and targeted way. You discussed and evidenced the use of data in monitoring, evaluating and developing the service as a result of your performance management systems. You have started to roll out more comprehensive ways of utilising performance management in years 1-3 to support your learning and teaching
18. Timely Outcomes (5.2.3 and 5.2.4) You provide effective joined up working with partners internally and externally 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. As already mentioned, parents/ carers proactively mentioned this good work and its importance when speaking with the Assessor

Areas for Development

Mintlaw Academy should be congratulated on its performance against the CSE Standard. You made significant progress on Areas for Development highlighted in the 2018 report. The Assessor however would like the organisation to examine the following areas prior to the next visit in 2020.

Partial Compliance:

Achieved Timely Delivery (5.3.2) You do not currently publish your performance against your response times standards

Areas for Development

Engagement and Consultation (1.2.1) You currently have a defined consultation strategy. You may wish to consider the development of a consultation schedule outlining the types of consultation methods, consultees, frequency and time of consultation, representativeness and robustness and any reviews undertaken

Co-operative working with other providers, partners and communities (3.4.1)

The following points relate to the provision of School Meals within Mintlaw Academy. These points were raised during discussions with stakeholders at this assessment visit. It is accepted that School Meals are provided by another Local Authority service, however you should look to be involved in discussions around the service provision to assist your customers.

Some parents/ carers indicated that there was no future menu availability to allow the pupil or parent to make decisions on whether to prepare packed lunches or make alternative lunch arrangements

Some parents and pupils indicated that for pupils who were vegans/ vegetarians or had dietary requirements there was a lack of choice or no provision.

Some parents noted that the food provided did not allow for flexibility, one example being the 'sandwiches are overloaded with butter' and that it would not be possible to ask for a sandwich without butter

Parents questioned the use of plastic utensils from an environmental protection and recycling perspective

Parents observed that the School Meals provision was not flexible. As such at Prelim Exam times, pupils can be left without any meal provision at an important time for them

Access (3.3.3) Parents observed that the areas reserved for lunches were not the most attractive and that this may result in pupils not using the school meals service. They felt that a more modern facility would help increase the uptake of School Meals

Summary of findings against Customer Service Excellence

Criterion 1 - CUSTOMER INSIGHT

In discussion with a variety of stakeholders it was apparent that you have high level of understanding in relation to the needs and preferences of both customer groups and individual customers. It is impressive that even before pupils become pupils of Mintlaw Academy you take early action to identify their specific needs and preferences. The organisation consults with customers at transition stage, through the evolving and comprehensive transition programme, and throughout the time a pupil or parent/ carer is a customer of the School. Pupils highlighted the fact that the Head Teacher knew

them, and that staff personalised the service delivered to meet their needs as key attributes to their enjoyment and value from their education at Mintlaw Academy.

In closer working with business and other partners, staff have better developed their understanding of the skill needs of employers, school leavers and of the young workforce in general. This is fed into curriculum development and in other ways to support effective leaver destinations. The Assessor was able to speak with providers of work experiences, vocational opportunities and local employers as part of the meeting with parents.

The discussion with a cross-section of both teaching and non-teaching staff it was clear that you have a very pupil focused organisation that look to providing the best educational and supportive environment for your customers.

The School continues to use a range of baseline, monitoring and tracking tools to inform action and, where possible, that the service is tailored to get the best attainment and achievement for pupils.

Criterion 2 - THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

To ensure a strong customer and continuous improvement ethos this must be driven from the top 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 again clear that she continues 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 the overall continuous improvement journey for the School. The Head Teacher has involved many stakeholders in developing the vision, aims and objectives of the School and in the development of a Three-Year plan. This year the Core Values have been rationalised and refined to improve understanding and focus. During this assessment pupils, parents and carers mentioned that they felt they were more directly involved in the operation and decision-making processes of the School

Once more, stakeholders told the Assessor that there is an 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 be a Learning Organisation.

There is a strong distributive leadership ethos in place that empowers and develops staff. This aspect of work came to the fore very strongly this year. Staff mentioned that the vast majority of the Learning and Teaching Groups were led by unpromoted staff to support their development and to drive improvement from the bottom up wherever possible. This usefully utilises the staff customer insight in developing policy and procedures.

Criterion 3 - INFORMATION AND ACCESS

You have further developed your information provision including your electronic communication systems. Your website and Social Media have been upgraded and improved and stakeholders have been directly involved in making recommendations for change. 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, Group Call and email and were very supportive and welcoming of this.

Staff and pupils were very enthusiastic about the increased use of collaborative software such as Microsoft Teams to improve internal communications as well as communication with pupils.

You work very 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 during this visit.

Criterion 4 – DELIVERY

You have continued 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 continue to 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. Importantly, pupils are directly involved in giving feedback and are integral to improving teaching and learning practice. Staff spoke of the rigour and detail of these visit and the fact that pupil feedback was taken seriously and had meaningful impacts of the teaching and learning process.

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 continue to improve, 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. You are working to further develop and better utilise performance data and analysis in Years 1-3.

Criterion 5 - TIMELINESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICE

As is apparent from the report, this is an organisation that values its customers and involves and engages them. The 'Mintlaw Charter' involves stakeholders in a meaningful and detailed way and the core values have been rationalised and refined to improve effectiveness.

You have again improved your benchmarking of your performance against your quality of service standards compared to other similar organisations over the past year. In addition, this and other benchmarking has been used more widely to improve the service provided.

Conclusions

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 they, 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.