Evaluation considerations

Guiding Principles

1. **Effectiveness:** Evaluation is essential to determine the true impact of any initiative. It helps to understand whether an intervention is beneficial, harmful, or neutral. Without evaluation, schools may continue using strategies that appear promising but do not deliver actual results.

2. **Efficiency**: Evaluating initiatives ensures that resources are used effectively, saving time and money. It helps schools focus on practices that yield the best outcomes, avoiding the continuation of less effective methods. This approach maximises the return on investment in educational interventions.

3. **Informed Decision-Making**: Careful evaluation guides future planning and decision-making. Understanding what works and what doesn't allow for better choices and improvements in educational strategies. Honest evaluation, despite its challenges, provides the necessary insights to refine and enhance educational practices for better student outcomes.

When schools attempt to evaluate a programme or intervention, they should consider several key aspects to ensure a comprehensive and effective evaluation:

Aspect to consider	Prompts
Evaluating impact	- Find out how each initiative/programme/intervention/idea entered the school - Check that efforts are not duplicated (multiple approaches that do similar things)
Objectives and goals	- Clearly define what the programme or intervention aims to achieve - Establish measurable outcomes that align with these objectives
Activities and involvement	- Detail the specific activities involved in the programme - Identify who participated (students, teachers, administrators) and when these activities took place
Implementation fidelity	- Assess whether the programme was delivered as intended (dosage, resources, delivery) - Document any modifications made to the intervention and assess their impact on fidelity and outcomes - Evaluate if the implementation was feasible and well-suited to the school's context
Baseline data	- Collect data on the initial state of the target outcomes before the intervention begins - Ensure this data provides a solid foundation for comparing changes post-intervention
Monitoring and data collection	- Establish ongoing monitoring processes to collect data throughout the intervention - Use various methods (surveys, tests, observations) to gather comprehensive information
Comparison groups	- If possible, use control or comparison groups to determine the intervention's impact more accurately - Ensure these groups are comparable to the intervention group to avoid bias

Analysis of impact	- Examine the changes that have occurred at various levels (system, school, student) - Distinguish between correlation and causation to attribute changes to the intervention accurately - Explore whether the intervention directly causes the outcome, or whether other factors involved
Qualitative and quantitative Data	- Use both qualitative data (interviews, focus groups) and quantitative data (test scores, attendance rates) to gain a full picture of the intervention's effects
Contextual factors	- Consider external factors that may influence the outcomes (tutors, existing school culture, school environment, parental engagement, students in receipt of multiple interventions, resource allocation, quality of delivery, training and staff) - Acknowledge these factors in the evaluation to understand their impact
Feedback and reflection	- Gather feedback from all stakeholders involved (students, teachers, parents) - Reflect on this feedback to understand different perspectives on the intervention's effectiveness
Reporting and dissemination	- Clearly report the findings of the evaluation, highlighting both successes and areas for improvement - Share the results with all stakeholders to ensure transparency and collective understanding
Sustainability and scalability	- Consider whether the programme can be sustained over time and scaled to other contexts - Evaluate the resources required for long-term implementation and potential expansion

By considering these aspects, schools can conduct thorough evaluations that provide valuable insights into the effectiveness, efficiency, and overall impact of their programmes and interventions.