



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

School Improvement, Quality Assurance & Accountability Framework

2017

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School Improvement, Quality Assurance & Accountability Framework

Overview

This paper proposes an integrated, comprehensive approach to school-based accountability and quality assurance arrangements which introduces a fresh approach to continuous monitoring and improving performance, in Maldivian schools.

The quality improvement and quality assurance framework proposed to be named as the **School Improvement, Quality Assurance & Accountability Framework (SIQAAF or SIQAA Framework)** will support the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Maldivian schools and their communities to identify and implement a shared vision for school improvement to create successful schools.

All schools can use the SIQAA Framework to improve their performance by engaging the school community and their peers in a cycle of performance feedback that includes performance planning, self-evaluation, review, and performance reporting. More comprehensively, each element of the SIQAA Framework will be linked to provide a coherent and streamlined means for schools to:

- understand their performance (self-evaluation and review)
- identify their vision and purpose and set goals and targets for improvement (school strategic plan)
- put into operation their improvement plans and manage resources (annual school improvement plan)
- report on their performance (annual report to the school community).

The SIQAA Framework is built on the relationships that exist within each school: those with the school board, school management, school staff and parents and the broader community in which the school is located. Shared responsibility, partnerships and transparency will be the key principles within the SIQAA Framework in supporting quality student outcomes.

School Principals and other leaders are central to this process, combining an understanding of their school's unique context with expertise in change management and instructional practice to guide continuous improvement. Working in partnership with their school community, school leaders are the key drivers in promoting change and building the collaborative relationships and accountability necessary for improving student outcomes.

This section gives an overview of the elements and underpinning principles of the SIQAA Framework. Subsequent sections provide more detailed information and implementation guidance on each of the SIQAAF elements.

Key Features of the New Approach

- Schools will engage in self-evaluation every year based on student performance assessment and school quality indicators

- School will prepare a three year school strategic plan, identify their vision and purpose and set goals and targets for improvement
- Based on the self-evaluation and in line with the three year school strategic plan, schools will prepare and put into operation their annual school improvement plan and manage resources
- Schools will demonstrate their accountability by reporting on their performance through an annual report to the school community and MoE.
- At least once every three years schools will undertake one of two types of review: peer review or priority review
- Schools undertaking a peer review will select at least two peers from across the system and an MoE accredited reviewer to conduct the review
- Exemplary practice will be shared across the system
- Schools undertaking a priority review will be supported by an independent review team that will carry out a four to five day intensive analysis of the school's performance
- Following a priority review, intervention and support may be initiated based on the diagnosed needs of the school
- A School Improvement Partners (SIPa) panel will be established by Quality Assurance Department (QAD) of MoE through which schools can enlist accredited reviewers and intervention specialists

Phased Implementation

The implementation of the new framework will take a phased approach where selected schools will start piloting the arrangements in early 2015. Most components of the new arrangements can start implementation in these pilot schools from 2016. Schools can start with undertaking their self-evaluation with QAD's support.

National Institute of Education (NIE) in partnership with QAD can facilitate and conduct the trainings required for implementation of the SIQAA Framework in the pilot schools.

From late 2016 onwards, with inputs from the pilot schools the SIQAA Framework implementation can be gradually rolled over to other schools in the country.

Introduction

The context of school improvement

Achieving excellence in schooling, like all fields of human endeavour, requires a commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance. Succeeding schools moving towards achieving excellence, direct their energies and resources towards the improvement of learning to maximise achievement and realise the potential of all students (OECD, 2009). They are committed to making a difference and doing things better. These schools use research and planning to ask questions and to evaluate practices impacting on student outcomes. Succeeding schools systematically gather data from a range of sources, plan for the future success of all learners and account for progress through reporting and validating their programs. They seek feedback and are confident to expose their actions to external review.



School improvement is about putting in place a set of well-tested processes for identifying and addressing the developmental needs of each school. Effective school improvement is about change that is driven by commitment to increase the learning outcomes of every student (ACT 2009). It requires a supportive environment where relationships and trust are developed. While the critical role of quality teaching in the pursuit of school improvement is irrefutable, the capacity of the school leadership team to build a professional learning environment and lead the change process is equally important.

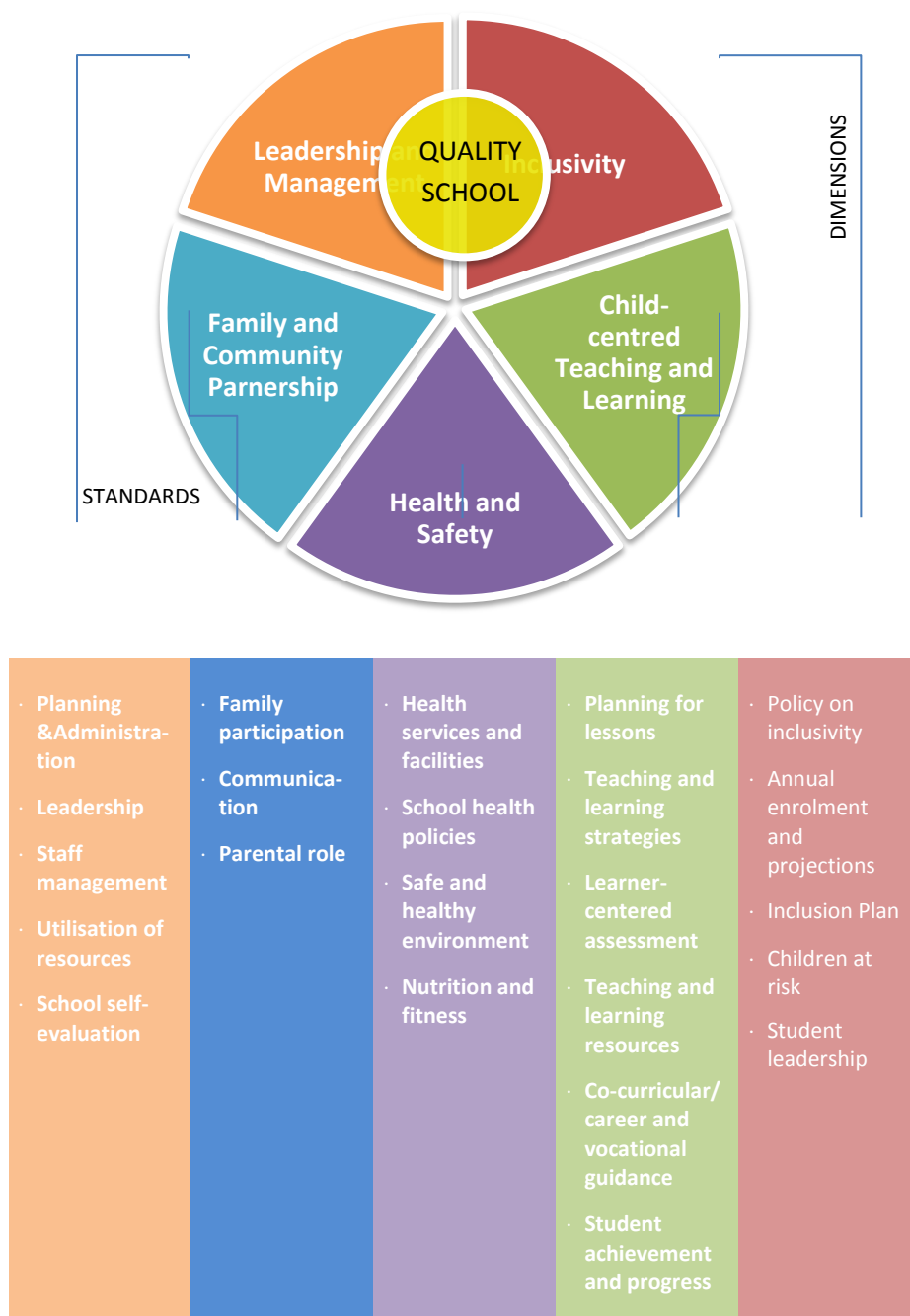
Strengthening Quality Assurance

Quality assurance helps to support schools and build expertise and capacity in the education system to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people. Through sharing, understanding and applying standards and expectations, quality assurance helps to raise standards and expectations and levels of consistency across teachers and schools. It is important in the planning and coordination of professional development activities that a partnership and inter-establishment approach is adopted to ensure cross-service and cross-sector working on standards and expectations.

Quality assurance in education is part of the day-to-day work of schools and central education authorities. Schools and MoE need a wide range of activities to ensure that high standards are maintained and outcomes improved for children and young people. These include monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

The development of a quality assurance framework has been one of the most important and innovative policy initiatives in the Maldivian school system with the focus on improving and ensuring school quality. The Child-friendly Baraabar School (CFBS) quality indicators were developed as an evaluative tool for addressing all key quality dimensions in the schools (MoE, 2010). It provides teachers, school leaders, parents and other school community members, as well as MoE with a practical tool for assessing the extent to which the various elements of “quality” are consistently and observably practised and developing action plans for improvement, where appropriate.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Child-friendly Baraabar School Quality Indicators



The CFBS quality indicators are categorised into five dimensions of education quality; inclusivity; child-centered teaching and learning; health and safety; family and community partnerships; and leadership and management. For each dimension there are identified standards of quality defined by specified indicators (Figure 1).

The implementation of CFBS framework demonstrates that a quality approach is currently being adopted in the Maldivian schools. However there is still the need to implement this effectively giving

due consideration to the capacity available in the atoll schools to carry out self-evaluations, as well as geographical limitations in carrying out regular external reviews. The CFBS quality indicators which are currently undergoing some review in terms of its implementation can be fully integrated into this new Framework as the main tool for school self-evaluation, as well as external monitoring and evaluation.

Ensuring Accountability

Developing an understanding of school performance and planning for improvement includes identifying the accountabilities and responsibilities of each member of the school community as well as central education players in the improvement process. To achieve high levels of educational outcomes, accountability related to student learning is the responsibility of individual teachers. Teachers need to be supported by strong school leadership and strong partnerships with parents and community members. Accountability for school improvement need to be shared with clear links between school level planning and individual principal and staff performance and development planning.

Planning at the school level should comprise of a medium term strategic plan which can be a three-year *school strategic plan* and an operational *annual school improvement plan*. Schools may choose to develop school policies and detailed project plans to underpin the annual school improvement plan. These plans need to focus on:

- curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment;
- staff development; and
- resource use

Individual performance and development planning for principals, teachers and educational support staff can focus on the role the individual will play in contributing to the achievement of the school's goals, targets and key improvement strategies and the targeted professional learning required for the support staff. Similarly, the school community, including the school board, has a role to play in school improvement by providing feedback and information which contributes to and endorses the school's planning and review process. This role clarity enables individuals to understand and articulate accountabilities and plan for improvement in a more strategic way.

Monitoring and Measuring Performance

Performance can be monitored and measured through achievement of milestones (outputs) and progress towards targets (outcomes). Milestones and targets must focus on local priorities and show clear connection to systemic and national outputs and outcomes. It is critical that information reported by schools is accurate and timely. Schools through an annual *self-evaluation* process can monitor and measure performance by comparing their results, appropriate to their context, with:

- achievement standards within National Assessments at the primary level and student achievements in O' Levels and A' Level exams at the secondary and higher secondary level;
- agreed national performance targets; and
- school improvement targets set against the quality indicators for CFBS or other achievement milestones set by the school.

Performance can be monitored and compared both at a point in time and also over time. Measuring performance over time can provide evidence of:

- impact of strategies and focused effort;
- rates of improvement, particularly in comparison to previous performance; and
- progress towards regional and national targets

In monitoring performance it is crucial that at the school level, principals and supervisory staff manage performance reviews and use the process to build staff capability. The review should include explicit leadership development, while positively focusing staff performance on student learning to align resources and professional learning. Such a process forms the foundation for the creation of a culture of inquiry which develops new capabilities and revolutionises teaching and learning. The core challenge is to establish classroom routines and practices that represent personalised, evidence based, focused teaching and learning. Those schools which are high performing, track student progress on a regular basis and can demonstrate through evidence based practice that they are adding value to each and every student

There also is the need to be in place a systematic process of *external review* of the schools, to monitor individual school's performance which can also play a critical role in monitoring the performance of the education system as a whole. Such reviews will collect evidence about the curriculum offered in each school, the instructional models used, and the role of student voice in the school, the quality of each school's governance and the nature of interactions with the community. External reviews can support whole-of-system learning through conducting thematic reviews that focus on the impact of particular programs or dimensions of professional practice.

Reporting evidence of performance

To complete the accountability cycle the schools have a responsibility to report to its community and MoE on its performance. Such reports provide an opportunity for the school board, leadership team, staff and students to reflect on the success of their improvement strategies and the allocation of resources, and inform planning for improvement in the future.



While schools can use a range of formal and informal means to communicate with their community, an *Annual School Report* can provide the mechanism for the school to report formally to its community, and MoE. The purpose of the report will be to:

- provide student performance and school achievement information to the school community
- record progress in meeting objectives and targets set out in the school plan
- provide evidence of improvement in the process of external validation
- fulfil reporting obligations required by MoE

Succeeding Schools

Research identifies *succeeding schools* or high performing quality schools as continuously improving schools. Succeeding schools demonstrate a commitment to on-going self-evaluation, evidence-informed practice and strategic planning. They have an unrelenting commitment to improving student performance.

All schools can be great schools and all schools can be high performing. It is with this expectation that schools seek to better understand their context and more confidently direct future attention to areas of need in order to deliver better outcomes. Reflection helps schools to focus on what matters and ask important questions, such as:

- How can this school help students become successful learners and informed citizens?
- How can this school support quality teaching and leadership?
- How can this school develop and sustain strong partnerships?
- How can this school improve outcomes for all students?

While succeeding schools have unique aspects relevant to their particular community and circumstances, there are common features that consistently characterise the quality of these schools.

In relation to learning and teaching, succeeding schools:

- set high expectations for learning to challenge and engage their students and identify high standards for all students to achieve
- have a strong focus on quality teaching in every classroom and a commitment to professional learning
- deliver a curriculum that provides all students with a solid foundation in core knowledge, understandings, skills and values while being responsive to individual needs

In relation to leading and managing, succeeding schools:

- establish and publish a shared and clear vision of the school's values, goals, priorities and directions
- demonstrate strategic, purposeful and participative leadership, with a strong focus on student achievement through quality teaching

- manage resources and risks in ways that support the school's vision and maintain operational integrity

In relation to the student environment, succeeding schools:

- have structures and processes to identify, support and monitor the needs and performance of each individual student
- ensure all students can access and participate fully in the school's learning programs and promote the involvement of students in the life of the school
- are safe, supportive, inclusive and welcoming places

In relation to community involvement, succeeding schools:

- actively encourage and support parents to be involved in their children's learning
- foster a genuine collaborative relationship with the school community
- celebrate and promote their achievements

The above characteristics are cognisant with the quality standards and indicators applied in the existing Child-friendly *Baraabar* Schools (Figure 1).

A Comprehensive Integrated Framework

This document proposes a new, comprehensive integrated approach to school-based accountability and quality assurance arrangements which introduces a fresh approach to continuous monitoring and improving performance, in Maldivian schools.

The quality improvement and quality assurance framework proposed to be named as the **School Improvement, Quality Assurance & Accountability Framework (SIQAAF or SIQAA Framework)** will support the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Maldivian schools and their communities to identify and implement a shared vision for school improvement to create succeeding schools.

All schools can use the SIQAA Framework to improve their performance by engaging the school community and their peers (principal and teachers from other schools) in a cycle of performance feedback that includes performance planning, self-evaluation, review, and performance reporting. More comprehensively, each element of the SIQAA Framework will be linked to provide a coherent and streamlined means for schools to:

- understand their performance (self-evaluation and review)
- identify their vision and purpose and set goals and targets for improvement (school strategic plan)
- put into operation their improvement plans and manage resources (annual school improvement plan)
- report on their performance (annual report to the school community)

The SIQAA framework builds on existing reform in the Maldivian education system that have highlighted the value of a structured cycle of self-evaluation, review, planning and reporting, and made explicit the connections between the performance development of professionals working in



the schools and the performance of the school as a whole. The framework brings into focus the pivotal roles of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and reporting in lifting students' achievement, engagement and wellbeing outcomes.

The SIQAA framework has attempted to focus on the characteristics that matter most to improving student outcomes and highlights the connections between:

- government's educational reform objectives
- the domains of practice known to make a difference to students' outcomes
- compliance with professional standards for teachers
- evidence of achievement of quality standards for schools
- what communities, leaders, teachers and students need to know, and need to be able to do, to improve outcomes, including professional practice expectations and relevant professional standards for school leaders and teachers and expectations to guide school boards
- the outcomes schools are working to improve
- a system-wide measurement framework for monitoring success.

The new approach to accountability, quality assurance and school improvement can help to realise the goal of exceptional learning for every student. The SIQAA framework describes how school principals, teachers, education support staff, and the Ministry of Education will hold themselves and each other to account for ensuring students reach this goal.

Guiding Principles

The SIQAAF is developed around the following key principles.

1. Improving students' learning is the core

Accountability arrangements should support every student, without exception, to make great progress in their learning, regardless of background or circumstance.

2. Ensuring equity and inclusion is paramount

Equity and inclusion are paramount in the performance expectations of education support staff, teachers, leaders, schools and the system.

3. High expectations are non-negotiable

High expectations are a critical precondition for success. Accountability arrangements, including the standards we set, should reflect this.

4. Applying rigour

Goals and targets are set by the school reflecting the school's unique context and identified areas for improvement. These goals and targets enable the school to monitor and review its progress.

5. Aligning resources to support improvement

Planning strategically means making decisions about aligning resources and personnel with the school's goals and targets so that they will make the most difference.

- 6. The framework should be aligned and integrated to build a self-improving system**
To support a focus on self-improvement, accountability arrangements for teachers, education support staff, school leaders, schools and the system should align and integrate reporting, timing, outcomes and metrics. Compliance reporting should be minimised.
- 7. The framework should foster a culture of accountability within local learning communities**
Arrangements should reflect the day-to-day accountabilities between students, teachers, parents and colleagues. They should support schools to hold themselves to account and foster a culture of strong internal accountability.
- 8. Autonomy is matched by accountability**
Schools are best placed to determine the practices that support improved learning, drawing on the available research and evidence. Schools must be held to account for the impact of their decisions, but accountability arrangements must not prescribe practice.
- 9. Accountability is matched by support**
Accountability is reciprocal. Support should be provided in equal part to increased expectations for performance. To do more, teachers, leaders education support staff and school boards need to know more. Increased knowledge and capability is essential to improved learning outcomes.
- 10. The response is swift where underperformance is identified**
Where there is evidence of outcomes below expected standards, the players must respond swiftly to identify and provide the kind of support required to turn things around. Students' achievement, engagement and wellbeing is far too important to do otherwise.
- 11. Learning should be enabled across the system through the provision of quality feedback**
To drive improved performance, and ultimately to create and sustain a self-improving system, performance and accountability arrangements should deliver meaningful feedback between students and teachers, between teacher and principal peers, across school communities and between schools and MoE.
- 12. Performance expectations should be clear and consistent, with open and transparent assessments**
Quality assurance arrangements should be based on clear expectations for practice, outcomes and reporting, with outcomes measured using a balanced set of indicators constructed from quality data.
- 13. Minimising the administrative workload**
The Framework streamlines the planning and reporting processes. It allows more time for self-evaluation and strategic planning and offers a simplified reporting mechanism.

Key Features of the Framework

The SIQAA Framework can be used by schools to improve their performance by engaging their peers in a cycle of performance feedback that includes performance planning, self-evaluation, review, and performance reporting (Figure 2). Through this new approach



- Schools will engage in self-evaluation every year based on student performance assessment and school quality indicators
- School will prepare a three year school strategic plan identifying their vision and purpose and set goals and targets for improvement
- Based on the self-evaluation and in line with the three year school strategic plan, schools will prepare and put into operation their annual school improvement plan and manage resources
- Schools will demonstrate their accountability by reporting on their performance through an annual report to the school community and MoE.
- At least once every three years schools will undertake one of two types of school review: peer review or priority review
- Schools undertaking a peer review will select at least two peers from across the system and an MoE accredited reviewer to conduct the review
- Exemplary practice will be shared across the system
- Schools undertaking a priority review will be supported by an independent review team that will carry out a four to five day intensive analysis of the school's performance
- Following a priority review, intervention and support may be initiated based on the diagnosed needs of the school
- SIPa Panel will be established by Education and Quality Improvement Division (QAD) of MoE through which schools can enlist accredited reviewers and intervention specialists

Expected Outcomes

By implementing the above features of the SIQAA framework, the expectation is that, under the new approach:

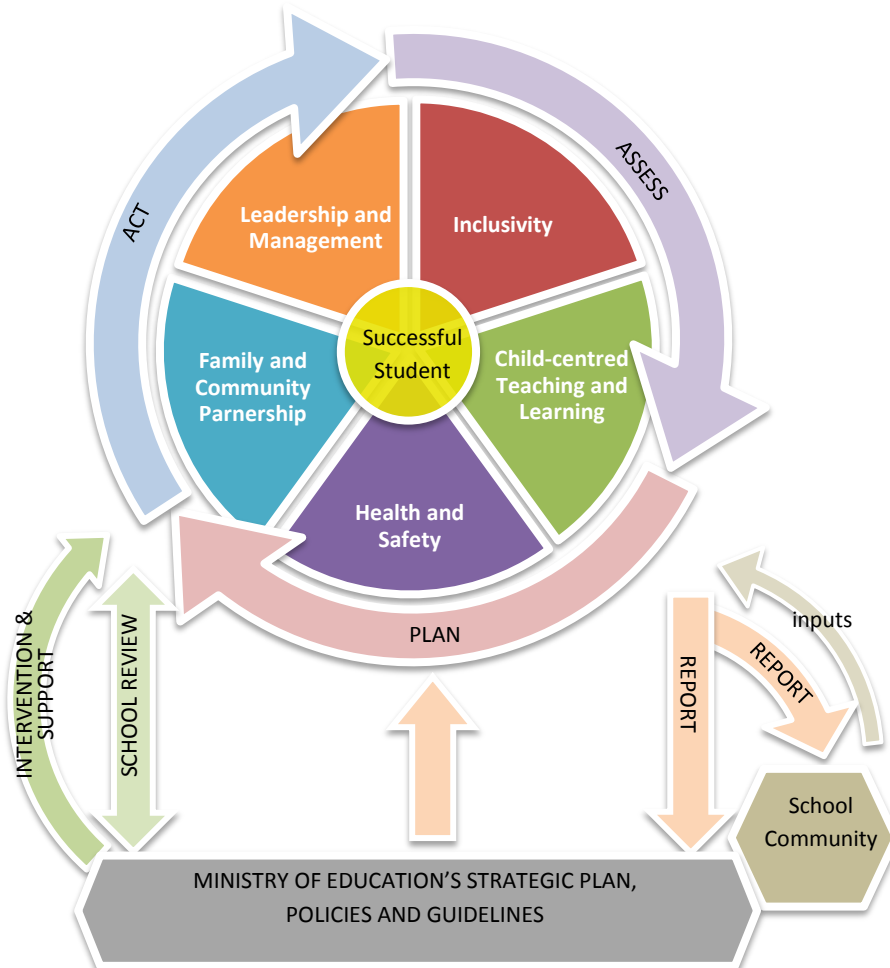
- school communities will be increasingly empowered to actively lead their own improvement
- lateral accountability arrangements will emphasise the exchange of ideas and practice between schools and education professionals
- high expectations will be fostered from within the profession rather than driven from outside it
- clear and consistent expectations for performance will support differentiated assessment, leading to intervention and support where it is required
- performance expectations and accountability arrangements for schools, principals, teachers and education support staff will be more closely aligned to the strategic direction of each school
- performance will be explicitly linked to relevant professional standards, performance and development expectations for teachers, education support staff and principals
- system-wide feedback will support the continued development of a self-improving school system that is accountable to students, community and government

SIQAA Framework

Conceptual Model

The SIQAA Framework is structured around the following conceptual model.

Figure 2: SIQAA Framework – Conceptual Diagram



The conceptual model that underpins the SIQAA Framework has six key components.

1. **Successful student** is at the core of school improvement and accountability with all other components connected to and focused on the standards of student achievement.
2. **Quality school framework** covers major aspects of school operations and practice, which are both prerequisites and enablers for successful students, and provides a lens for reflecting on school performance.
3. **School improvement cycle**, where schools assess their performance, plan for improvement and act on their plans, is a continuous process that is central to effective school improvement and accountability and is aligned with priorities and strategies of MoE.



4. **Schools report** through which schools demonstrate their accountability to the school community and MoE about their performance.
5. **School reviews** are conducted to independently verify and evaluate school effectiveness and provide feedback on how schools might improve their performance.
6. **Intervention and Support** may be initiated based on the diagnosed needs of the school

Successful Student

The standards of student achievement, both academic and non-academic, are the central focus of school improvement, quality assurance and accountability. Schools are expected to seek continuous improvement of student achievement and are accountable for their effectiveness in doing so.

While schools cannot be held accountable for contextual factors that are outside their control, they are expected to demonstrate that every effort has been made to overcome contextual factors so that students receive the highest quality educational instruction.

Data on academic student achievement comes from two sources - teacher judgements and systemic testing. It is expected that schools will use both. For teacher judgements to be used with confidence it is important that these judgements are consistent, both within and between schools. Reference to teacher judgements should be accompanied by information about the mechanisms and processes undertaken to ensure consistency.

Data from *National Assessments* and *O' Level* and *A' Level* exams can be used to identify cohort trends and characteristics, to moderate teacher judgements, to guide classroom planning and to gain an overview of school performance.

Non-academic achievement relates to the development of appropriate behaviour, including social and emotional learning and the adoption of the core values described in the National Curriculum Framework.

All school operations and processes must ultimately be evaluated in relation to their impact on student achievement. The following sets of questions would need to be asked by schools to focus evaluation and planning on improved outcomes for all students

1. What student outcomes were we trying to achieve?
2. What student outcomes did we achieve?
3. Why did we achieve/not achieve improved student outcomes?
4. How effectively did we manage resources to support the achievement of improved student outcomes?
5. What can we do in the future to continue to improve?

Quality School Framework

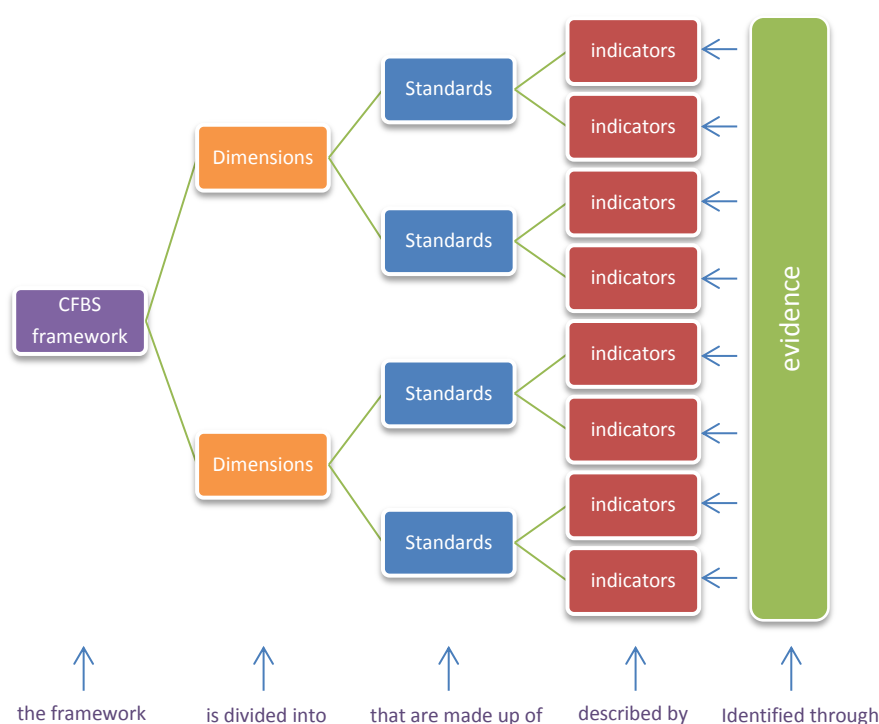
The SIQAA Framework will fully adopt the existing Child-friendly *Baraabar* School (CFBS) quality framework as the quality assurance tool for monitoring and evaluation. The framework provides teachers, school leaders, parents and other school community members, as well as MoE with a practical tool for assessing the extent to which the various elements of “quality” are consistently and

observably practised. It has been developed based on the belief that all dimensions identified in the framework need to be addressed to achieve quality in a school. The dimensions work together in an integrated way and there may be some overlap. An overview of the Dimensions of the CFBS is represented in the Figure 1.

The quality school framework can be most effectively used when members of the school community work together through the document and jointly evaluate school performance and produce plans to address the priority areas. The framework will also be used to evaluate the existing quality levels from an external perspective. In this case independent reviewers would work with the school community, identifying possible areas of strength as well as possible areas for future development.

The quality school framework is designed as a hierarchy of dimensions, standards, indicators and evidence that represent various aspects of the functioning of an effective quality school (MoE, 2010). This hierarchy is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 3: Hierarchy of CFBS dimensions, standards, indicators & evidence



The school's current performance in terms of the aspects of the quality school framework is measured and recorded at the standard level. The standards focus on the actions that the schools can take to implement the principles, policies and strategies of good practice. These standards represent actions that teachers and school leaders can be held accountable for and contribute to improved school and classroom performance.

Using the Framework to Evaluate the School Performance

The CFBS framework is designed to provide a basis for making evaluative judgements about the extent to which the various elements of quality are consistently and observably practised.



The indicators provide practical examples of what would be seen in classrooms and schools that are operating at different levels of practice. The indicators describe the standards and are a guide for evaluating the extent to which each standard is demonstrated within the school's context. The list of indicators does not have to be considered as exhaustive; they are meant to provide a picture of what the standards of quality might look like, rather than a complete list of every aspect that could be considered.

Similarly, the examples of the kinds of evidence that might be considered in rating the standards provided in the CFBS framework is neither prescriptive for all schools, nor the only kind of valid evidence that might be appropriate in every circumstance. They are simply a guide for making decisions about the school's performance.

The indicators and the examples of evidence given in the CFBS framework are not necessarily all of equal importance in making decisions about the levels of performance under a particular standard. Using the indicator is a matter of accumulating sufficient evidence to have confidence that the level of achieving the standard is valid. "Evidence" in this context might draw from documents such as school policy and procedure documentation, teachers' programmes or staff, teacher observations, student performance data, student observations, perceptions and views.

These views may be gathered from surveys or observations or from information gathered during interviews, focus groups or round table discussions conducted as part of the *school self-evaluation* or *school review* process. The types and amount of evidence used in an evaluation by any individual school will vary according to its size, context and needs.

Rating Performance

In the original CFBS framework introduced in 2010, the indicators for each standard were grouped into 4 levels of ratings (*Emerging, Progressing, Achieving, and Achieved*) with one level of rating attributed to each standard. According to the original framework, for the lowest level rating (emerging), the criteria under that rating would need to be met in full; otherwise the school did not have a rating for that category (MoE, 2010). The criteria were considered cumulative, in that to achieve a higher level of rating, the school is required to meet all the criteria in that rating and all criteria of lower levels. Therefore progression from one category to the next or let alone achieving even the first level was either impossible or a herculean task for most schools.

The main problem of this method of rating was that meeting some of the criteria were beyond the control of the school such as infrastructure support, financial resourcing and staffing, which often were identified as first level indicators and has impeded schools from progressing. Hence, in consultation with the schools the CFBS framework has now been revised by removing the rating system as well as reviewing and changing some indicators for the quality standards.

A lack of a rating system however may be a limitation in the current framework whereby, schools or MoE may find it difficult to record their judgements about the extent to which certain quality standards are demonstrated. The presence of a rating scales are a useful means of summarising the judgements made about the extent of implementation of the practices represented by the quality standards.

A New Proposal for Rating

A five points rating scale can provide a basis for describing the existing level of school performance against quality criteria. This can allow performance of a particular school to be “benchmarked” against the quality standards described in the CFBS framework. They also allow changes in practice over time to be measured.

The rating scale proposed is based on observations of the extent to which various outcomes may be observed within a school. The proposed rating scale is shown in Table 1.

Because the indicators are meant as a guide only and are not comprehensive, it is not desirable to “add up” scores for the indicators to arrive at the rating for the standard. However, it would be unusual for a rating of “Always demonstrated” to be given where none of the indicators was present. Conversely, if all of the indicators were present it would be unusual to award a “rarely demonstrated” rating. Arriving at the final rating for the standard is a matter of making an informed decision, taking into account the particular context and circumstances of the school.

Table 1: Quality School Framework Rating Scale

Scale	Description
Always demonstrated	To achieve this rating, it would be expected that the reviewers would agree that the majority of indicators describe the usual practices in the school.
Mostly demonstrated	It would be expected that the reviewers would agree that the majority of indicators describe the usual practices in the school, but there may be some significant exceptions, or some indicators may not be evident.
Sometimes demonstrated	This rating would reflect a situation that applied in some cases but not all. For example, the indicators may not be observed in some cases or may not be demonstrated consistently throughout the year.
Rarely demonstrated	This rating would be appropriate in circumstances where the reviewers would agree that there is evidence that the indicators are demonstrated in very few instances in the school.
Never demonstrated	This rating would be appropriate in instances where none of the indicators for the element describe the practices in the school

Using the CFBS framework for evaluation

The CFBS framework will be the main tool for evaluating school performance. The framework has been designed to be used by a team of key stakeholders from the school community to collectively review how well the school is performing in relation to one or more Dimensions of the CFBS framework.

The success of the review depends on the existence of open and honest discussions by reviewing team members about the extent to which good practices are observable within the school. The process for making judgments should always rely on the information gathered during the review as such decisions need to be founded on information rather than intuition. For this reason, all the evidence in relation to a particular indicator needs to be considered simultaneously. The team will need to decide whether the evidence is sufficiently comprehensive to draw conclusions for future



action. Where evidence is inconclusive or conflicting, team members need to decide which piece of evidence is considered most important, or whether more evidence needs to be gathered in relation to this standard. In making judgments about particular standards, it is always important to consider the context within which the judgment is made.

The use of the tool in school self-evaluation and schools reviews, as well as the use of the evaluation results in school improvement planning will be discussed in subsequent sections.

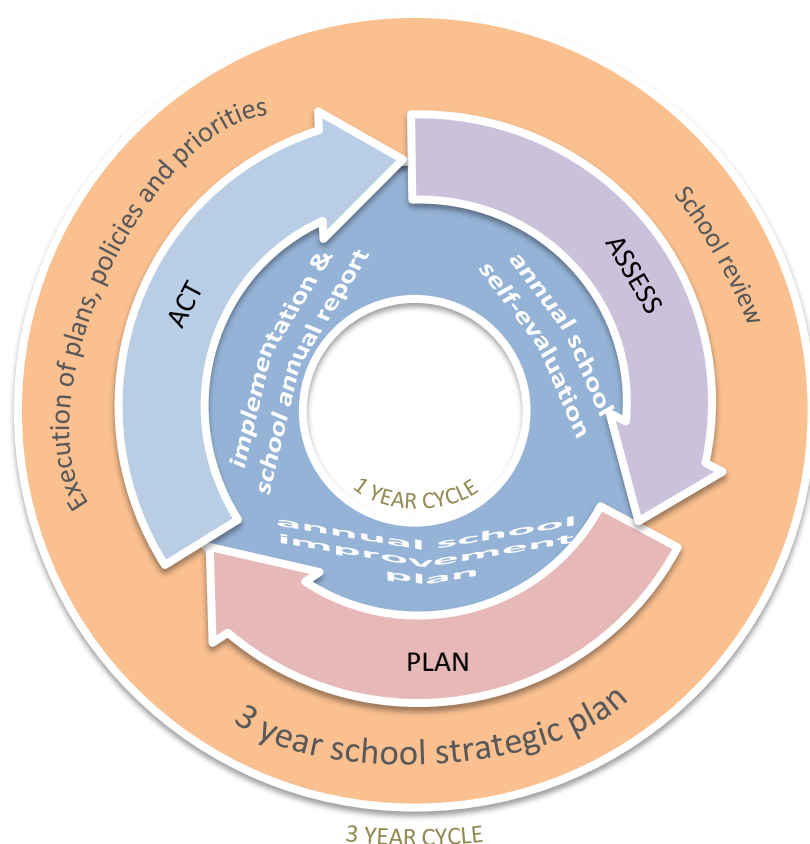
School Improvement Cycle

Research has identified that schools improve when they draw on a range of evidence from a variety of sources to inform their decision-making (Elmore, 2005; Caldwell, 2011; Wößmann, et al, 2007). Coordination of this evidence-base is a continuous process designed to efficiently and effectively distribute effort and resources to best meet changing needs and address school and system priorities.

A number of fundamental assumptions about how school improvement occurs inform the SIQAA Framework:

- improvement occurs in schools when strategies and actions for development are based on a rigorous assessment of and reflection on data
- improvement occurs by improving the knowledge-base, skills and capability that the teacher and student bring to the teaching and learning process
- improving workforce capacity requires professional learning in context, based on effective professional learning principles
- schools improve by ensuring that all programs, activities and services work in concert and support on-going development in the school
- school improvement is enhanced by productive partnerships between the school and its community.

Figure 4: School Improvement Cycle – conceptual model



The Key Components of the school improvement cycle

The key components of the school improvement cycle sit alongside an action research and planning continuum. The action-oriented continuum is the core component of reflective practice and a feature of improvement models promoting school review, school effectiveness and school development.

The school improvement cycle has three key components. Schools:

- **ASSESS** data and other evidence related to student achievement and school operations;
 - annual self-evaluation against the four domains of school improvement
 - annual analysis of student achievement data from national and international assessments
 - on-going collection and analysis of school-based student performance data
- **PLAN** to improve the standards of student achievement;
 - development of a three-year school strategic plan and an annual school improvement plan
 - annual review and update of operational aspects of the school plan
 - on-going alignment of school plan to system policies and priorities
- **ACT** to implement planned strategies.
 - execution of the school strategic plan and the annual school improvement plan



- processes and procedures that enable the standards of student achievement to improve
- day-to-day activities of the school
- teaching and learning practices
- implementation of central policies and initiatives

Because the school improvement cycle is an on-going process, the three components should be seen as dynamic and interactive. While assessment leads logically to planning and planning logically to implementation, continuous self-evaluation recognises that the act of implementation may cause planning to be modified and may re-focus self-evaluation questions.

Under the SIQAA framework each school will develop a comprehensive three-year school strategic plan and an annual school improvement plan, self-assess on an annual basis and report the outcomes against this plan to the school community. Each school will also participate in external reviews within the 3-year planning cycle to gain an objective evaluation of its achievements and standards of performance, and to inform future planning for continuous improvement.

With a three-year review cycle (Figure 4), schools will move through different stages of self-evaluation and reflection. At each stage there need to be a range of support strategies, personnel and tools available to assist schools as they:

- develop and update school strategic plan and annual school improvement plan
- implement programs and strategies to meet the goals and targets of the plans
- monitor, review and evaluate inputs, outputs and outcomes
- report student achievement to parents and school community
- report progress towards the achievement of goals through annual school reporting
- undergo an external validation of their progress over time within the three year cycle

School Self-evaluation

Great schools regularly evaluate their progress (State of Victoria, 2013). They pause to reflect, undertaking a thorough analysis of the available data to reflect on how well the human, financial, physical and information resources of the school have been deployed to achieve the goals and priorities in the school's strategic plan and the annual school improvement plan.

Good self-evaluation is a powerful process of engagement. It empowers the whole school community – students, parents, teachers and the school community more broadly – to actively participate in a process of reflective practice. It uses an inquiry model to arrive at a shared view of the school's strengths, achievements and future needs.

School Self-Evaluation (SSE) provides a significant opportunity for the whole school community, including students, parents and all staff, to reflect on student outcomes in light of their goals, targets and key improvement strategies from the previous planning cycle. This includes examining teaching and learning strategies, the school's culture and other aspects of school operations so they can be strengthened and supported to improve student outcomes.

Sourcing Evidence to Inform Planning and Setting Targets

Processes for identifying and gathering evidence should be fair and balanced, followed by analysis that is valid, reliable and trustworthy. When evidence is carefully gathered and critically examined by the school community (staff, students, parents and carers), it provides a platform for considered debate and consensus, and increases the level of confidence stakeholders place in subsequent findings.

When a school community feels included in the data-gathering process it is more inclined to take greater ownership of findings and be more committed to improvement plans. Likewise, when a school community fully understands an issue, on the basis of balanced information, it is more likely to embrace change (Caldwell, 2011).

Each school has a major role in collecting and reporting data that will contribute to an understanding of their performance at both local and system levels. Schools will measure their performance by comparing their results with:

- previous student and school results to find evidence of school improvement and growth over time
- standardised school improvement targets to find evidence that improvement strategies are having an impact
- national and international assessment results to demonstrate evidence of improvement

Throughout the three-year cycle of school improvement, schools can also use evidence to:

- assess the quality of programs
- inform planning and set targets
- report on key indicators of school improvement

CFBS as the Framework and Monitoring Tool for Self-evaluation

Under the existing CFBS framework, all schools are expected to engage in self-evaluation annually. The CFBS quality assurance framework provides detailed guidance, assessment tools, evaluation forms, templates, examples and advice on carrying out the school-self assessment.

The CFBS quality indicators matrix assist schools in their continuous improvement process and can be used to identify and clarify factors inhibiting or accelerating improvement, and the gaps between actual and best practice. This enables the school to develop priorities for action by identifying the largest gaps and relative impact on the school.

Carrying out the Self-evaluation

Prior to using the self-evaluation matrix the school community including all stakeholders should be made aware of the purpose and function of this activity within the school improvement cycle. Self-evaluation is a form of reflection on practice, and as such is a critical component of action research and planning. As a school reflects on its practice it will examine existing practices, research possible alternatives and refine or change its future targets, goals and plans for action.



The CFBS quality assurance framework requires that a School Improvement Team (SIT) is formed with members representing key stakeholders from the school community. The team should include at least 6 members including the principal, leading teachers, teachers, parents and also senior students. In order to provide a degree of independence, schools may also wish to consider using teachers or principals from another school, or other education experts.

School self-evaluation is an annual process. It is best carried out at the commencement of a school year to provide baseline data for planning. All or school determined priority domains of quality schools identified in the CFBS framework are assessed each year. This will ensure the school clearly identifies the priority areas for action. It may be re-visited at other times during the year as issues arise, or at the end of the year to evaluate progress in one or all of the domains. The information will also assist schools to report against the domain within the *School Annual Report*, and, in the longer term, provide evidence for the external validation.

Key Attributes of School Self-evaluation

- Focuses on school performance in terms of student achievement, wellbeing, engagement and productivity
- Assesses the extent to which performance has been supported towards the CFBS quality domains
- Addresses a minimum set of system-level performance thresholds
- Includes locally collected evidence of student outcomes
- Involves input from all members of the school community, including students and the school board
- Includes evaluation of progress on agreed school goals and priorities
- Reports on the school's financial activity and budget position
- Can be made publicly available in a format that suits the needs and expectations of the local community and includes MoE reporting requirements
- Contributes to teacher and principal performance planning and appraisal.

Peer Validation

An optional process of peer validation can extend the school's reflective practice and inquiry by engaging with a small group of peers in a professional interaction to test the integrity of the school's self-evaluation. Principals may select peers strategically, seeking out those with complementary strengths in areas requiring improvement. The process should be rigorous, data-orientated and outcomes-driven, with consideration given to the school context. Peer validation can be integral to moderating locally collected measures of student outcomes, and to building confidence in the quality and accuracy of these measures within and between schools. Peer validation can also be a critical mechanism for system improvement because it builds professional trust between schools, facilitates knowledge sharing, and shifts the accountability focus from MoE to peers and the school community.

Figure 5: School Self-evaluation Process Guide



Planning

Policy on planning

At present there is no specific educational policy or legal requirement for Maldivian schools to have a strategic plan. However, planning has been identified as the first quality standard under the *Leadership and Management* domain of the CFBS quality framework (MoE, 2010). The standard is described as “*Planning and school improvement is a continuous process and guided by all stakeholders according to the vision and mission of the school*” (MoE, 2010). This indicates there is a high expectation that, for a school to demonstrate a quality leadership and management it has to be systematically engaged in a continuous school improvement process where planning is the key component.

Similarly, the MoE policy on the school boards, *School Board Management Policy 2012*, states that it is the responsibility of the school board to give guidance and direction to the school to develop its strategic plan.

Therefore with the above requirements, there is a need for MoE to provide specific policy guidance to the schools on the development of school plans.

Planning is an integral component of the School Improvement Cycle of the SIQAA framework. The framework specified the development of a three-year school strategic plan and an annual school improvement plan.

School Strategic Plan

The school strategic plan is going to be the school’s 3 year strategic plan, which is a concise document that enables everyone in the school community, including students, parents and all staff, to know what outcomes the school aims to achieve over the next three years and how it intends to achieve these outcomes. The plan will also describe how progress is monitored and how achievement will be measured, including the evidence that will be gathered. Through planning, a school embeds into its processes and practices a capacity to meet internal and external demands.

The School Strategic Plan as a Living Document

A school’s strategic plan should reflect the community’s expectations and the Government’s priorities for education. It can be considered as a formal understanding between the school’s staff, School Board, the school community and MoE. While the cycle specifies a three-year planning period, the school strategic plan is a ‘living’ document in that it can be updated to take into account changes in the school’s environment or data.

Significant national level programs or initiatives in which the school is engaged should be readily integrated into the school strategic plan as part of a key improvement strategy as they are designed to contribute either directly or indirectly to improved student outcomes.

The benefit of integrating these initiatives into a single strategic plan is that the school can clearly state what outcomes the school is trying to achieve through these initiatives. Furthermore, a single school strategic plan and single annual school improvement plan removes the need for separate

planning and accountability arrangements for different initiatives, streamlining the administrative workload of planning and reporting.

Structure of the School Strategic Plan

The school strategic plan is a blueprint that outlines how the school will achieve improved levels of performance. It establishes the overall strategic priorities for the school in relation to school context. As a public document it provides a whole school focus for continual improvement over the full three-year term of the school improvement cycle.

The school strategic plan can comprise two distinct parts: the **school profile** and **strategic intent**.

School profile:

Developing the school profile provides an opportunity for schools to articulate their purpose, values and articulate the current and future environmental contexts and the opportunities and risks these may bring. Schools can commence exploring and developing the school profile early in the year of self-evaluation, review and planning as this analysis is needed as a foundation for establishing the strategic intent of the school.

Strategic intent:

The second component of the school strategic plan, will draw on the evidence and analysis generated by the school self-evaluation and review. This element represents the school's plan for action and is composed of the goals, targets and key improvement strategies identified to support improvement.

Goals are aspirational statements that define what the school is striving to achieve in terms of improved student outcomes.

For each goal, schools are required to set a target or targets that indicate how the school will measure achievement. Targets should be measurable, realistic yet challenging, and achievable within the timeframe of the school improvement plan. Targets should be set against the school's own performance (rather than national means) to ensure they are meaningful for the school and understood by the school community.

Key improvement strategies are high level directions that the school will use to achieve its goals and targets. They are expected to be implemented over the three years of the school strategic plan and include a number of aligned actions. Implementation is rolled out through annual school improvement plans that outline the actions required to support implementation of the strategy.

The key improvement strategies are the logically connected steps or actions that need to be put into place to achieve improvement and the assumptions that underpin these activities. For example, a school's theory of action could include the notion that if teachers participate in targeted professional learning that is aligned with the school's teaching and learning priorities, then this action will improve teacher practice, which will in turn improve student learning outcomes.



It is important that the leadership of the school can articulate their theory of action so that staff understand why they are doing what they do and what they are aiming to achieve.

Annual School Improvement Plan

At the end of each year, schools will develop an annual school improvement plan for the following year. The plan describes how the key improvement strategies in the school improvement plan will be put into operation and how they will be monitored. The annual school improvement plan also incorporates other significant projects to be undertaken by the school in that year.

The annual school improvement plan outlines the:

- actions that will be undertaken in order to implement the key improvement strategies and significant projects
- resources required to support the implementation of the action, who is to be involved and associated timelines
- achievement milestones that will be used to assess the desired changes in practice or behaviour that should occur through the implementation of strategies
- one-year targets to identify progress towards the targets for improved student outcomes identified in the school strategic plan

The annual school improvement plan assists the school community to be clear about what actions it is aiming to implement in the year, and how this will lead to the achievement of the school's goals and targets in the school strategic plan.

Developing an annual school improvement plan assists schools to:

- plan their work for the coming year
- ensure efficient and effective allocation of resources to complete the work
- monitor progress and success

Whilst plans may be amended within the first three months in a given year, a sound planning cycle would see the school's annual school improvement plan defined by the end of the year prior to its implementation.

It may be necessary, however, to adjust the annual school improvement plan during the first few weeks of the academic year after actual school enrolments are known and the school has undertaken the necessary reflection on school performance through the annual reporting process.

The School Planning Process

Schools typically prioritise their strategic intentions in ways that provide the best balance between available resources (including human, physical and financial resources) and competing demands of stakeholders across the school. It is important that schools set an achievable number of priorities, at

the same time providing the school with a broad range of significant challenges for each year of the cycle.

By identifying a school's priorities and describing them in a strategic and operational context, a school community can begin to systematically map out a plan for improvement in its three-year cycle. For each strategic priority a school will establish an intended course of action. Schools will need to reflect system commitments into their priorities. School planning is a dynamic and systematic process. Schools should ensure that their processes allow planning to evolve to meet changing needs and circumstances.

Schools will establish the School Improvement Team (SIT) who will work with the Principal to develop and monitor the school's planning and improvement processes. In devising a planning process the SIT should ensure:

- full and open consultation with the school community occurs
- strategies for improvement are well researched
- data sources are identified and monitoring processes established
- the processes for improvement are communicated to key personnel
- documentation to support the improvement process is written
- future plans are informed by what was learned

Reporting

Providing evidence of performance

The school has a responsibility to report to its community on its performance and achievements. Parents and the wider community will judge the quality of education through a range of interactions with the school. These include both formal and informal communications, and activities such as parent meetings, assemblies, open days, school celebrations and school involvement in community events and activities.

While schools use a range of formal and informal means to communicate with their community, an annual school report provides the mechanism for the school to report about its performance formally to its community, the MoE and to the general public. It gives parents and other members of the community a clear sense of how students in the school are progressing and what is being done to maximise student achievement. School report may also serve as a vehicle for promoting the school.

Existing Reporting Requirement

All government schools are obliged to prepare and submit an annual report to the MoE at the end of every calendar year in line with the government institutions reporting legal requirements set by an act of 1968.

MoE in its circular number 2/87 dated 19 January 1987 has given specific instructions on submitting the school annual report by 5th December of the current year (MoE circular 2/87) to the MoE. The directive gives guidance on the content of the report as follows:



1. *Introduction of the report*
 2. *Management*
 - a. *Date of school inauguration*
 - b. *Date of establishment of the school*
 - c. *School's mandate*
 3. *Education provided by the school*
 - a. *The level and type of education*
 - b. *Enrolment and the number of classes*
 - c. *School session and information on teaching*
 4. *Activities regarding teaching and learning*
 - a. *Days celebrated*
 - b. *Sports*
 - c. *Courses and programs conducted*
 - d. *Production of curriculum and teaching materials*
 - e. *Special classes*
 - f. *Basic education*
 - g. *Community education*
 - h. *Exams held and student results*
 - i. *Constraints and challenges*
 5. *Changes to the school building and to the school staff*
 6. *Special events during the year*
- MoE circular of no 2/87 (19-1-1987)

In line with these requirements schools continue to submit annual reports accordingly to the MoE. A summary of these reports are also presented to the parents on the annual *prize day* events of the school.

School Annual Report

Following on from the above practice, the SIQAA framework requires that all schools prepare and publish annually a **School Annual Report (SAR)** that describes the school's performance and report on school performance and legislative and designated policy and program requirements. This report will provide an opportunity for the school board, leadership team, staff and students to reflect on the success of their improvement strategies and the allocation of resources, and informs planning for improvement in the following year.

The SAR should draw upon evidence from the annual school self-evaluation of progress against its strategic priorities, objectives and targets identified in the school plan in addition to meeting reporting obligations as per government requirements.

The purpose of the SAR is to:

- provide student performance and school achievement information to the public
- record progress in meeting objectives and targets set out in the school plan
- provide evidence of improvement in the process of external school reviews
- fulfil reporting obligations required by the government

The SAR will be a vehicle for the schools to communicate changes in direction that have occurred through the annual school self-evaluation and the planning processes. Following finalization of the SSE report by the school board, it can be included in the SAR.

An annual report must also be officially endorsed at a meeting of school board before submission to the MoE and making it public to the school community.

External Review

External school review or supervision as it is mainly called in the Maldivian context is an important evaluation and accountability process that supports continuous improvement and builds public confidence in the quality of the schooling being provided .

External school review follows directly from the school self-evaluation. SSE has the merit of being immediate, responsive to the school's specific needs and circumstances and its results are 'owned' by the school. However, self-evaluation which serves the needs of accountability is subject to inevitable tensions between rigour and depth on the one hand and a natural desire not to undermine the confidence of parents and superiors on the other.

As a result, self-evaluation is more a tool for managing development than for challenging assumptions or for arriving at conclusions which threaten key actors in the school's hierarchy. The involvement of externality in school evaluation, therefore, both provides that element of distance from the internal dynamics of the school and gives the kind of perspective and challenge to assumptions and to the interpretation of evidence. This can lead to greater rigour in the process.

The external school reviews and the reviewers themselves will play a critical role in monitoring the performance of the education system as a whole. Reviewers will collect evidence about the curriculum offered in each school, the instructional models used, the role of student voice in the school, the quality of each school's governance and the nature of interactions with the community. Reviewers will support whole-of-system learning through conducting thematic reviews that focus on the impact of particular programs or dimensions of professional practice.

Existing External Review Process

The Quality Assurance Department (QAD) of MoE is the central body responsible for quality assurance of the schools, and their monitoring and evaluation. QAD mobilises teams of internal and external supervisors (reviewers) to carryout monitoring and evaluation of schools (MoE, 2007). The independent supervision teams are mainly selected from among experienced principals, accomplished teachers, as well as other educational experts.

The supervision teams, led by a team leader would usually spend about 4 to 5 days in a school observing teaching and learning practices, checking compliance, collecting evidence on school improvement, and interviewing teachers, students and parents.

A supervision report is compiled and submitted by the supervision team to the school and MoE, to highlight commendations and recommendations drawn from the school evaluation. The reports



which used to be a closed confidential document shared only with the relevant departments of MoE and the leadership team of the school concerned is now a public document. Through a directive of MoE in 2009 (circular no.14/2009) school supervision reports are required to be published on the MoE website in addition to sharing it with the school board and the wider school community to improve greater accountability.

With the introduction of the CFBS framework in 2010, the evaluations are now focused mainly on the five domains of the quality schools framework (see Figure 1). QAD provides the necessary training and guidance to school managers and strengthen the internal supervision of schools, especially in carrying out the school self-evaluation as per the CFBS framework.

Given the geography of the country with hundreds of widely scattered islands, centrally driven quality assurance processes such as the school supervision is both time consuming and expensive. Hence, such monitoring has not been carried consistently or in predetermined time cycles. Most school supervisions have thus been on an ad hoc basis or on specific diagnostic needs of some schools.

Therefore school evaluation and quality monitoring programs would have to rely heavily on self-evaluations by schools, with external reviews taking place according to a time cycle that is affordable.

A New Approach to School Review

The SIQAA framework proposes that at least once every three years, all schools will engage in one of two types of review: **Peer Review**, or **Priority Review**.

The type of review a school undertakes will be determined by QAD following assessment of the school's performance against a consistent set of nation-wide measures about students' achievement against the quality domains of the School Quality Framework (CFBS). This will be determined through SSE reports and external validation of these assessments. Schools performing above key performance thresholds will engage in a peer review. Schools performing below the thresholds will engage in a priority review (see Figure 6). The key performance thresholds determined for this process should be fair and accurate and reflect the system goals for improvement.

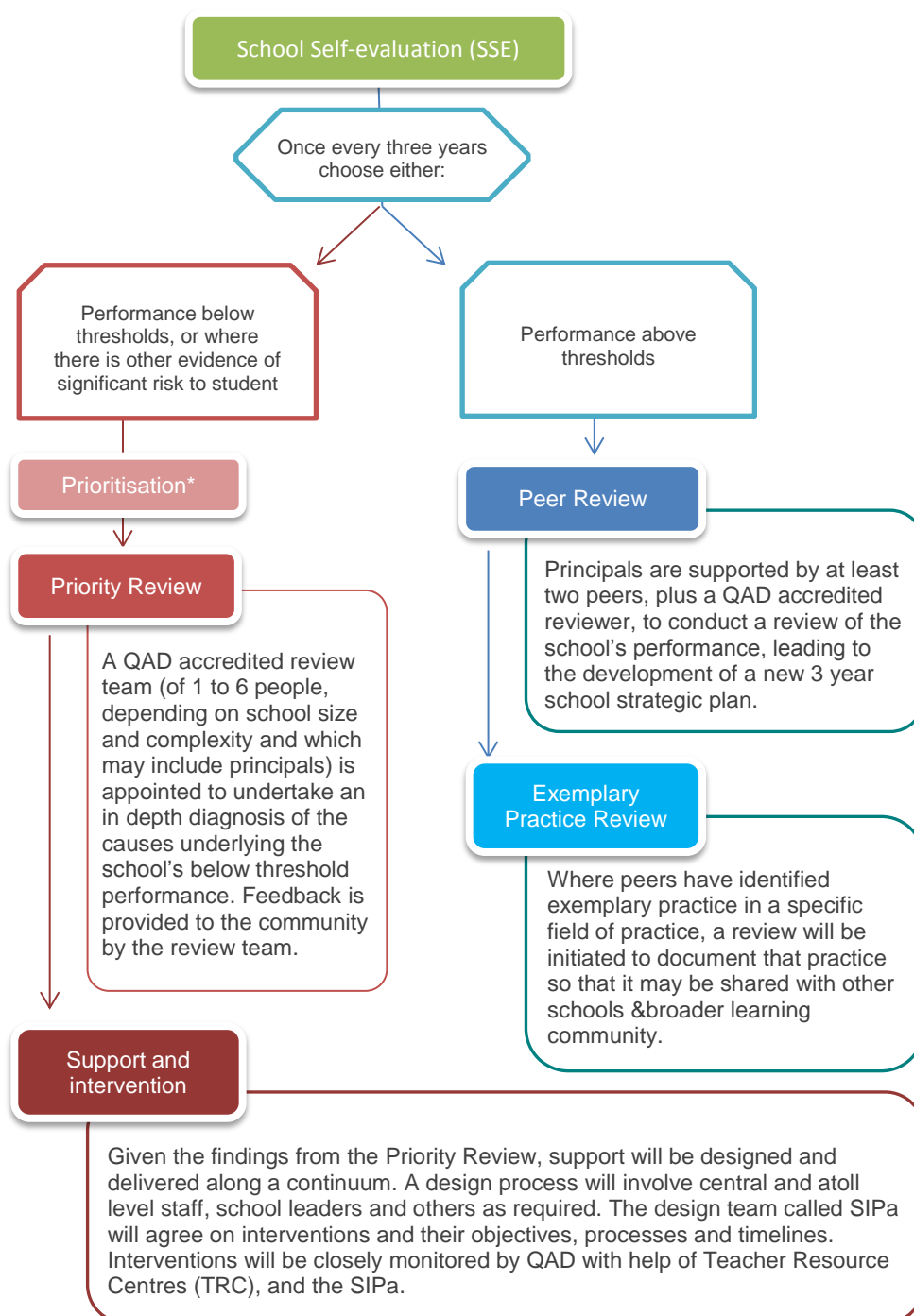
Accredited Reviewers

For the external review process to function efficiently QAD will need to establishing and maintaining a pool of trained and accredited school reviewers (including practicing principals), to support the review process. The lead reviewers can be designated and trained Educational Officers (EOs) from QAD who are assigned the responsibility of supervising the schools.

QAD can design and deliver an accreditation program open to educational professionals and practicing principals. The trainings can be delivered through the National Institute of Education. Such an accreditation program should cover a range of topics, including data analysis and evaluative techniques, facilitation skills, conducting challenging professional conversations, and establishing effective protocols to guide peer learning.

Special priority should be given to practicing principals to participate in the accreditation program. This will support the building of principal knowledge and capacity in the transition to the new review processes.

Figure 6: School review determination process



***Prioritisation:** when a school is identified as performing below the key performance thresholds, a prioritisation step will consider local knowledge, additional evidence and past review activity to determine with the school the most appropriate sequencing of next steps, and specifically, which schools will undertake a Priority Review in a given year.

Peer Review

Schools with performance outcomes that meet or exceed clearly articulated performance thresholds will undertake a peer review within a three year cycle. Schools will have the opportunity to work with their peers and a QAD accredited school reviewer, who will facilitate the peer review process. Principals will be provided with training opportunities to enhance their knowledge and understanding of school review, planning and improvement.

Peer review demonstrates professional trust in the expertise of the principals and a commitment to profession-led school improvement. Peer review involves leaders from across all schools working together to assess school performance and making recommendations for improvement by asking the questions:

- What are students learning?
- How are students learning and how is the school supporting learning?
- How does the school know students are learning?
- How are resources being used to support student learning?

Peer reviews involve Principals from the atoll or region working together to assess an individual school's performance and co-developing a set of recommendations for improvement. The scope of peer reviews will be sufficiently flexible to match the learning needs and priorities of each school.

To ensure a high quality standard across the system, all peer reviews will be conducted by a panel of at least two peers and will be facilitated by a QAD accredited reviewer (AR). The accredited reviewer can be assigned by QAD or be chosen by the school from a panel of reviewers trained and accredited by QAD.

The term peers is not intended to be limited to school principals. Schools will determine their peer reviewers in consultation with QAD, following consideration of a range of factors, including local learning partnerships beyond the school and learning and development opportunities for potential future school leaders.

School boards have oversight of school accountability and are expected to play an active leadership role in the review. School board members and the community more broadly, including students and parents, will be actively involved in planning, self-evaluation, review and reporting in a manner that suits a school's local needs and accords with principles of good governance.

Peer reviews will provide an opportunity for principals to build their professional knowledge and capacity, foster collegial support, and share knowledge and experience of successful school practices.

Principals will need to be supported to undertake peer reviews through a combination of funding, training and access to principals identified as having quality-assured system leadership capabilities.

Peer review will help build and sustain professional relationships between the leaders of all schools, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise and building greater levels of system knowledge in the pursuit of high quality educational outcomes for all students. Peer learning will be at the heart of peer review, providing an opportunity for principals to build their professional

knowledge and capacity, foster collegial support, and share experiences of successful school practices to improve students' achievement, engagement and wellbeing.

Exemplary Practice Review

Exemplary Practice Reviews will be conducted alongside peer reviews to document and share the cultural or operational aspects of schools that exhibit exemplary outcomes in a specific area of practice within the five quality domains of the CFBS framework.

Peers will play a strong role in identifying exemplary practice. Peer Reviews and Annual Peer Validation will provide a key opportunity for Principals to identify quality practice and nominate their peers for an Exemplary Practice Review. Data will be used to validate a nomination by confirming that a school's performance is of a sufficiently high standard to qualify.

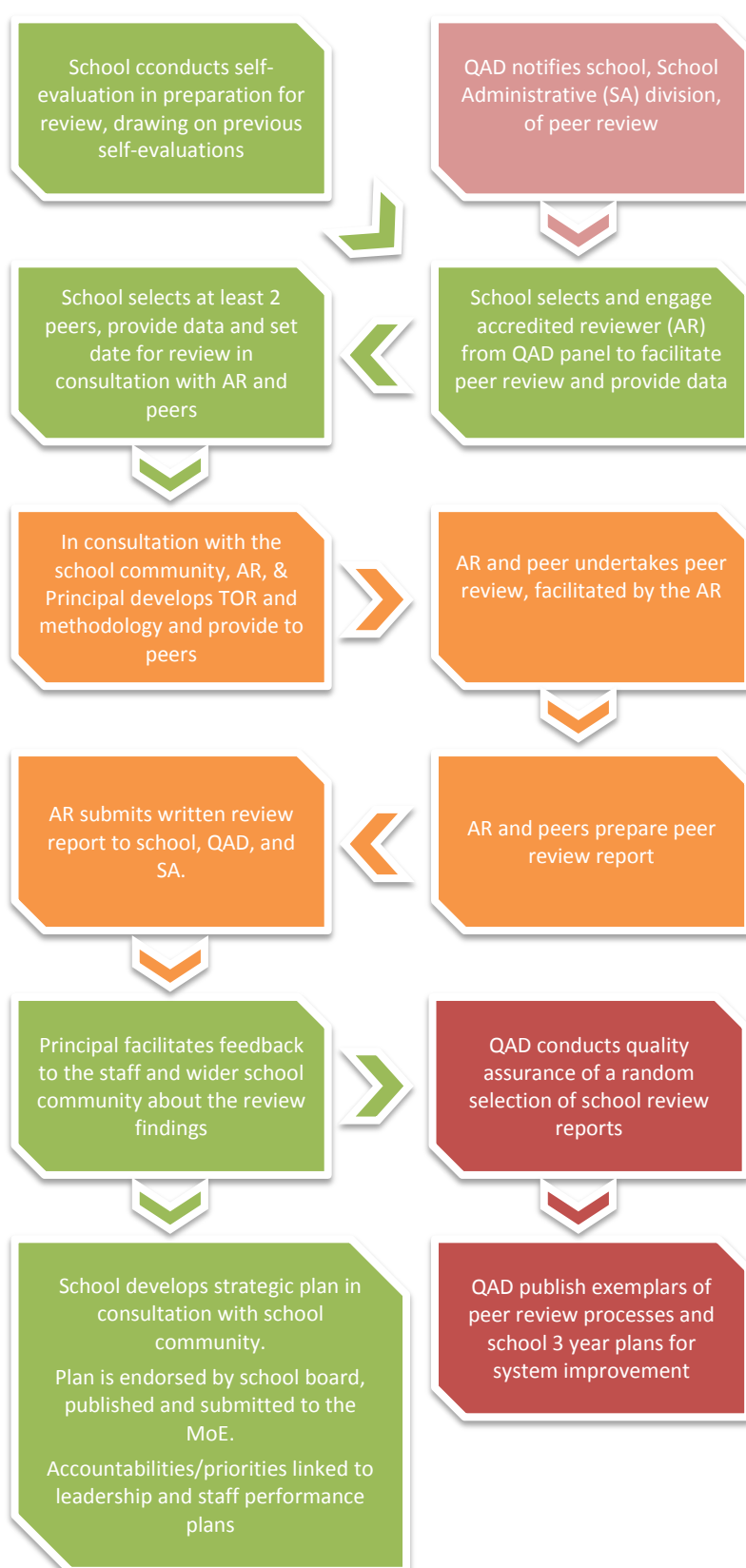
Key Attributes of Peer Review

Peer reviews will:

- Be conducted by a panel of at least two peers from any school in the country including private schools, along with the host school principal and a QAD accredited reviewer (AR)
- Be facilitated by an externally accredited reviewer who supports the peer review team in ensuring a high level of challenge, rigour and quality assurance is applied to the process
- Examine performance against a consistent set of nation-wide measures, as well as lead indicators including curriculum documentation, assessment schedules, reporting, teaching practice and school leadership
- Examine the quality of relationships between the school and the wider community, including the impact of formal and informal partnerships the school has established
- Consider how effectively school resources are deployed to achieve school goals and priorities, including consideration of human, financial, physical and information resources
- Focus the discussion on high level recommendations for improvement based on the terms of reference for the review
- Deliver findings that are reported to the school community and shared with the MoE to increase transparency and facilitate sharing of evidence across the system
- Enhance school planning processes.



Figure 7: Peer Review Process Guide



Priority Review

There are times when a school, for a variety of reasons, does not demonstrate sufficient progress or falls short of absolute minimum standards. Research suggests that timely and appropriate intervention can turn these schools around.

The MoE has an obligation to respond when a school does not demonstrate sufficient progress or where there is other evidence of significant risk to students' achievement, wellbeing or engagement. In such circumstances, MoE will need to determine the level of support or intervention required to restore the ability and autonomy of that school to self-improve. MoE will initiate this support through a Priority Review.

Where schools are performing below clearly articulated thresholds, support will be initiated through a priority review. These schools will benefit from a thorough diagnosis of their performance by an independent review team. The priority review will provide the evidence needed to ensure appropriate support.

An independent review team, consisting of accredited reviewers contracted by QAD, will be assembled to undertake a four to five-day intensive analysis of the school's performance. Each team will have a nominated lead reviewer who will be responsible for:

- developing the terms of reference
- undertaking the fieldwork, and
- providing a written report and feedback to the school and MoE based on a thorough diagnosis of the factors inhibiting the school's improvement.

The specific support required to the school, informed by the priority review findings, will be determined by an intervention design team, referred to as SIPa. Support will be tailored to the school's context and will aim to embed improvement strategies and support the school's autonomous operations.

Key Attributes of Priority Review

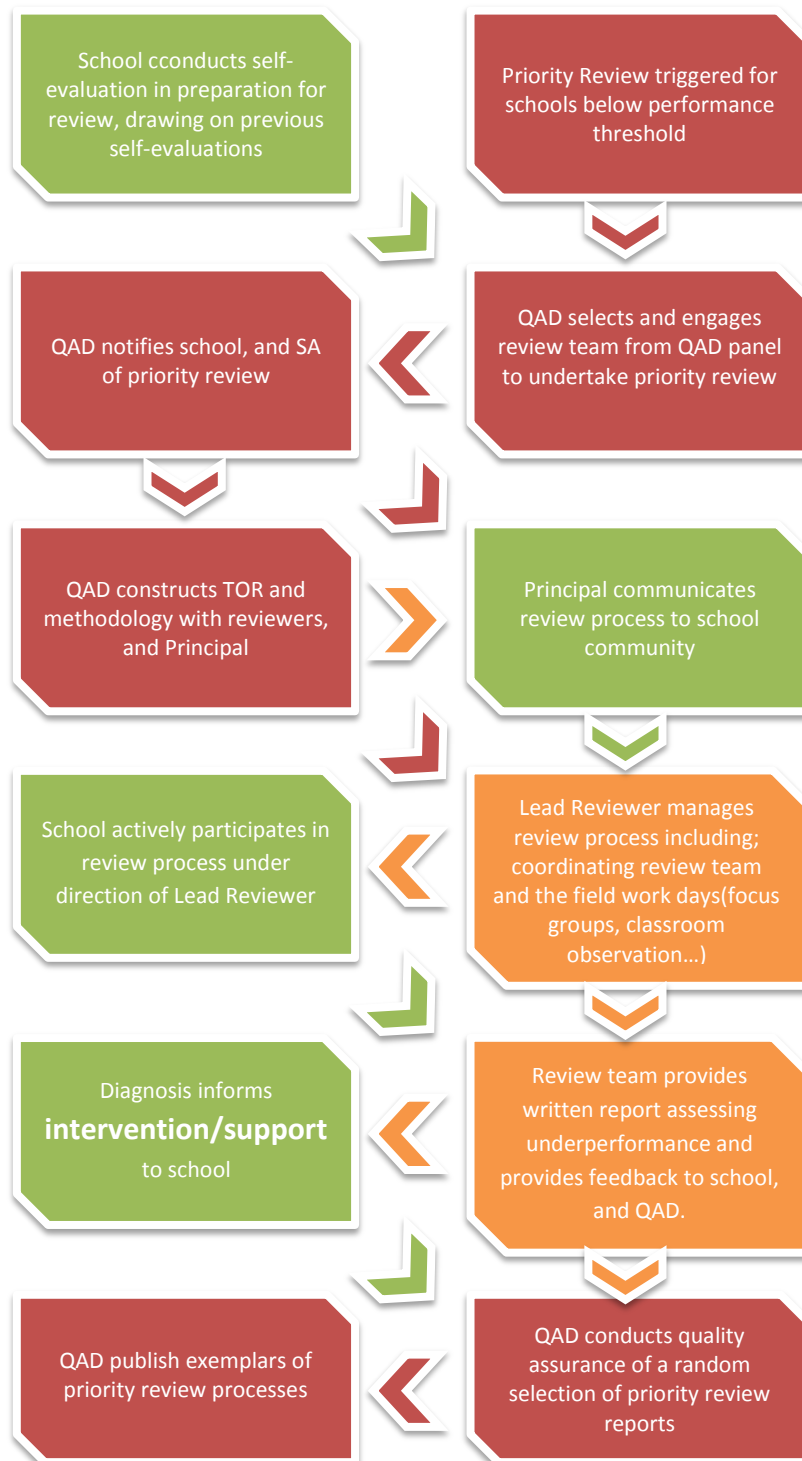
Priority reviews will:

- Engage a panel of expert school reviewers who will be assembled and contracted by QAD to undertake priority reviews in schools
- Be differentiated depending on the size and structure of the school – review panels will comprise one to six reviewers
- Include four to five field work days undertaken by the review team after the terms of reference and methodology have been developed in consultation with the principal, regional superintendent and QAD
- Have a clear focus on diagnosing the major issues contributing to underperformance
- Include opportunities for involving external Principals who can assist to build individual and system capacity and share knowledge
- Engage a lead reviewer as the point of contact for the principal



- Include a written report provided by the lead reviewer, outlining the issues contributing to underperformance
- Provide feedback through a meeting with staff, the school community and the lead reviewer.

Figure 8: Priority Review Process Guide



Intervention and support

The coupling of peer-led accountability with targeted intervention and support for schools with performance outcomes below expected levels ensures all schools receive the support they need to lift the students to the high level of outcomes expected from them. Research suggests that underperforming schools can turn around with effective intervention involving early and determined action, targeted resources supported by strong governance and management, and simultaneous whole-school action at the leadership, teacher and classroom levels. By providing appropriate support in the domains required, MoE should maximise the effectiveness of school autonomy.

Following the Priority Review, MoE will intervene where schools are not demonstrating sufficient progress or are falling short of minimum standards. Intervention and support will be preceded by a priority review, which will provide a thorough diagnosis of the root causes behind the school's underperformance. The diagnosis will lead to the design of tailored intervention approaches by a design team of school, Atoll Teacher Resource Centre (TRC) coordinator, SA section and QAD representatives referred to as SIPa.

Support will be tailored to suit each school's capacity to deliver improved student outcomes. Interventions will focus on strengthening the capacity of teachers and leaders to build the school's ability to self-improve, and to sustain improvement. Interventions will be supported and monitored through the TRC and senior Principals in the school region. Intervention support will remain in place until the school can return to effective autonomous operation, with students' achievement, engagement and wellbeing outcomes above the minimum thresholds.

Interventions will not follow a formula. They will be restorative and tailored to suit each school's needs, ranging through **monitoring and support**, **structured system support**, and **tailored external support**.

Monitoring and Support

Some schools completing a priority review will have the internal capability and capacity to sustain their own improvement. If so, MoE will monitor the school's compliance and outcomes and provide appropriate supports. Peer support through annual self-evaluation, and collaboration across networks and clusters of schools, will be a constant source of collegiate support.

Structured System Support

For some schools completing a priority review, the use of approved evidence-based tools and resources will be mandated in areas where professional practice requires improvement. These tools and resources may include, for example, a curriculum planning tool, a teaching practice model, or participation in a leadership development program offered by NIE.

The findings of some Priority Reviews may lead to the initiation of structured peer support programs. Leaders with expertise in fields particular to the identified organisational learning needs of a school will be invited to offer targeted support to the Principal, leadership team, or specific staff. This support could take the form of mentoring or coaching.



Tailored external support

Tailored external support will be determined according to a school's context and needs, as diagnosed through the Priority Review. A ***School Improvement Partners (SIPa)*** panel should be established by QAD to provide ready access to a suite of school improvement service providers with expertise in areas that represent common barriers to school improvement. The panel can offer specialised intervention expertise in the following fields:

- leadership, focusing on providing project support to school leaders, and a focus (through NIE) on staff culture, leadership distribution, technical leadership, and workforce management
- teaching and learning, focusing on curriculum planning and development, pedagogy and assessment
- school governance, focusing on assisting school boards and principals to develop processes and risk management systems needed to develop and maintain a high performing school
- strategic partnerships, focusing on community partnerships, productive school improvement networks, and student support and intervention
- literacy and numeracy, focusing on supporting effective instruction through coaching, mentoring and planning, and developing and implementing literacy and numeracy activities.

When more intensive intervention is required, it can be negotiated with each school's Principal and the board.

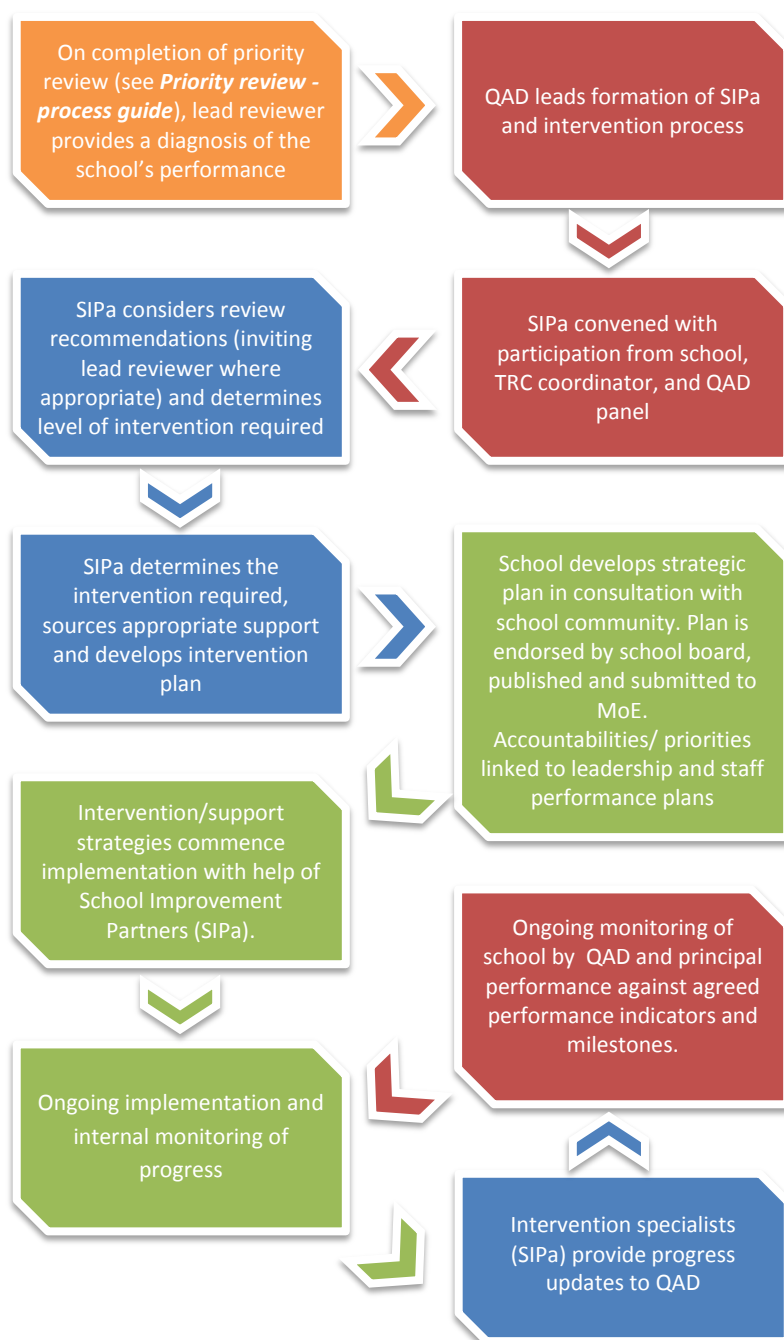
The success of all interventions should be documented and monitored.

Key Attributes of Intervention and Support

Intervention and Support will:

- Be determined by a design team the SIPa panel, with representation from the schools' senior management team, school board, the Atoll TRC coordinator, and others as required
- Scope the intervention, based on the specific context and needs of the school, drawing on the diagnosis from the priority review report
- Be tailored, developed and implemented, focusing on building the capacity of teachers and leaders to sustain their school's improvement and fostering whole-school approaches
- Be designed and delivered along a continuum, spanning:
 - *Monitoring and support*– a school may demonstrate the internal capability and capacity to sustain its improvement, and will be monitored and supported by QAD as needed
 - *Structured system support*– a school may adopt particular evidence-based approaches (for example, curriculum planning approach, teaching practice model) or receive specialised support from a high performing principal/school
 - *Tailored external support*– a school may receive specialised support from one or more intervention specialists who will be allocated from a panel, in accordance with the intervention design
- Include a panel of intervention specialists (SIPa) available to support schools requiring tailored external support. The panel will have expertise spanning the domains known to be common areas of weakness in schools in challenging circumstances (areas of focus for schools and specialists might include leadership, behaviour management, pedagogy, organisational culture, curriculum planning and community partnerships)
- Where possible, support the school's autonomous operation within existing budget provision; however, system funding will be explored for schools that require financial assistance. The SIPa will determine the ability of the school to fund the agreed intervention.

Figure 9: Intervention & Support Process Guide



Implementation and support

The implementation of the school improvement, quality assurance and accountability framework will have to take a phased approach where selected schools will start piloting the arrangements in early 2016. Most components of the new arrangements can start implementation in these pilot schools from 2016. Schools can start with undertaking their self-evaluation with QAD's support. From early 2016 onwards, with inputs from the pilot schools the SIQAA Framework implementation can be gradually rolled over to other schools in the country.

NIE in partnership with QAD can facilitate and conduct the trainings required for implementation of the SIQAA Framework. Such training will target school principals, board members, and potential reviewers.

For the external review process to function efficiently QAD will need to establishing and maintaining a pool of trained and accredited school reviewers (including practicing principals), to support the review process. The lead reviewers can be designated and trained Education Officers (EOs) from QAD who are assigned the responsibility of supervising the schools.

QAD can design and deliver an accreditation program open to educational professionals and practicing principals. The trainings can be delivered through the National Institute of Education (NIE). Such an accreditation program should cover a range of topics, including data analysis and evaluative techniques, facilitation skills, conducting challenging professional conversations, and establishing effective protocols to guide peer learning. Special priority should be given to practicing principals to participate in the accreditation program. This will support the building of principal knowledge and capacity in the transition to the new review processes.

QAD will continue to provide the necessary training and guidance to school managers and strengthen the internal supervision of schools, especially in carrying out the school self-evaluation as per the CFBS framework.

Similarly a specific training package for the school boards will have to be developed and delivered to improve the knowledge, understanding and skills of school board members including the Principals. This will provide them with the skills to execute their role in implementing the framework.

For the effective implementation of the SIQAAF, MoE will need to develop the necessary tools, and build its own capacity to

- provide timely, accurate and functional performance data that enables school-level benchmarking, and which provides feedback from system surveys and sample assessments
- provide access to core performance indicators, transparent performance standards for schools, and clear expectations/triggers of graduated support and intervention
- monitor school performance against a range of core indicators and provide targeted responses to demonstrated issues related to school performance and student outcomes
- maintain a pool of trained and accredited school reviewers (including practising principals) and provide guidance and resources for school review activities



Tools to be developed and to be further refined include templates for School Strategic Plan, Annual School Improvement Plan and the School Annual Report. Further, the development of school performance charts and statistical tools for generating performance tables will also be very helpful for streamlined implementation of the framework.

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