



Centre for
Transformative
Change in Schools

Quality Teaching Rounds in Scotland

**Evaluation of a pilot with schools and
community partners**

Centre for Transformative
Change in Schools (CentTCS)
University of Glasgow

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Executive Summary

This pilot explored how Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) could support professional learning in Scottish schools and how interactions between teachers and community partners could develop teachers' equity-focused discussion and skills during rounds and beyond. It expanded on previous research and development of QTR in other national contexts by combining training on the Quality Teaching Model (QTM), school-based Rounds and three Community Learning Days.

The findings support a further, carefully supported pilot. Teacher accounts describe valuable professional dialogue, closer collaboration and early applications of the model to practice. A summary of survey responses from seven teachers showed positive improvements in how connected they felt to colleagues and in their confidence in their teaching. These are encouraging indications from a small, unevenly sustained project; they do not establish that the pilot improved teaching quality or pupil outcomes.

What the pilot showed

Rounds created time for detailed reflection. Teachers valued observing colleagues, discussing evidence through a shared framework and recognising strengths as well as areas for development. They reported that the process made discussion of teaching feel less personal and more constructive.

Community learning opened useful conversations but had mixed results. Teachers gained insights into pupils' lives and community resources. Some remained uncertain about how to connect these experiences to discussions during Rounds and to everyday teaching. Participation in the Community Learning Days declined among teachers and community participants, limiting continuity and the range of voices present.

The quality and success of activities depended on school staffing and sustained organisational support. Funding for teacher cover did not guarantee that replacement staff were available. That led to the attrition of one school team and the truncation of Rounds activities in another. Participants also wanted a clearer route from an initial experience to continuing professional learning after the conclusion of pilot activities.

Recommended next steps

The following recommendations would support continuation and inform future expansion:

- Agree the purpose, scope and commitments for a further phase with the local authority, schools and community partners.
- Begin planning in the preceding school year, including incorporating QTR into School Improvement Plans, agreeing arrangements for teachers' time with relevant unions, and recognising project activities as continuing professional learning.
- Secure practical arrangements for teacher release, including the availability of cover, before activities begin.
- Protect the four core activities of the QTR process.
- Support teachers to connect community learning experiences with quality teaching in their classrooms.
- Continue research and evaluation of teachers' professional learning and development through Rounds and community learning activities.
- Track changes in classroom teaching, pupil learning and school culture over time.

1 Purpose and background

Four researchers from the Centre for Transformative Change in Schools (CentTCS) worked with colleagues at the University of Newcastle, Australia—with additional collaboration from the University of Sydney—and local education and community partners. Researchers from the University of Newcastle have produced robust evidence that QTR supports professional dialogue, improves teaching, and positively impacts pupil learning in Australia. Research teams from other countries are working with teachers to develop and evaluate the use of QTR with promising results. Funding from the University of Glasgow's Glasgow Global Partnership Fund supported the expansion of these activities to schools in Scotland.

In addition to exploring the implementation of core components of the QTR process, the project aimed to build upon these processes by developing teachers' dispositions, knowledge, and skills related to the equity focus of QTR's underpinning Quality Teaching Model (QTM). The pilot activities that supported these objectives included the four QTR core components along with community activities. The focus on educational equity and connecting teachers and communities reflects CentTCS' mission and draws upon the expertise of CentTCS researchers.

The Quality Teaching Model

The Quality Teaching Model (QTM) was developed by Laureate Professor Jenny Gore and colleagues at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia. Introduced in 2003, it organises 18 elements of teaching within three dimensions.

Dimension	Focus
Intellectual Quality	The depth of knowledge, understanding and thinking developed through a lesson.
Quality Learning Environment	The expectations, support and participation that enable pupils to learn.
Significance	How learning connects with pupils' knowledge, cultures, experiences and the wider world.

The pilot activities gave particular attention to the Significance dimension: background knowledge, cultural knowledge, knowledge integration, inclusivity, connectedness and narrative. Activities explored how:

1. familiar knowledge helps pupils make sense of new learning by reducing pupils' cognitive load and increasing the “fit” between what pupils already know and new material being taught in a lesson;
2. teaching can recognise whose experiences and identities count in school by opening up opportunities to improve pupils' sense of belonging and affirm their sense that school is “for me” because they can see themselves and their communities in formal school curriculum and teaching.

Quality Teaching Rounds

Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) uses the model within a structured cycle of professional learning. A small, stable group of teachers discusses a reading and observes one of the teachers teaching a complete lesson. Each teacher then codes the lesson, using the model to judge the evidence for its 18 elements, before the group discusses its reasoning together. The four core components of the QTR process are therefore: Reading discussion, lesson observation, individual coding, and coding discussion. Everyone takes a turn to host a Round. Reciprocal participation and confidential discussion support professional learning.

What the Australian evidence contributes

Australian randomised trials provide a substantive rationale for this pilot. Gore and colleagues (2017) found improvements in observed teaching quality and teacher morale, with teaching-quality effects sustained six months later. A subsequent trial involving 5,478 pupils found greater progress in mathematics for pupils whose teachers undertook QTR (Gore et al., 2021). These studies support investigating QTR in Scotland.

2 Plans and activities

The original plan

The September 2025 design envisaged 16 teachers across four linked primary and secondary schools undertaking Rounds alongside a learning community of educators, community members and researchers. The planned sequence began in autumn 2025 and included training, repeated Rounds, teacher meetings (including collaboration across the primary/secondary transition), community activities, and interviews and surveys. Analysis and dissemination were intended to continue beyond the funded activity.

What took place

Ten teachers from three schools were initially involved, alongside community participants connected through third sector organisations. Activity began later than originally envisaged: teachers attended a two-day workshop in February 2026, and the three Community Learning Days took place between April and June at a third sector organisation serving a marginalised area where some of the teachers' pupils lived. Educator and community member participation varied across activities and over time.

Stage (Spring 2026)	Description of Activities
Training (February)	Two days at the University of Glasgow, led by a Quality Teaching Adviser from the QT Academy, University of Newcastle.
School-based Rounds (February-June)	Three school teams embarked on Rounds. Two continuing teams completed a Round for each member. Staffing shortages ended other participation early. Researchers attended coding discussions and lesson observations when possible.
Community Learning Days (April, May, June)	Three days combined teacher learning in the morning with lunch and shared activities involving community participants later in the day.
Evaluation (February-June)	Educator interviews, a community focus group, survey data, activity artefacts, exit slips, meetings and researcher reflections were recorded as evidence sources.

How the Community Learning Days developed

Community Learning Days (CLD) were designed to support the development of teachers' dispositions, knowledge, and skills necessary for addressing educational equity in class. Research has established that teachers' knowledge of pupils' lives beyond school can inform relevant and responsive teaching when the required dispositions, knowledge, and skills are developed. The Significance dimension of the QTM focuses on these aspects of teaching. The pilot explored how supplementing the process of QTR with Community Learning Days could further support teacher understanding of this dimension of the QTM. Additionally, teachers from the associated primary and secondary schools had dedicated time to consider how pupils encountered quality teaching across the primary and secondary transition.

CLDs were scheduled as full days for teachers rather than after-school sessions in response to feedback from school leadership that further explained teacher workday agreements and union stipulations. During CLDs, teachers met together during the morning session and then teachers and community members met together during the afternoon session. CentTCS researchers designed and facilitated these sessions.

	Primary and secondary teachers (morning session)	Teachers and community members (afternoon session)
CLD 1	Discussion of pupil knowledge, motivation and school transitions	Mapping of pupils' home – school journeys and community experiences
CLD 2	Learning across primary and secondary curriculum levels	Creative artefacts workshop to discuss experiences of advantage and disadvantage as contextualised within the community
CLD 3	Applying the Significance dimension to lesson planning and reflecting on the learning journey	

The first CLD combined teacher discussion of pupil knowledge, motivation and school transitions with shared mapping of pupils' journeys and community experiences. The second considered learning across primary and secondary curriculum levels and used creative artefacts to discuss experiences of advantage and disadvantage as contextualised within the community. The third focused on applying the Significance dimension to lesson planning and reflecting on the learning journey.

Sessions included agreed norms, introductory conversations and feedback. A community venue and shared meals supported the meetings, and community participants received gift cards. The sequence moved from exploring knowledge and experience towards possible classroom application, although attendance became increasingly difficult to sustain.

3 Evidence and confidentiality

The basis of this evaluation

The research proposed for this pilot sought to learn through collaborative activity as well as document it. This report is an early descriptive evaluation of activities and emerging outcomes, rather than the complete qualitative analysis. It draws upon project management documents, surveys, teacher interviews, field notes, and researcher reflections. The qualitative synthesis identifies recurring ideas and differences across the accounts of teachers who completed all project activities, then considers them alongside project management information, researcher notes and reflections and the survey summary.

Protecting people in a small pilot

Findings are reported as pooled themes, without participant labels, attributed quotations or school comparisons. Names of schools and community organisations, precise locations, personal histories, distinctive curriculum examples and detailed attendance breakdowns are omitted. Photographs, maps, personal artefacts and individual survey lines are not reproduced.

Brief verbatim snippets are marked with quotation marks, but they carry no speaker labels and are not linked across sections. Snippets illustrate views without indicating how widely they were shared; surrounding prose synthesises the accounts. Small overall counts are retained where needed to understand the evidence. These choices reduce identification risk.

4 Learning through Quality Teaching Rounds

Time for sustained professional reflection

The teacher accounts consistently valued the opportunity to observe lessons and discuss them at length. Participants described limited previous opportunities for observation beyond familiar colleagues and for substantive discussion afterwards. As one teacher stated, “the most rewarding part has been the discussion afterwards. It was the most reflective process I've ever been involved with.” The format of Rounds gave teachers time to examine what had happened, consider different interpretations and reflect together.

An initial concern that a whole day was excessive became an appreciation of the depth of discussion the time allowed. The practical lesson is that protected discussion time was part of the learning process. Reducing that time could alter an aspect participants valued.

A shared framework for constructive discussion

Teachers described the model as “giving names to specific things” they had previously discussed more informally. Its structure helped them move beyond general impressions to consider different elements of a lesson. The distinction between analysing practice and criticising a person was captured in a participant’s phrase “it’s just about the teaching,” leaving teachers space to identify their own next steps.

This shared language was still developing. One teacher pointed to the need for “a longer exposure for it to become my ‘go-to’ vocabulary.” Being able to use the model deliberately was distinct from having its terminology become an automatic part of everyday professional conversation. The evidence supports an emerging common framework, rather than complete integration into routine practice.

Closer professional relationships

Working with colleagues beyond usual teaching groupings made different practices more visible. Teachers described learning about colleagues' approaches, recognising their commitment and “forming those stronger bonds” that could support future collaboration. Seeing familiar pupils in different lessons also prompted reflection on

how participation and engagement can vary with the learning context and across subjects.

Early applications to teaching and planning

Participants described using QTM to recognise their existing pedagogical strengths and to consider changes. Reported applications included reviewing units of work and broadening the cultural and social perspectives represented in teaching materials. This extended use of QTM beyond the observed lesson is a concrete indication of professional learning being taken into planning.

These are self-reported applications. Their implementation across classrooms, persistence over time and consequences for pupils were not independently established in this evaluation. Teachers' interest in continuing was accompanied by concern that the work could fade if it remained an isolated initiative without scheduled opportunities to return to it.

5 Learning across school and community boundaries

New knowledge and opportunities to listen

Teachers described learning more about local community organisations, pupils' experiences beyond school and community members' views of education: “I definitely learned things about the local community that I didn't know before.” Mapping and storytelling opened discussion of resources, relationships, responsibilities and barriers less visible from within school. The project team recorded community members' willingness to support good schooling and the significance of their accounts of their own experiences in school.

The emerging benefit was greater awareness and the opening of dialogue. Sustained changes in relationships, shared decision-making and community members' experiences of being heard remain to be examined. The focus on the Significance dimension of the Quality Teaching Model across learning days led to specific examples of teachers developing awareness, knowledge, and reflection on their practice.

Insight did not always lead to a clear next step

However, immediate responses to the community activities varied. Alongside accounts of useful learning was uncertainty: “I don't know how much it's going to impact my day-to-day practise.” Teachers also questioned what the group was working towards. Some perceived the activities as affirming approaches they already valued, rather than identifying a clear change to make. Declining attendance and changing group membership further weakened a sense of continuity.

The link between understanding pupils' lives, examining assumptions and designing teaching needs to be further established. A future phase should provide opportunities to explore classroom implications.

Discomfort was part of the experience

Accounts included discomfort when community members discussed negative experiences of schooling or understood local places differently from teachers. The comment “I found them to be pretty awkward” describes this response to the community sessions. Some teacher responses treated community members' earlier school experiences as distinct from current practice as reflected in the comment that “we don't do that now.” This observation suggests that dialogue did not always produce a shared interpretation of the problem or its relevance to contemporary schooling. Differences in experience and perspective need time and careful facilitation so that discomfort can lead to insights and learning.

Connections between primary and secondary education

Teacher discussions also raised questions about curriculum progression and the information available to educators when pupils move from primary to secondary. Participants valued opportunities to understand colleagues' contexts and highlighted uncertainty about how existing information reaches classroom teachers. These were issues identified for further work, not verified findings of a failure in any school's procedures.

Declining participation in pilot activities limited sustained participant collaboration across primary and secondary. The pilot therefore identified useful questions about

transition and curriculum continuity without demonstrating that those questions had been resolved.

6 Survey findings

The pre/post survey reports results for seven teachers. Average scores moved favourably across professional connectedness and the efficacy measures. *Efficacy* concerns teachers' beliefs about their capacity to act effectively; it is distinct from an independent assessment of teaching quality or pupil learning.

The pre-round survey was administered at the end of the two-day training due to logistical necessity. It is therefore a baseline before school-based Rounds, not a measurement before the entire programme. Changes associated with the initial training cannot be estimated from this comparison.

Measure in the survey summary	Mean direction	Reported d
Connectedness to the profession	Increase	0.59
General efficacy or effective practice	Increase	0.87
Efficacy for classroom management	Increase	0.44
Efficacy for instructional strategies	Increase	0.74
Efficacy for student engagement	Increase	0.70
Teacher responsibility negative scale	Decrease	-0.55
Teacher responsibility positive scale	Increase	1.07

The figure labels standardised changes as d. Values are reproduced as reported, without recalculation. The negative sign records a decrease in the negative responsibility scale (resulting in a positive change). The two indicators of teacher responsibility indicated greater ownership of classroom practice and a stronger belief in making a difference to pupils' lives.

Perceived impact of QTR

The survey indicates favourable ratings of QTR's contribution to professional relationships and teaching quality, and perceived benefits for pupil achievement. These are teachers' perceptions, not measured changes in actual teaching or pupil achievement.

How to interpret the results

The pattern is encouraging and broadly consistent with the teacher accounts. However, the small sample, absence of a comparison group and uneven participation prevent causal conclusions or generalisation. Training, Rounds, community activity and other experiences may all have contributed.

7 Overall evaluation and its limits

Professional learning was the clearest area of promise

The clearest finding is that participating teachers valued sustained, structured discussion of teaching. Their accounts of reflection, professional relationships and early use of the model are consistent with the favourable survey pattern. The pilot provides a credible basis for further investigation of QTR's acceptability and usefulness in Scotland. It does not yet provide an independent estimate of improvement in teaching.

School and community dialogue remained exploratory

The activities brought different experiences into conversation and prompted questions about the relationship between classroom learning and life beyond school. Immediate benefits to community participants remained unclear, which could have contributed to the decline in participation. Learning days broadened teachers' awareness of the local community and prompted reflection on their practice, although there remained a desire for clearer connections to specific classroom applications.

Feasibility depended on practical conditions

Teacher shortages and the availability of cover affected participation. Original project planning did not distinguish financial support for cover from the practical availability of replacement staff. Scheduling, examinations, competing activities and maintaining a stable group also required attention. These constraints limit what can be concluded about an approach that participants could not all experience to the same extent.

There was interest in continuing and introducing aspects of QTR more widely, alongside a concern that "it feels like now it's just going to drift." Sustaining the work requires a

clear purpose, leadership support and enough time for the activities that teachers found valuable.

Financial investment also requires consideration. With substantial participant attrition, the initial investment made in the training and resourcing of the pilot supported fewer participants through the full programme than anticipated. Having a smaller number of participating schools than planned, along with participant attrition, limited opportunities to realise the potential benefits of that investment. This experience highlights the importance of securing the conditions for sustained participation. Future investment should therefore be accompanied by practical commitments to staff release, reliable cover and continuity of participation, with costs considered alongside the learning and outcomes achieved.

Limits on the conclusions

The evidence comes from a very small, locally situated pilot. Participation and follow-up were uneven. Participants who completed the pilot and research activities may have had more favourable experiences or more supportive conditions than those whose participation ended.

Researchers were also organisers and facilitators, so their preliminary interpretations reflect involvement in the work. Self-reported learning, confidence and satisfaction are useful evidence but do not substitute for independently assessed practice. There is no comparison group, no established longer-term follow-up and no direct pupil-outcome analysis in this evaluation.

The appropriate judgement is to continue learning through a supported further phase. The pilot is insufficient on its own to justify claims of effectiveness across schools, measured pupil benefit or readiness for authority-wide implementation.

8 Priorities for a further phase

This evaluation suggests four priorities for further phases:

8.1 Secure time and people before starting

The local authority and participating schools should agree who coordinates the work, who resolves problems at each school and how teachers will be released. Both the funding and availability of cover need to be confirmed, contingency arrangements need to be agreed, and activities need to be scheduled around known pressures. QTR should be included in school improvement and professional learning plans so that participants know when and how the work will continue.

8.2 Preserve the processes that support learning

Further phases should protect the shared QTM pedagogical framework, discussion of a reading, observation of a full lesson, individual coding and sustained group discussion. Further phases should also maintain the norms of reciprocal participation and confidentiality and keep the discussion focused on professional learning.

Schools should work with QT Advisers to plan any adaptations. The QT Academy describes possible adaptations to group composition, scheduling and technology, while stressing the importance of maintaining the components and underlying purposes of Rounds. In further phases, it will also be important to record what changes, why it changes and how teachers experience the revised process. An introduction to selected elements of the model should not automatically be treated as equivalent to participation in QTR.

8.3 Connect community activities with inquiry into teaching

Community partners, teachers and researchers should identify mutually beneficial activities that support teachers' understandings of pupils' lives outside of school. Activities should include ample time for community experiences to be heard on their own terms, and support for teachers to examine what these experiences might mean for curriculum, relationships and classroom participation.

Facilitators should ask participants about barriers to continued involvement, without interpreting absence as disinterest. Stable membership and accessible scheduling need attention alongside the content of sessions.

Finally, facilitators should explore appropriate opportunities for young people to contribute their own perspectives, with suitable support and consent. Stakeholders should make an explicit agreement about what the project will give back.

8.4 Give collaboration across primary and secondary a practical focus

Questions about progression and transition can be used as starting points for joint work and collegial conversations about QTM. For example, teachers could examine what pupils already know, how that knowledge is communicated from primary to secondary and how teaching can build on pupils' knowledge development. Collaborators should agree on a manageable task, a date to revisit it and a way of checking what changed.

9 Evaluation of the next phase

A further phase should agree the questions and evidence with partners before activity starts (see table below). The evaluation should distinguish between successful activities, professional learning, changes in practice and consequences for pupils and teachers.

Question	Evidence to collect
Can participation be sustained?	Attendance and completion records, changes to the protocol, cover arrangements, resource use and confidential feedback about barriers.
What do teachers learn and use?	Interviews, selected Rounds discussions, examples of planning and independently reviewed practice where feasible. Include varied experiences and follow-up after the initial cycle.
What changes for community partners?	Direct community feedback on influence, relevance, participation and benefit, including experiences of those who do not continue.
How do community activities support teacher learning and practice?	Examples tracing community activities into teacher dialogue, lessons during Rounds, self-reports and pupil perspectives.
What changes for pupils?	Pupil perspectives and appropriate measures of engagement, belonging or learning, selected with partners and collected over a suitable period.

The following actions would address the main uncertainties left by this pilot:

For surveys, measure before training as well as after Rounds, retain confidential matching information and report item-specific sample sizes and missing data. Analyse the uncertainty around changes. Consider a suitable comparison design and a sample planned for estimating effects.

For the qualitative work, continue to collect evidence through interviews, discussions, artefacts, feedback and researcher reflections. Compare perspectives and look deliberately for evidence that complicates the preliminary findings from this pilot.

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