

Item: 7

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 10 November 2021.

National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2021/22.

Report by Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To present the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2021/22.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, in December 2020, the Scottish Government published the latest update on progress in relation to the National Improvement Framework.

2.2.

That, in 2019/20, the Orkney National Improvement Plan was suspended, with the 2020/21 plan focussing on supporting learning and recovery as a result of COVID-19.

2.3.

That, in relation to the National Improvement Framework, a draft summary of progress made locally, as well as an outline of next steps, is detailed in Appendix 1.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2021/22, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

3. Background

3.1.

The Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education was first published on 13 December 2016. These documents set out the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland's children and young people which can be summarised as follows:

- **Excellence through raising attainment:** ensuring that every child achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, set out within Curriculum for Excellence levels, and has the right range of skills, qualifications and achievements to allow them to succeed.
- **Achieving equity:** ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

3.2.

The National Improvement Framework sets out the undernoted four strategic priorities which must be focussed on if that vision is to be realised:

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

3.3.

The latest update by the Scottish Government on progress in relation to the [National Improvement Framework](#) was published in December 2020. This reports on progress under the framework's organisational themes of:

- School Leadership.
- Teacher Professionalism.
- Parental Engagement.
- Assessment of Children's Progress.
- School Improvement.
- Performance Information.

4. Looking Back, Looking Forward

4.1.

Over the last 12 months or so, Orkney's education service has been singularly focused on managing learning, progress, achievement and attainment in the context of COVID-19. Schools and nurseries have been closed, partially open and fully open. Systems and processes to support 'learning at home' were developed and refined and alternative assessment arrangements to support progress through the senior phase were implemented.

4.2.

During this period, and noted at the meeting of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee held on 11 November 2020, work in relation to priorities previously set out was suspended and replaced by the agenda to support learning at home as well as a COVID-19 School Return Local Delivery Plan.

4.3.

In August 2021, the new academic year started, and all settings are 'open'. The context, however, remains challenging. Restrictions are easing and the whole community has been adjusting to ways of living and working that may need to be in place for some time.

4.4.

It remains appropriate to focus the work of the service on 'recovery'. It is important to understand the impact COVID-19 has had on individuals and families and how it has affected learner wellbeing as well as their progress. Planning for learning, and the aspiration for children and young people, needs to be ambitious, but it also needs to be based on an appreciation of current knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently, services, schools and settings have been asked to focus on the undernoted three main themes as they develop improvement and team plans:

- Health and wellbeing.
- Learning and teaching.
- Self-evaluation.

4.5.

Underpinning the three themes outlined in section 4.4 above, the main goals of the education service, namely 'raising the bar and closing the gap' (excellence through raising attainment and ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed)' remains unchanged.

4.6.

A refreshed local plan, in respect of the National Improvement Framework, which includes a summary of the progress made, as well as an outline of next steps, is attached at Appendix 1 to this report. This has been submitted, albeit in draft form, to the Scottish Government in response to the requirement for this to be complete by the end of September 2021.

5. Human Resource Implications

5.1.

Whilst there are no direct Human Resource implications arising out of this report, the Education Improvement Plan provides an overarching framework that will inevitably impact on the workload for all staff delivering and supporting education for the young people of Orkney.

5.2.

The targets in the improvement priorities will be required to be delivered during the working day or negotiated with staff through the Teacher's Working Time Agreement process, which will require engagement and negotiation with the relevant Teaching Trade Unions.

6. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

7. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and statutory reporting duties and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Plan.

8. Financial Implications

The Service has confirmed that all development will be funded through the existing Continuing Professional Development and Curriculum for Excellence budget streams as well as the existing Scottish Attainment Challenge Fund.

9. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10. Contact Officers

James Wylie, Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, extension 2477, Email james.wylie@orkney.gov.uk.

Peter Diamond, Head of Education, extension 2436, Email peter.diamond@orkney.gov.uk.

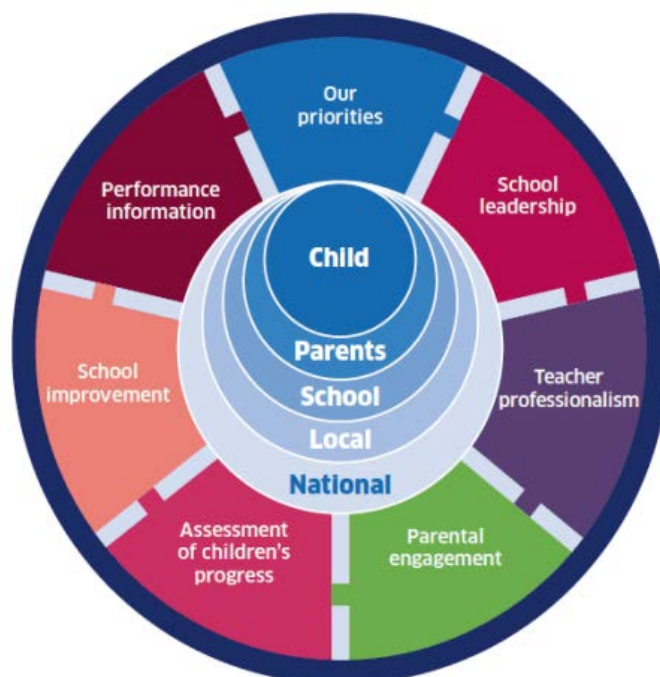
11. Appendices

Appendix 1: National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2021-2022.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment.

Appendix 1:

National Improvement Framework:



Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

The national [Education: improvement framework and plan - 2021 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-improvement-framework-and-plan-2021-2022/pages/introduction/) (www.gov.scot) replaces last year's NIF and Improvement Plan. Together with the [National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report](#), the NIF has improved the availability, quality and consistency of data, and extended understanding of what works to drive improvements for children and young people across all parts of the Scottish education system. It sets out the vision and priorities for Scottish education that have been agreed across the system, and the national improvement activity that needs to be undertaken to help deliver those key priorities.

The NIF complements the ongoing implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, Getting It Right for Every Child and Developing the Young Workforce, which are the three supporting pillars of the Scottish education system.

The National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2021-2022 reflects the work done locally as well as the activities planned in relation to the NIF. It is organised using the NIF headings. Each section includes a reflection (looking back) as well as an outline plan (looking forward).

Detailed and specific planning will be contained within the Council Plan and Service Plan, as well as team (sector) and individual plans and monitored using Pentana, the Council's performance management tool.

OUR PRIORITIES

Looking back: Over the last 12 months or so, the service has been singularly focused on managing wellbeing, learning, progress, achievement and attainment in the context and limitations created by COVID-19.

Schools and nurseries have been closed, partially open and fully open; at short notice systems and processes to support 'learning at home' were developed and appropriate support for our most vulnerable children and young people was put in place.

Alternative assessment arrangements (senior phase) have been developed and implemented.

Currently all settings are 'open' in the context of a wider community where restrictions are easing and everyone is beginning to understand what living with Covid might mean.

Looking forward: As the new academic year gets underway, it is important to base our work within the context of 'recovery'. We need to understand the impact Covid has had on individuals and families and how it has affected their wellbeing as well as their progress. Consequently, we have asked services, schools and settings to focus on 3 main themes as they develop improvement and team plans:

Health and Wellbeing

Learning and Teaching

Self-evaluation

Underpinning these 3 themes are the primary goals of the education service. The fundamental focus on 'raising the bar and closing the gap' (excellence through raising attainment and ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed) remains unchanged.

LEADERSHIP

Looking back: In September 2019, a new Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing was appointed. A considered restructuring of the whole central service, delayed in order to take forward the COVID-19 strategic response, is almost complete with remits, roles and responsibilities being overhauled.

Over the last academic year, the capacity of the local authority's central education team has been impacted by staffing shortages at head teacher level. This resulted in two of the three Service Improvement Officers working in schools as acting head teachers.

The end of the academic year (2020/21) saw the retirement of 4 long serving and successful head teachers. Another head teacher, who was successful in her search for employment on the Scottish mainland, also left. A very successful recruitment drive saw 4 new head teachers joining us for the start of the academic year 2021/22.

The final post is being covered internally on a temporary basis, pending a further round of recruitment.

Looking forward: During the course of the next 12-18 months the service will:-

- Undertake a review of the early learning and childcare sector leadership pathway and workforce structure.
- Introduce a revised induction programme for school leaders.
- Consolidate and extend the opportunities for coaching and mentoring across the leadership network.
- Consolidate and develop the leadership learning offer to existing and aspiring leaders within and across all sectors.
- Work with two schools as part of the Northern Alliance's project – 'Driving Improvement from Within'.
- Begin to implement The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child Scotland Bill:
 - Introduce and develop a Participation Model of engagement for all children and young people with additional support needs.
- Support schools to engage with the Rights Respecting School programme.

PROFESSIONALISM

Looking back: While managing schools and establishments in the context of COVID-19 has had many challenges, opportunities for personal development and professional learning have continued to be available. The nature and format may have been fundamentally different ('face to face' learning being predominately replaced with 'virtual' learning). A significant element of this will be captured within individual portfolios, but shared learning opportunities include:

- Multi-agency and cross-sectoral learning as part of the programme of development supporting improvements in Orkney's approach to supporting children and young people in need of care and protection.
- Nurture to mitigate the potential impact of adversity and trauma for children and young people.
- Awareness raising of neurodiversity pathways to support our children and young people.
- Video Interactive Guidance: Support and training for Children and Families from the Education Service.
- Improving the engagement and achievement of all learners, including those who require additional support, through the introduction and implementation of the 'Circle Framework' across all settings.

Looking forward: During the course of the next 12-18 months the service will:-

- Consolidate and develop the induction programme for new (probationary) teachers.
- Refresh support for Professional Update.
- Consolidate and develop the learning offer in relation to the following:
 - Play-based Pedagogy (P1).
 - Complete the 'Sounds Write' pilot with 5 schools and plan the roll out across the primary schools (Primary Sector).
 - Getting it Right – Outcome Focused Planning (all sectors).
 - Inclusive Practice and the Circle Framework (all sectors).
 - Develop and embed Video Interactive Guidance approaches to support parents/carers to attune and develop positive relationships with their children.
 - Roll out 'My Rights, My Say' (an approach to ensuring participation of children and young people with additional support needs) across all Primary and Secondary school settings:
- Support schools to register and work towards achieving (at least) the Bronze award of Rights Respecting Schools.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Looking back: Core to any success achieved during the pandemic has been the support and engagement of parents. Schools and establishments worked hard to create a range of materials to support 'learning at home' and ensure that parents could help and support their children. Without doubt the experience of families has been mixed and the re-opening of schools was widely welcomed across the community.

Parent Councils have, in the main, been able to continue to operate virtually and support and engagement by parent bodies for the recruitment processes undertaken virtually has been second to none.

Looking forward: During the course of the next 12-18 months the service will:-

- Re-establish meeting, networking and learning opportunities for Parent Councils (members and chairs).
- Consolidate and develop policy and practice in relation to Home Education.
- Continue to develop the practice of Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) across Education /Partner Services.

- Support parents/carers full participation, with their child, in the child's planning process for children and young people with additional support needs.

ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

Looking back: Attainment in literacy and numeracy has fluctuated in P1, P4 and P7 since the first reported data in session 2015-16.

In 2018-19 literacy levels in P1, P4 and P7 in reading, writing and listening and talking were highest in P1, but still lower than the Scottish national figures. At S3, although still a varying picture, results have, at times, been better than the Scottish national average. In numeracy at S3 there has been a stable picture and results have been consistently above the national average from between 4 to 21 percentage points.

At the beginning of session 2019-20, the local authority, with the support of the attainment advisor (AA), developed an attainment strategy which focused on improving attainment in all stages and for literacy and numeracy within Broad General Education.

The strategy included scrutiny of assessment, moderation and teachers' professional judgements. The AA worked alongside Service Improvement Officers and senior leaders in schools to evaluate and devise new tracking and monitoring processes. The introduction of an authority-wide exercise to collect and collate predicted grades was central to the improvement agenda.

All schools returned predicted levels in December 2019 and then again in February 2020.

The predicted data for all stages in February 2020 showed that there would have been an increase across all stages in literacy of between 3 to 24 percentage points, except in S3 third level reading and listening and talking which would have remained the same. In numeracy the increase across P1, P4 and P7 would have been between 8 to 11 percentage points. In S3 the third level results were predicted to be the same at 94% and in fourth level to decrease by 5%.

Significant support for staff and pupils has been in place to ensure best progress possible through periods of full or partial lock down resulting in learning at home.

As the 2020/21 year ended schools had completed a review of progress and had made good progress in terms of setting clear goals for individuals, groups, and cohorts for 2021/22. However, the impact of interrupted learning is clear and there is evidence of a difference in attainment between where children and young people might have expected to be and where they are.

Looking forward: During the course of the next 12-18 months the service will:-

- Consolidate and develop the use of the BGE Tracking Toolkit to support progress and achievement in learning.

- Extend the application of the BGE Tracking Toolkit to support progress and achievement for:
 - Care Experienced Children and Young People.
 - Children and Young People whose attainment is adversely affected by poverty.
 - Young Carers.
 - Children and Young People who are accessing part time school placements.
- Consolidate and embed multi and single agency planning and appropriate target setting processes to measure progress for all children and young people with additional support needs.
- Review attainment, achievement and curriculum offer in secondary education with a focus on structure of the senior phase, including S3.
- Consolidate the use of tracking and monitoring for secondary pupils and, through further use of the Insight analysis tool development strategies, support progress and higher achievement throughout the senior phase.

IMPROVEMENT

Looking back: With the support of the attainment advisor, BGE attainment has now been collated and analysed in greater depth since 2019. This enables us to see trends and identify areas of focus. From the recent attainment analysis (June 2021), a priority now is to develop approaches and confidence in learning and teaching at the P4 stage in particular.

Looking forward: During the course of the next 12-18 months the service will continue focus on 'Recovery', work in 2021/22 will focus on achieving specific outcomes in relation to the following three themes:

Wellbeing

- Continue to promote and support young people's mental health and wellbeing in Orkney. Togetherall, is a clinically managed, online community designed to improve mental wellbeing and is now available for our secondary pupils to provide anonymous peer-to-peer interactions and round-the-clock support when they need it.

Learning and Teaching

- Develop approaches to learning, teaching and moderation at the P4 stage with a focus on writing initially, and numeracy thereafter.
- Inclusive Practice for All: Introduce and begin to develop the Circle Framework with school practitioners.

Quality Assurance

- Within the new service structure, develop approaches to quality assurance within and across schools that meets the needs of the service and schools in ensuring quality provision. A collaborative approach to this with Shetland, Western Isles, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and Education Scotland will be established.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Looking back: Through the national improvement framework, raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap has been and continues to be a significant national and local priority.

Looking forward: During the course of the next 12-18 months the service will:-

- Support intelligence led interventions with a focus on progress, achievement, and attainment at across levels, stages and phases.
- Hold termly meetings between every school and the attainment adviser, reviewing attainment and progress for all children and young people.
- Collate, analyse and act with respect to predicted BGE attainment data during the academic session (noting final BGE data submission in June 2022).



Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan	
Name of function/policy/plan to be assessed.	National Improvement Framework (NIF): Orkney Islands Council Education Standards and Quality Report and Improvement Plan
Service / service area responsible.	Education, Leisure and Housing: Education and Improvement/Leisure, Lifelong Learning and Inclusion
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Peter Diamond
Date of assessment.	19 October 2020 (revised 29 October 2021)
Is the function/policy/plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Associated costs will be within existing budget allocation with the budget lines: Continuing Professional Development and; Curriculum for Excellence.

2. Initial Screening	
What are the intended outcomes of the function/policy/plan?	To ensure Excellence and Equity in line with the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework.
State who is or may be affected by this function/policy/plan, and how.	Pupils and Staff. Pupils will experience consistency in line with new guidance from the Scottish Government. Staff workload will be managed through the working day and Teacher's Working Time Agreement.

<p>How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function/policy/plan?</p>	<p>Head Teachers have been significantly involved in the delivery of the plan to date; many aspects are operationalised through School Improvement Plans.</p>
<p>Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see engagement and consultation resources on OIC information portal).</p>	<p>Evidence from the Equality and Human Rights Commission shows that levels of attainment at school has generally improved although gaps persisted nationally including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in attainment were evident by Primary 1 – both by sex and for children living in the most deprived areas. • Girls continued to do better than boys, and some ethnic minority pupils performed well above the national average. • Gypsy/traveller pupils, those with additional support needs, looked after children and those living in the most deprived areas had lower levels of attainment than average. • Subject choices continued to show difference based on gender stereotypes for girls and boys, with likely implications for career paths in adult life. • Following the closure of schools in March 2020 in response to Covid-19, a significant focus has been understanding the impact on the welfare and wellbeing of children, young people and families.
<p>Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Interim Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.</p>	<p>The National Improvement Framework sets out to deliver excellence and equity for all children. The current priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children. • Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing and; • Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive leaver destinations for all young people.
<p>Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?</p>	<p>(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons).</p>
<p>1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.</p>	<p>No detrimental impact anticipated</p>

2. Sex: a man or a woman.	No detrimental impact anticipated; the plan contains outcomes that seek to promote greater inclusion, achievement and attainment for all children and young people
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	No detrimental impact anticipated
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	No detrimental impact anticipated
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	No.
6. Age: people of different ages.	Yes. By its nature, the plan aims to deliver outcomes that will have positive impacts for children and young people.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	No detrimental impact anticipated
8. Caring responsibilities.	No detrimental impact anticipated
9. Care experienced.	Yes – the National Improvement Plan sets out closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children as a key priority. Evidence shows that those children and young people who are care experienced are often those also experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. This plan therefore seeks to address inequalities in this area and will likely have a positive impact.
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	No.
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	No detrimental impact anticipated
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	Yes - positive. Specific actions (including those supported or funded by the Pupil Equity Fund) are identified to address and measure the attainment gap versus deprivation and this gap is the key driver for the National Improvement Strategy. There will therefore likely be a positive impact for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

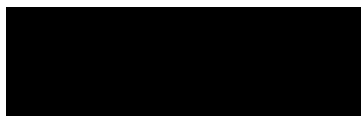
3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	Ensure that staff work within the working day and that time is negotiated within the Teachers Working Time Agreements
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	No.
What action is to be taken?	Outcomes from the plan that are linked to the Equality Outcomes will be reported annually
Who will undertake it?	Ensure that staff work within the working day and that time is negotiated within the Teachers Working Time Agreements.
When will it be done? (please provide specific dates).	If council agrees the plan from November onwards.
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	By Service Managers and Officers through regular/annual reporting as per the Improvement Plan requirements and linked to the Equality Outcome reporting where applicable.

Signature:



Date Revised 29 October 2021

Name: Peter Diamond

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Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk.