

Standards and Quality Report

THURSO HIGH SCHOOL

2022/23



Thurso High School

HIGHLAND COUNCIL Thurso High School, Ormlie Road, Thurso, Caithness KW14 7DS

This report is provided to families and partners to identify our achievements this session. The next steps in our improvement journey are also outlined.

Throughout the year we continuously evaluate what we do and how it makes a difference to our learners. We want to know what is working well for our school community and what needs further improvement.

Our children and young people are actively consulted and involved in this process. We also give staff, parents/carers, and other partners the opportunity to participate in discussions and activities in order to shape our improvement journey.

When we develop our improvement projects, we use key questions at planned review times throughout the session in order to know how well we are progressing towards achieving these positive outcomes and changes.

Our School

Thurso High School, built in 1958, is the most northerly secondary school on the Scottish mainland serving the coastal town of Thurso and the west of Caithness. We educate around 750 young people in a truly comprehensive environment and are proud of the social diversity of our catchment. There are 80 members of staff (74 full time equivalent), 60 (54.8 full time equivalent) of whom are teachers.

We have seven associated primary schools covering a wide geographic area. More than 50% of pupils use school transport with some pupils travelling up to twenty miles. Of our current pupils, 32% have recognised additional support needs and 15.2% are registered for free school meals. Our demographic is changing slightly due to changes in the major local employer of Dounreay and the increase in families moving into the area from the south.

Staffing can present a challenge due to our geographical remoteness and there is continual work required in being creative around staffing to meet pupils' curricular needs. Despite this we work hard to offer as broad a curriculum as possible, with a strong partnership with our close geographical neighbour North Highland College and use of online provision from Highland Virtual Academy and E-sGoil digital learning. We have very good numbers of pupils moving into positive post-school destinations.

Inclusion is a strong feature of our school with all pupils welcomed and valued equally. We have an Enhanced Provision base for pupils with severe and complex physical and learning difficulties and can offer pupils, where appropriate, an individualised blend of mainstream and Enhanced Provision learning. We aim for all pupils to be supported in appropriate and inclusive settings and pride ourselves on our provision for pupils to proactively address any barriers to learning with a Nurture programme that includes a Softstart Base, a Children's Service Worker base with excellent support for pupils, in school Youth Development Officer support and safe space provision and varied further opportunities for pupil support such as mentoring, Resilience groups, Friendship groups, etc. Our experienced and extremely hard-working Pupil Support team provide excellent pastoral support to pupils. We aim to personalise what we offer wherever possible to ensure achievement and wellbeing for all pupils.

Teamwork Respect Achievement Commitment Kindness

We have been a Gaelic Medium school since 2020-21, with one feeder primary school, Mountpleasant Primary School, and a total of ten pupils in session 2023-24. Our first cohort of Gàidhlig pupils will be entering S4 in the coming session and we also offer Gaelic Learners and Gaelic for Beginners in S6. We are enjoying our journey into this new area for us and working to increase awareness of Gaelic culture in the school.

We have good behaviour across the school in general, with staff and pupils working together on agreed whole school and classroom procedures. Our whole school work towards '*Creating a Classroom Culture*' focuses on consistency of practice across the school with pupils and teachers working in mutually respectful and calm learning environments. We have, however, an increased minority of pupils with challenging behavioural needs, with the greatest increase being in younger pupils. Where pupils have greater social, emotional or behavioural needs we work very hard with them, and parents or carers and other partners supporting them, to adapt arrangements that allow them to cope and to support them as fully as possible with this. Following the recent pandemic, we are finding that there is greatly increased need for support for some pupils and families. There are also increased attendance concerns, with an average pupil attendance rate of 91% (above the minimum expectation of 90%) in 2019 to 86% in 2023. There are 43 pupils in 2022-23 with less than 50% attendance compared with 9 pupils in 2018-19. Our exclusion rate rose sharply in 2021-22 from just 8 exclusions in 2019-20, with 24 exclusions in the recent session. All issues we are working very hard to address with the resources within our means.

Visitors to the school consistently find the pupils of Thurso HS to be polite and helpful and obviously proud of their school, with a warm, friendly atmosphere in the school. We also consistently receive excellent reports of the conduct of our pupils when away from school on trips or outings. We have good parental support through Parent Council and good attendance at Parents' Evenings and other school events.

All our staff, teaching and non-teaching, are valued members of our community and all are highly committed to providing the best for the pupils, who in turn contribute to the school in many ways including through our Prefect and House system which promotes our refreshed and updated core values of Teamwork, Respect, Attainment, Commitment and Kindness.

Teamwork Respect Achievement Commitment Kindness

Our School Vision, Values and Aims

Vision

For every pupil to achieve their potential in a safe, happy and caring environment in which all pupils feel valued.

Lèirsinn

Airson gach sgoilear comas a choileanadh ann an àrainneachd shàbhailte, thoilichte agus choibhneil far am bi a h-uile sgoilear a' faireachdainn gu bheil luach orra.

Values

Teamwork, Respect, Achievement, Commitment and Kindness (TRACK)

Luachan

Obair-sgioba, Urram, Coileanadh, Dealas agus Coibhneil

Aims

To create an ethos of kindness and respect so all pupils feel included, supported and valued;

To set high expectations for attainment, achievement, behaviour, attendance and punctuality;

To provide quality learning and teaching experiences for all;

To provide an engaging, challenging and creative curriculum for all learners;

To ensure all pupils leave Thurso High School to a positive and sustained destination.

Amasan

Airson nòs de coibhnealas agus urram a chruthachadh gus am bi gach sgoilear a' faireachdainn an lùib, taic agus luach.

Airson dùilean àrda a stèidheachadh airson coileanadh, modh, frithealachadh agus pongalachd;

Airson teagaisg is ionnsachadh càilidheachd a sholarachadh airson a h-uile duine; Airson Curraicealam tarraingeach, dùbhlanaich agus cruthachail a sholarachadh airson gach luchd-ionnsachaidh.

Pupil Voice: what is working well in our school?

Our children and young people identified the following strengths for our school this session:

- Pupils feel that behaviour in most classes allows pupils to learn and achieve.
- Most pupils feel that teachers are clear about what they are learning and that they understand teachers' explanations.
- Almost all of our first year pupils enjoyed their transition days in June last year and found it useful to meet their teachers and have S6 Prefect guides to support them.
- Most pupils feel that have someone in their school they can speak to if they are upset or worried about something and that staff treat them fairly and with respect.
- Most pupils feel that the school offers them the opportunity to take part in activities in school beyond the classroom and timetabled day.
- Our Gàidhlig Medium pupils feel very positively that learning Gaelic contributes to bilingualism, to learning other languages and to career paths.
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Teamwork Respect Achievement Commitment Kindness

Pupil Voice: what changes would you like to see made?

Our children and young people identified the following changes they would like to see and the difference these changes could make.

- More talk about mental health and how it affects physical health/ motivation and things to do to improve it.
- Our Gàidhlig Medium pupils are very keen to set up a whole school Gaelic club or committee to promote the language and culture more widely. They would also like to register together in an S1-S6 Gàidhlig registration class.
- Younger pupils would like more involvement in the school committees, for example Social and Sustainable Committees.
- Pupils would like to build a culture where it's okay to talk about being bullied and to have further assemblies to raise awareness of bullying.
- Pupils would like a variety of activities for younger pupils during breaks and lunches, to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Pupils would like to know who gave them merits and what for.
- Walls in corridors are dull; pupils would like them to be brighter and to include pupil artwork, wider achievement information and a focus on school ethos and TRACK.
- Social areas are very congested! Can designated areas be allocated for S3, 4 and 5?

Our Improvement Journey Headlines Session 2021/22

These projects are linked to the vision and priorities for Scottish Education based on delivering excellence and equity. Parent/Carer information is available [here](#).

Improvement Project 1: Improve Health and Wellbeing

Primary focus: School and ELC improvement

Year of Project: 3

Purpose: Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing by creating a positive and inclusive school ethos that reflects a commitment to respect, children's rights and positive relationships and removes barriers to learning through nurture and support.

Progress and impact:

Nif Driver: School and ELC leadership

Nif Driver: Teacher and practitioner professionalism

Nif Driver: Parental/carers involvement and engagement

Nif Driver: Performance information

PROGRESS

To address the concerning decrease in pupil attendance we have reviewed and updated our *THS Attendance and Intervention Procedures* in line with the Highland Council amended policy and our *THS Reluctant Attendance & School Refusal Policy*. At 4 weekly attendance review points we follow the planned intervention actions including letters home with support offered, all the support processes offered by our Attendance and Family Support leads and including Area Education Manager, Children's Reporter and Social Work interventions (see Pef Plan 2022-23 and 2023-24 also).

Part of the Attendance and Family Support leads' remit is also to support pupils who are frequently late to school.

IMPACT

Our planned Attendance intervention strategy with a five stage letters/phone calls/meetings/PTPS support process has had some success with 75 out of 99 S1-3 pupils targeted for intervention having an improved attendance over the most recent four-week period with an average of +11.07% improvement across the 99 pupils.

Working as part of this with some of our pupils who have been having the most difficulties with attendance is the Pef funded Attendance and Family Support Lead, following an intensive programme of support for the young person and family if required. Of the 21 pupils on their caseload since December, 12 of them have made significant improvements in their attendance ranging from +7% to +71% with an average of +25% improvement in attendance across these 12 pupils. For all pupils involved, including those who have not improved their attendance, the process has supported identification, through the questionnaires and close work with the families, of issues that are now being supported where possible through partner agencies such as CSW, YAT, YDO, Caithness Klics (Kids Living in Caring Situations), etc. so that pupils are much better supported regardless of their attendance.

NEXT STEPS

Increase Attendance and Family Support with an additional PSA post in order to be able to support more pupils; Attendance Leads to work in conjunction with Softstart base to a certain degree; further establish the processes of our school Attendance policy and involve the Area Manager, social work or Children's Reporter where required.

Nif Driver: School and ELC leadership

Nif Driver: Teacher and practitioner professionalism

Nif Driver: Parental/carers involvement and engagement

Nif Driver: School and ELC improvement

PROGRESS

Teamwork Respect Achievement Commitment Kindness

As part of our aim to create an ethos of kindness, support and respect our pupils are very aware of the behavioural framework they work within that has been created through our '*Creating a Classroom Culture*' programme which we have re-visited this session with all new staff and reviewed with all staff. This supports us to work consistently to create a mutually respectful learning environment as consistently as possible across all classrooms, with class teachers supported by FHs and SMT. We have refreshed our *Whole School and Classroom procedures* post Covid including discussion with pupils and sharing with parents and Parent Council, and all school staff. We have built lessons into our new PSE curriculum to actively teach the behaviour we wish to see in Thurso High School to all BGE pupils. This is a 3-year project.

IMPACT

This is evidenced through observation, survey and pupil focus groups. Through observation, most classes have well established routines and pupils know what is expected of them creating calm and ordered learning environments. Most staff are applying this much more consistently and with more confidence and calmness. Only 4% of all pupils in all subjects did not agree that everyone in the class behaves in a way that allows everyone to learn and achieve. 83% of pupils feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect; almost all teaching staff feel that staff treat pupils fairly and with respect.

NEXT STEPS

Revisit and extend our *Creating a Classroom Culture* professional learning in order to achieve better consistency across the school. This will link to class observation plans. Continual refresh and review of *School and Classroom Procedures* and sharing of these with all relevant partners is an ongoing process.

Nif Driver: School and ELC leadership

Nif Driver: Teacher and practitioner professionalism

Nif Driver: Curriculum and assessment

Nif Driver: School and ELC improvement

PROGRESS

We have redesigned our S1-3 PSE and S1-2 Health and Wellbeing curriculums with new resources and increased focus on all aspects of wellbeing, including mental health specifically. Phased introduction of these new courses has started with S1 this session with S2 to follow in session 2023-24. This is a 4-year project.

IMPACT

Review of the new S1 curriculum through Health and Wellbeing pupil focus groups identified many topics that pupils found interesting and useful, such as 'Sleep', 'The Brain' and 'Positive Mental Health Strategies'. They also suggested a few improvements that will be built in for the coming session. Guidance teachers are very appreciative of the clear 3-year structure and the reasonable pace of introduction of the new courses.

PROGRESS

Our 'Ethos leads' continue to work with SMT and school staff to embed the values of the school (TRACK), the House and Prefect system.

We have shared and discussed our Values with the Parent Council and also display these in Gaelic. We have reinforced our Vision, Values and Aims at the start of each termly pupil led House Assembly and each Assembly has one or two of our Values as an underlying theme.

We have started to improve opportunities for pupil voice and learner participation through improvement to the House Council function by clarifying methods for pupil representative selection, having clear processes for pupils to set agendas, and allowing enough time for pupils/staff to feed into the agenda. There is also opportunity to reflect on House Council feedback through meetings with the Pupil Leadership Team and Ethos leads. This will be further embedded next session.

All termly House Council suggestions and requests are considered by Senior Management and feedback is given. Points arising are actioned wherever possible.

Further pupil feedback is sought throughout the year, on a termly basis, when members of the Prefect Team are invited to join Senior Management Team meetings. In addition to attending Senior Management Team

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meetings, Prefects lead their own weekly team meetings in conjunction with the staff Ethos leads where they provide regular feedback about school issues and their own views on the duties of the Prefect Team. We have introduced a 'Prefect Calendar' to ensure clarity of duties for all pupils involved. This includes delivering House Assemblies, team building activities, support from visiting speakers on presentation skills, representation at Parent Council meetings, speaking at Parent Information evenings, supporting parents at Parents' Evenings, etc.

Opportunities for pupil leadership further down the school will be introduced in the coming session through S3 committees on *Sustainability* and *Equality and Diversity*.

The merit system which is the tangible manifestation of pupils demonstrating our values is reviewed frequently and we aim to continually improve this. For example, points identified to improve the system, through House Council feedback, were that it would be beneficial if pupils knew what was expected of them to achieve a merit in a subject and that Senior pupils don't always receive as many merits as Juniors. Both areas we have tried to improve.

Parents are informed when their children receive merits. All staff – not just teaching staff – can award merits to pupils. This contributes to the community ethos of school staff working together as a whole. To support the merit and House system, we have introduced a House week where pupils participate in a range of activities, each of week provides different opportunities to achieve merits individually or in teams.

Our winning House of the year, as well as individual top merit winners, are rewarded with a cinema trip. We sought feedback from pupils, parents and the Parent Council on our Merit system. We have actioned areas for improvement where possible.

IMPACT

Through survey most parents said they were aware of our school values, almost all were aware of the merit system and almost all were pleased to receive the text information sent home when a pupil is awarded a merit.

All prefects felt that the position had improved their confidence in speaking in public; most felt that their teamwork had improved; the majority felt that it had improved their ability to assume responsibility. Prefects also felt that the weekly meetings gave them a voice and that their concerns were heard and listened to.

Most (88%) pupils felt that the House Council meetings were effective in raising pupils' views and areas of concerns.

Pupil and staff engagement with our values through the merit system from its beginning and subsequent evolution has been high – 100% of teaching staff award merits.

Pupil feedback through House Council meetings has covered a wide variety of areas, including the physical school building, the curriculum, behavioural procedures and expectations and aspects of the School Improvement Plan such as Developing the Young Workforce.

PROGRESS

Following previous feedback from younger pupils that they sometimes felt unsafe in school at social times we have developed a further 'safe space' at breaks and lunchtimes supported by Youth Development Officers (YDOs) based in the school.

Working with the YDOs we have been able to offer individual/group activities and support where required to allow for personal timetables to be created for pupils struggling to follow a full school day. These activities range from baking to mountain biking to weekend outdoor activity trips.

YDOs have also supported pupils to attend school extra-curricular activities and to give pupils opportunities to gain John Muir and Dynamic Youth Awards.

IMPACT

Pupil feedback through focus groups and survey has been extremely positive with all pupils enjoying attending the safe space, 88% of pupils feel more confident as a result of having access and 66% have felt that coming to school is made easier through attending the safe space.

Feedback from individual events such as the two weeklong Fire Skills courses has been very good, with pupils being commended by the Fire Services for their behaviour and engagement, and pupils survey results

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showing that they have greater self-esteem, are better at working with others, better at problem solving and better at making friends and trusting others.

NEXT STEPS

Review the S1 PSE programme and implement the S2 programme; work on developing S4-5 PSE programmes over the next two years.

Support the new PSE programme by adapting the Highland Council *Equality and Diversity* policy for THS, consulting and sharing with pupils, parents and staff; discuss and plan how to support LGBT equalities and issues as part of this. Consider the requirements for working towards the Rights Respecting Schools Award.

Refresh staff training in understanding ACEs and trauma informed practice as well as delivering further CPD on understanding neuro diversity and positive/growth mindset, linking this also to Classroom Culture.

To further promote our Ethos and House system we will hold biannual meetings with House and Ethos Leads to review their remit and methods of encouraging House participation and raise further TRACK profile. Improve learner participation by holding regular pupil focus groups and increase the scope and influence of the House Councils by inviting pupil representatives to speak at Parent Council and Parent Information Evenings. Strengthening House Captain pupil assembly delivery with planned themes across the year more clearly tied to key aspects of the Vision, Values and Aims. Opportunities for pupil leadership further down the school to be introduced through S3 committees on *Sustainability* and *Equality and Diversity*.

Investigate how to improve communication to parents regarding merits to include which teacher gave the merit and for what action by the pupil.

Refresh our Behaviour Management processes through a short-term working group of teachers led by DH.

Continue to improve the sharing of pupil info with staff and communication with staff following any incident reported and to ensure that staff are aware of all pupils in groups with protected characteristics to develop clearer focuses on improvements for groups that may be at risk, such as CEYP, pupils with FSM, etc.

Continue to work on embedding shared policy with Airport House, the off-site educational provision unit in Wick.

Very good progress was made in this area.

Improvement Project 2: Raising attainment

Primary focus: School and ELC improvement

Year of Project: 4

Purpose: To improve the attainment of all pupils across all areas by ensuring that high quality lessons are delivered across the school as consistently as possible by teachers who, through engaging with research informed professional learning, are confident in working within a framework which clearly sets out the typical features of high quality lessons.

Specific regard is also given to literacy and numeracy attainment, high quality homework, high quality assessment and preparation of pupils for assessment as well as ensuring that the best opportunities are offered to all pupils for achievement through the best curriculum we can offer – both whole school and within each subject.

This will generate confident, successful, independent learners.

Progress and impact:

Nif Driver: School and ELC improvement

Nif Driver: Performance information

Teamwork Respect Achievement Commitment Kindness

PROGRESS

BGE Literacy and Numeracy

Review and develop processes for addressing literacy issues for BGE pupils – see review section of Pef plan 2023-24.

Numeracy issues in S1/2 to be addressed explicitly following the recently developed programme across all Maths sets - see review section of Pef plan 2023-24.

The English Faculty are developing a moderation calendar and processes to ensure that there is a greater degree of validity and reliability in Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level judgements for S1-3 pupils.

Attainment in S3 Literacy and Numeracy for 2022 had dropped in comparison with previous years. This is possibly due to the difficulties some pupils have faced in re-engaging with school following Covid and some difficulties in Literacy and Numeracy in moderating the judgements which have been addressed.

Both Faculties have worked extremely proactively to evidence and moderate judgements for all pupils – working with other partners where required, using evidence for literacy levels from other subjects where relevant.

We have developed a whole school literacy and numeracy spreadsheet to allow for sharing of SNSA and ACEL data with all staff and to ensure that no pupil is missed. This also allows a more systematic approach to data tracking in the Broad General Education.

IMPACT

Predicted ACEL levels for 2023 are much improved and all pupils have the evidence for achievement of a level.

Literacy	THS		Highland		National	
	S3 3rd Lvl or better	S3 4th Lvl	S3 3rd Lvl or better	S3 4th Lvl	S3 3rd Lvl or better	S3 4th Lvl
2016	69%	17%	79	25		
2017	98%	67%	86	42	87	44
2018	85%	39%	86	46	87	46
2019	88%	29%	85	40	88	48
2020						
2021						
2022	74%	17%	82	41		
2023 pr	95%	73%				

Num	THS		Highland		National	
	S3 3rd Lvl or better	S3 4th Lvl	S3 3rd Lvl or better	S3 4th Lvl	S3 3rd Lvl or better	S3 4th Lvl
2016	82%	48%	82	45	86	41
2017	88%	48%	86	51	88	56
2018	84%	48%	85	53	89	56
2019	95%	62%	89	57	90	59
2020						
2021						
2022	78%	41%	87	54		
2023 pr	94%	73%				

PROGRESS

Senior Phase Literacy and Numeracy

The English and Maths Faculties, with Guidance and SMT support, have been extremely proactive in securing the highest available SQA literacy and numeracy qualifications for all Senior Phase learners, 'banking' attainment in S3 and then building on this in S4/5/6. Pupils are supported individually where required, working with other partners such as Airport House and Highland Virtual Academy if needed. Maths has a carefully constructed Numeracy pathway for all pupils from S1 onwards. This has allowed pupils to achieve success at a higher SCQF level than would otherwise have been possible.

IMPACT

	Year	% L4 Lit	% L4 Num	% L5 Lit	% L5 Num
THS	2022	93.96	96.64	89.93	80.54
VC	2022	95.84	92.95	84.9	74.63
THS	2021	93.33	91.33	87.33	66.67
VC	2021	92.07	89.27	79.4	69.67
THS	2020	95.83	90.83	92.5	73.33
VC	2020	92.92	90.83	80	70
THS	2019	95.58	90.27	89.38	70.8
VC	2019	91.24	89.03	78.58	65.49
THS	2018	96.86	91.82	87.42	72.33

Based on Insight data the percentage of young people attaining in Literacy at SCQF level 4 or better by the time of leaving school in literacy has only been behind our Virtual Comparator (VC) in 2022 (2.8 pupils), and in attainment in Numeracy has been consistently above or in line with VC.

For SCQF Level 5 our pupils have been consistently above the VC in Literacy, and only below for Numeracy in 2021 (4.5 pupils).

VC	2018	93.71	91.64	83.14	71.7
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Predicted results for 2023 are on target to be further improved and of the pupils leaving this session only 3 will have no Numeracy award and only 6 no Literacy award. Of these 6, 4 pupils with very little school engagement are now working well in the *MyFutureMySuccess* programme.

NEXT STEPS

- Create more formal processes for the whole school analysis of BGE data and share findings allowing teachers to identify pupils who are under achieving and to set appropriate targets and pathways for all pupils into Senior Phase. Early identification of pupils in the BGE who may be at risk of leaving with no Literacy or Numeracy qualification and individual intervention to mitigate against this. S3 pupils in some cases, will be working on Level 5 or 6 Numeracy awards.
- Following feedback from Parent Council parent survey, information about Literacy and Numeracy levels/qualifications will be shared and individual levels added to Tracking at certain points.
- Reform the Literacy Working Group to review initiatives for improvement in place and revisit whole school literacy initiatives and professional learning.
- Introduce *Direct Instruction* in two selected S1 Maths classes to deliver Numeracy learning by two recently trained teachers.

Nif Driver: School and ELC leadership

Nif Driver: Teacher and practitioner professionalism

Nif Driver: School and ELC improvement

Nif Driver: Performance information

PROGRESS

Staff have been involved in agreeing a framework and shared set of standards for good teaching and class management leading to our recently created '*Lesson Evaluation Toolkit*', which clearly sets out the typical features of high quality lessons. Research Informed Teaching CPD is teacher led and has, among other elements, focused this past session on '*Support*' and '*Challenge*' which together tackle differentiation within the teaching environment. The whole school approach to this has tightened the structure of lessons and has promoted collegiate reflective teaching. Lesson observations are also built around this framework with a selected whole school or individual focus from the *Toolkit*.

CPD moving forward will continue to focus on the different elements of the *Lesson Evaluation Toolkit* and is built into our Professional Learning Calendar for staff clarity.

Following staff feedback, progress is set at a pace that allows for change to take effect in the classroom and for methodologies to be embedded.

Further professional learning opportunities and collaborative discussion are offered through provision of a staff *Professional Reading Library* (books and online articles/blogs), a termly *Teaching and Learning Newsletter* on a selected aspect of teaching related to current or previous professional development, termly opportunities to attend *Professional Reading Group* meetings and our Research Informed Teaching website.

IMPACT

Observation shows that teacher participation in school based *Becoming Research Informed Teachers* and *Creating a Culture* CPD has effected positive changes in classroom management and teaching practice with raised attainment and improved learning environments for pupils and staff through these whole school efforts. There are improvements in teaching and more consistency across the school.

Through survey, 86% of pupils report they are happy with the overall quality of teaching in the school. Most pupils (81.9%) feel that the behaviour in the class allows for learning to take place.

In pupil survey of teaching and learning, for example, 82% of pupils feel that the feedback they receive on their work helps them to improve their learning.

All staff engage with the professional learning and contributions made to the sharing of examples of changes made as part of the process is excellent and inspirational.

Staff volunteer for leadership positions, for example the recent Peer observation programme that is staff led.

100% of teaching staff feel that their professional learning helps them to reflect on and improve their practice.

Insight measures of Senior Phase learning show improvement from 2018-2019-2022 in *Attainment for All* for all but the highest attaining 20% of pupils in S6.

S4					S5					S6				
Year	Lowest 20%	Middle 60%	Highest 20%		Year	Lowest 20%	Middle 60%	Highest 20%		Year	Lowest 20%	Middle 60%	Highest 20%	
Thurso High School	2022	99	347	420	Thurso High School	2022	215	665	984	Thurso High School	2022	419	898	1313
Virtual Comparator	2022	88	321	429	Virtual Comparator	2022	193	628	984	Virtual Comparator	2022	399	927	1376
Highland	2022	90	322	431	Highland	2022	163	579	975	Highland	2022	294	854	1360
National	2022	106	325	426	National	2022	177	608	986	National	2022	353	917	1403
Thurso High School	2019	88	313	417	Thurso High School	2019	185	585	931	Thurso High School	2019	170	745	1325
Virtual Comparator	2019	95	312	427	Virtual Comparator	2019	175	581	958	Virtual Comparator	2019	231	828	1328
Highland	2019	91	304	430	Highland	2019	164	561	960	Highland	2019	307	831	1349
National	2019	99	311	425	National	2019	175	575	967	National	2019	359	868	1366
Thurso High School	2018	107	300	414	Thurso High School	2018	127	480	937	Thurso High School	2018	327	873	1369
Virtual Comparator	2018	101	307	423	Virtual Comparator	2018	174	613	960	Virtual Comparator	2018	297	869	1357
Highland	2018	96	303	431	Highland	2018	164	550	949	Highland	2018	332	852	1373
National	2018	101	309	425	National	2018	192	595	965	National	2018	376	880	1375

NEXT STEPS

- Develop use of ‘*Lesson Evaluation Toolkit*’ in self and Faculty evaluation of teaching and in development of teacher *Personal Learning Plans* to support the PRD process. Identify where good practice in different areas occurs and signpost this.
Develop teacher led ‘*Peer Learning Walks*’ to introduce a system of informal peer observations to allow the sharing of good practice across the school.
Develop a THS class observation framework to reflect work done in CPD and based on *Lesson Evaluation Toolkit*.
- Encourage all teaching staff to engage directly with data, especially Insight and BGE data, and integrate this into planning; SMT to involve all teaching staff in Insight discussions. Through analysis of BGE data identify and improve pupils’ awareness at a younger age of what their future attainment targets may be.
- Develop our autism and dyslexia support; formation of a Dyslexia working group.
- Appoint a Digital leader to identify and share good practice in Digital Learning.

Nif Driver: Teacher and practitioner professionalism

Nif Driver: School and ELC improvement

Nif Driver: Curriculum and assessment

PROGRESS

Our research informed practice has been naturally extended to developing and delivering a progressive programme for **explicit teaching of effective Study Techniques**, delivered in PSE. Building on previous years’ study skills lessons, we continue to see a rise in the students’ self-reported confidence in using the techniques they have been studying.

This year for the first time, S1 have been included in the programme, with a new set of lessons written specifically to address the needs of our younger learners.

This along with the structured homework delivery (below) and planned assessment periods for S1/2/3 as well as Senior Phase, is working to develop more independent and effective learners.

The Study Techniques programme is shared with teaching and PSA staff to support and embed in lessons; **after school parental sessions** delivered to enable parental support at home.

To support pupils in **assessment periods** Faculties have been more effective in providing clear information to pupils (through Google Classrooms) of course outlines and assessed topics, what exactly pupils need to

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know and where to find it, revision materials, Knowledge Organisers, recommended study skills, etc. for all S1-3 and for the Senior Phase.

There is improvement in all these revision materials as well as course outlines, homework, class lessons to be available on Google Classroom, allowing any pupil absent (for any reason) to have access to teaching materials.

Following professional learning on *Assessment* in the Broad General Education, all Faculties have reviewed these assessments to ensure key core knowledge and skills are assessed with opportunities also for challenge, allowing for success for pupils at all levels.

IMPACT

A survey of students' confidence in using the methods that have been explained to them was carried out. Each year group saw an overall rise in confidence in their ability to study independently after receiving lessons in PSE, with an average increase of 15% following the lessons. S1 saw the greatest increase in their confidence, which is to be expected - they had not been taught these techniques explicitly before.

Through Parent Council survey, most parents attending have said how helpful the Study Technique sessions were and also made useful suggestions for other topics the school could offer parents support with, such as how to encourage positive attitudes and support mental health in teenagers and how to support children with choice of future pathways.

PROGRESS

Faculties have continued to work on a structured homework delivery for S1-3 pupils across all subjects. We ensure parents are aware if a pupil is not completing homework through email or Guidance phone call, to allow for school and parental support if required. Responsibility for promoting and running the **S1-3 Homework Club** for pupils with difficulty in meeting homework requirements has been taken by S6 volunteers and supported by the School Librarian.

IMPACT

Through survey the majority of parents felt that the amount of homework set for S1-3 pupils was about right. However, many of the comments made suggest a lack of understanding of the purpose and importance of pupils completing carefully planned and appropriate homework to support them to become successful, independent learners.

Only 55.7% of S1-3 pupils felt that they were set homework that helped them learn.

The Homework Club has been attended by only a few pupils each week but of these they all felt that the support was good.

NEXT STEPS

- Where need is identified create opportunities for teaching staff to learn from and share practice with faculties from other schools identified as demonstrating good practice; support teachers to foster and maintain links with other schools to support moderation processes.

 - Focus on the attainment of the top 20% of pupils to ensure that this group are as ambitious in their course choices as they should be.

 - Consider homework in the BGE to ensure that it is well-planned, consistent, related to learning, achievable by all pupils and is supporting pupils to become independent and self-motivated learners; linking this to positive mindset – Research Lead to lead this.
- Look at ways to encourage more pupils struggling with homework completion to attend the Homework Club.
- Review all BGE assessment periods to ensure that all pupils are being provided with all the skills and resources they need to study effectively.

Nif Driver: Curriculum and assessment

PROGRESS

We continue to increase the curriculum offer that we have for our young people with National Progression Awards, Skills for Work courses, Leadership courses and Foundation Apprenticeship courses all running in

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school this session. We also work closely with partners North Highland College, UHI, Highland Virtual Academy, YASS, etc., to make further curricular opportunities available to our young people. In S6 some pupils following the S6 Opportunities programme have achieved awards in Mental Health and Wellbeing, Leadership and Saltire.

We have incorporated the delivery of the following awards into the new PSE and H&WB programmes for S1-4: Mental Health, Wellbeing Awards, Personal Development, Personal Achievement. Evidence is in the process of being gathered to evaluate progress in these as they are ongoing throughout S1 to S4. Some pupils have achieved Dynamic Youth and John Muir awards through their work with Youth Development Officers.

IMPACT

Almost all of our pupils leave school to positive destinations.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue to monitor the curriculum offered across the school through ensuring that pupil needs are met by subjects and levels offered, adding to these where possible and useful.
- Introduce plans to discuss wider achievement in Registration time at set times across the year and gather information from parents and pupils through Google forms. Plan to support pupils with understanding how these achievements are helping them develop knowledge and skills for life, learning and work.
Plan to identify those pupils who do not participate in these opportunities and who may be missing out to ensure that all learners have the same opportunities to achieve the wider range of skills and attributes.

Very good progress was made in this area.

Improvement Project 3: Developing the Young Workforce

Primary focus: School and ELC improvement

Year of Project: 2

Purpose: (Linked to QIs 3.2 and 2.2)

- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

Progress and impact:

Nif Driver: Curriculum and assessment

PROGRESS

The Developing the Young Workforce curriculum has been designed to provide all pupils with an understanding of how to access information on a variety of post school destinations, how to apply for these, how to engage with employers through application and interview processes and how to reflect upon their own skills and achievements both in and out with school. To enhance the curriculum, which is delivered through Personal and Social Education classes for S1-S5 students, a calendar of Developing the Young Workforce events has been re-established this year following interruptions to this as a result of Covid restrictions. The calendar has included events such as STEP into STEM, a taster session at the University of Highland and Islands North Highland campus and an Engineering Industry Day.

In addition, S6 pupils were provided the opportunity to expand their knowledge of the world of Enterprise through a S6 committee led by a member of the Business Management department. The committee considered product design, marketing strategies and produced a game which they went on to market and

sell. The group also completed a Youth Enterprise Exam offered remotely through Strathclyde university. The team recently won a Scottish Youth Enterprise award for their business model and product.

IMPACT

A pupil focus group with student from S1-3 provided feedback on aspects of the Developing the Young Workforce curriculum. Almost all stated that the materials covered in the Developing the Young Workforce S1-4 booklets would be beneficial to pupils in preparing them for post school destinations. In a pupil survey, almost all (90%) pupils said that lessons in PSE had been either good or excellent in terms of providing information and advice on creating CVs and almost all (92%) felt that PSE lessons had helped them feel informed and well prepared for an interview.

Pupil feedback from Developing the Young Workforce events throughout the year was consistently positive. Pupils feedback included that the UHI taster event provided them with a better understanding of the college environment and provided subject options that are not possible to offer within school. In addition, feedback from pupils on recent talks from visiting speakers including the army have been positive.

Almost all of the S6 Enterprise committee have attained an additional award this year through the Strathclyde Youth Enterprise Exam offered. A majority of the committee participated and won Company of the Year at regional and national Youth Enterprise competitions which celebrated their wider achievement.

NEXT STEPS

- To continue to review and enhance the Developing the Young Workforce curriculum based on pupil feedback attained through focus groups.
- To continue to build on re-establishing our Developing the Young Workforce calendar of visiting speakers to support the curriculum pupils are working through.
- To hold a further pupil focus group comprised of Senior Phase pupils throughout the year to discuss the Developing the Young Workforce curriculum and consider any other forms of support they feel would be of benefit. This feedback will also be used when producing a S5 Developing the Young Workforce unit for Personal and Social Education.
- To continue to offer S6 pupils the opportunity to engage in Social Enterprise activities.

Nif Driver: School and ELC leadership

Nif Driver: Performance information

PROGRESS

16+ data collection now gathers feedback from S3 upwards to allow pathway planning at an earlier stage. This helps to reduce the risk of negative post school destinations and enables Year Heads, Pupil Support, DYW and SDS staff to tailor support. This is reviewed at termly caseload meetings with Learning Support, Pupil Support, Senior Management, Children's Service Workers. Referrals are made to external partners as required.

Pupils have benefited from input from some visiting speakers this session including representatives from the Army and the University of Highland and Islands staff. Visitors provided insight into various post school options.

In addition, all S4 pupils were invited to participate in interviews offered from local employers. In advance of this, pupils were supported by Guidance staff and Skills Development Scotland to create a CV and had a targeted lesson in Personal and Social Education on interview skills.

Thurso High School's Developing the Young Workforce coordinator has been pursuing work experience opportunities in the local community, particularly based on requests made by pupils through their House Council meetings.

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Skills Development Scotland have delivered information to staff at a whole staff meeting typical post school destinations to provide a better understanding of where our pupils move on to following their time at Thurso High School.

IMPACT

16+ data being gathered at an earlier stage allows for advanced planning and more effective support for pupils ahead of their leaving dates. The impact is clear when gathering data as we have full responses from pupils in these year groups. Insight data for last session indicated the following:

- Employment: 19 indicated employment as their preferred destination, 42 pupils actually went into employment as recorded in the destination profile. More have gone into employment than had initially indicated.
- Further Education shows a similar trend with more pupils going into this pathway than indicated. Because of strong links to University of the Highland and Islands through College Link options, this is a common leaver destination for our pupils.
- Higher Education: Aspirational numbers more closely match actual leaver destination numbers. Approximately 20% didn't move on to Higher Education as indicated. Of these 7 went into employment and 4 into Further Education.

Although data collection aspirations do not consistently match leavers' actual post school destinations, almost all are recorded as having a positive destination for the previous academic session.

Employer feedback from the S4 mock interview event was overwhelmingly positive with those participating commenting on pupils' preparation and participation. Pupil feedback, gathered through a pupil survey showed that most pupils (88%) felt that the interviews and feedback provided by employers was either helpful or very helpful and clear.

Progressing work experience opportunities has continued with 27 work experience applications being submitted this session by Senior Phase pupils.

NEXT STEPS

- To arrange link meetings with partners such as the Highland Employability Team, University of Highland and Islands staff, Developing the Young Workforce Coordinator and school Pupil Support and Senior Management to discuss services available this session.
- To hold termly 16+ meetings with a range of partners to ensure that all pupils are supported into positive destinations and that support is put in place in a timely manner. These meetings will be put into a 16+ school calendar and organised in advance.
- To gather pupil and employer feedback following Developing the Young Workforce events such as the S4 mock interview and employer visits and continue to amend events as appropriate based on pupil feedback.
- To build upon work experience opportunities by advertising the Hi Hope process to staff and parents.

Good progress was made in this area.

GME Project: Improvement of Gaelic Medium provision

Primary focus: School and ELC improvement

Year of Project: 2

Purpose: To improve the immersive experience for our Gàidhlig Medium pupils and increase the cultural awareness of Gaelic Language and Culture across the school and community. To develop the Senior Phase curriculum for Senior Phase Gàidhlig Medium Pupils and develop suitable academic destinations for Gaelic Learners.

Progress and impact:

Nif Driver: School and ELC improvement

PROGRESS

Whole School Approach

The introduction of whole school Gaelic events and promotion has been a priority for our two-year improvement plan. Several aspects of the plan have been achieved and expanded upon. Bilingual signs have been designed and posted throughout the Faculty and sections of the school. A Gaelic Language coffee morning was used to promote the language to all staff with pupils hosting the event and showcasing their language skills.

BGE Curriculum

Pupils have been successfully immersed in Gàidhlig Medium education in Thurso High School. The BGE curriculum includes Gàidhlig, Nuadh-eòlas and Coimpiutaireachd. Pupils are tracked by their achievement across the school as well as their Gàidhlig literacy levels.

Senior Phase Curriculum

The progress of the Gàidhlig curriculum for both Gàidhlig Medium and Gaelic Learners has been a key priority for development. Pupils have now progressed on to Senior Phase Gàidhlig Medium for the first time with pupils sitting National 5. Gaelic Learners also have the opportunity to gain a National qualification or equivalent units. Gaelic learner classes have been offered as a course choice option from S3 to Senior Phase. An additional Senior Phase option has been added as a plus one class for S5/6 pupils to gain the experience and knowledge of the Gaelic language.

Immersive and Cultural Projects

Pupils have had the opportunity to take part in Gaelic Drama workshops and have participated in the Film G project this year. Conversation qualification units have been developed with a view to allowing both Gaelic Learners and Gàidhlig Medium pupils to achieve a meaningful qualification regardless of chosen timetable constraints. An immersive registration experience is now in place for all Gàidhlig Medium pupils to enhance their opportunities to use the language.

IMPACT

Whole School Approach

Pupils across the school have an increased interest in the Gaelic language and culture due to whole school events and use of signage. Staff across the school have shown an increased interest in understanding Thurso High School as a Gàidhlig Medium school.

Pupil surveys indicated that 'Almost all' pupils felt positive about their experience of Gàidhlig Medium education within Thurso High School.

All had positive views of the benefits of Gaelic – that it contributes to bilingualism, to learning other languages and to career paths. The four periods a week they feel allows them regular contact with the language so their fluency and confidence has not been affected too much since their move from primary. However, they would like to receive more immersion in Gaelic when possible.

They do feel that Gaelic is a little marginalised in the school, and that others in the school have very little opinion either way about Gaelic, which they would like the school to work to improve.

Nif Driver: Performance information

Nif Driver: Curriculum and assessment

NEXT STEPS

Whole School Approach

To bring more awareness of what Gàidhlig medium is as a subject and its importance across the school. We aim to look at including Gaelic into whole school elements such as starting with a clear explanation of what Gàidhlig Medium. Looking at school assemblies and how we naturally feature Gaelic language and culture into our school life and events.

BGE Curriculum

To continue to develop the BGE curriculum to encourage Gàidhlig Medium pupils to progress to Senior Phase.

Senior Phase Curriculum

To develop and implement the Gàidhlig Medium and Gaelic Learner Senior Phase courses. To continue to moderate and evaluate their work as the year progresses.

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Immersive and Cultural Projects

To focus Gàidhlig registration into the House System to allow events to be better tailored to Gàidhlig Medium pupils. To investigate incorporate aspects of Gaelic Cultural activities into event such as House Week. To explore forming a Gaelic Committee of pupils to look at how we better develop Gaelic culture across the school.

Good progress was made in this area.

Evaluation of Progress

We believe we have made the following progress this session:

Quality Indicator

School self-evaluation

1.3 Good
Leadership of Change

2.3 Good
Learning, teaching and assessment

3.1 Good
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

3.2 Good
Raising attainment and achievement

Quality Indicator	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
1.3 Good Leadership of Change	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2.3 Good Learning, teaching and assessment	Good	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
3.1 Good Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
3.2 Good Raising attainment and achievement	Good	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

We will ask our children and young people what progress they think we have made in the following areas this session and update the section below:

Theme 1 Choose an item.
Our relationships

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Theme 2 Choose an item.
Our learning and teaching

Theme 3 Choose an item.
Our school and community

Theme 4 Choose an item.
Our health and wellbeing

Theme 5 Choose an item.
Our successes and achievements

Our overall evaluation of our school's capacity for continuous improvement is:

We are confident in our capacity for continuous improvement.

Planning Ahead

Full details of the school's 2023/24 improvement priorities and actions are detailed on the school improvement plan, which can be accessed on our website [ADD LINK](#) or by contacting the school office.