SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS POLICY FRAMEWORK
Updated May 2017

Introduction

Learning and Teaching is at the heart of the education process. During the learning process, from early childhood, through school education and further education into lifelong learning, all learners could require support at some stage.

Currently, the vast majority of pupils in Highland are on the roll of a mainstream school, apart from those educated in 3 special schools or those in out of authority placements. The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act (2000), requires local authorities to make provision which maximises the talents of each individual child and presumes provision to be in mainstream schools. Current educational practice in schools, establishments and partner centres in Highland, seeks to ensure that all learners are educated in their local community alongside their peers. Exceptions to this is where it is considered in the child's best interests that more appropriate education can be provided in a specialised provision.

The twin expectations of raising standards of achievement and inclusion are key principles within Highland Council, although the number of schools and the geography of the Highlands provide challenges to ensuring consistency in inclusive practice across the whole network of provision. Support and development is provided from small central and local strategic teams on an ongoing basis to fully realise this vision of inclusive practice.

Additional Support for Learning staff and school staff in general, seek to ensure that the barriers to learning, be they educational, social or emotional are prevented where possible, or overcome. They also aim to assist pupils to attain their maximum learning potential through identification of need at an early stage and through robust planning to ensure needs are met and progress is tracked across time.

Rationale

The fundamental principles of the **Inclusive School** are:-
- children have a right to learn in their locality;
- that mainstream schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their learners, while also having a continuum of support to match these needs;
- they are most effective at building solidarity between children with additional needs and their peers;
- increasing the participation of learners in, and overcoming the barriers to, the programmes and cultures of a learning community;
- improving schools for staff and pupils as participants in an overall learning community;

- concerned with fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities, acknowledging that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

These principles of inclusion have been reaffirmed in recent legislation, including:-
- The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000
- The Education (Scotland) Act 2004 and as amended 2009
- The Equalities Act 2010
- The Children and Young People's Act 2014

and are reflected in the revised Quality Indicators in Education Scotland's publication 'How Good is Our School – 4th edition' https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/Frameworks_SelfEvaluation/FRWK2_NIHeditHGIOS/FRWK2_HGIOS4.pdf , in developments to support multi-disciplinary working through the Getting it Right for Every Child framework and in the drive towards closing the attainment gap https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/closing-attainment-gap-scottish-education

1 Assessment and Planning

1.1 The establishment of a positive learning environment and an ethos of achievement at classroom level are key to effective learning and teaching. Effective learning and teaching is also dependent on the relationships established at classroom level through interactions between staff and pupil and between pupils themselves in group or whole class settings. In recent years much emphasis has been placed on the development of a positive ethos for learning in schools. These arrangements have been supported through various developments eg Nurture Provision, Circle Time, Emotional Check-ins, Early Intervention and pupil forums in schools such as Pupil Councils. The Council's framework for Promoting Positive Relationships is outlined in the guidance and policy documents on the Additional Support Needs Website https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/886/schools_-_additional_support_needs/1/support_for_learners/4

1.2 Assessment of the classroom environment and planning for enhancing ethos and promoting positive relationships across the whole school community should be a feature of the wider assessment and planning process in relation to pupils where emotional and behavioural issues are noted. This would include the development of behaviour protocols within the Child's Plan and robust risk assessments of the environment and of the needs (including additional training) and actions of relevant staff involved in supporting individual pupils and groups.

1.3 The expansion of Support for Learning in recent years has resulted in significant staff teams of teachers and Pupil Support Assistants in all but the smallest schools. In addition, developments in Early Intervention have established approaches in Early Years to support general child development and to developing early literacy and numeracy skills.

1.4 Planning for the delivery of the curriculum is the prime responsibility of the class or subject teacher taking account of the overall resources available, including the support staff resource. Guidance has been issued by the authority in relation to long term and short term planning of the curriculum. In addition, the school development planning

process is designed to ensure that appropriate development priorities are identified on an ongoing basis. Planning for individual pupils should be in line with the Highland Practice Model, with the Child's Pan being the key document around which assessment and planning is undertaken for individual pupils.

1.5   Class and subject staff have responsibility to ensure appropriate differentiation of the curriculum to meet individual learner needs. Where it is necessary to depart significantly from these arrangements to meet the needs of individual pupils, appropriate arrangements should be identified and described in an Individualised Education Programme as appropriate within the Child's Plan. Parents, the pupil and others have key roles to play in the development of Individualised Education Programmes . Schools are required to ensure that these partners are all involved in the development of Individualised Education Programmes and in the formulation of Child's Plans.

1.6   To meet the needs of some pupils it may be necessary to work in close partnership with colleagues in the wider Children's Service network. It is necessary at school level, to establish appropriate multi-disciplinary liaison in order that the needs of individuals are jointly assessed, where appropriate, leading to effective integrated planning for the child/young person by the team around the child.

1.7   Parents/Carers are the prime educators of their children. A child's early experiences can influence later success in the school system. There is significant evidence that early intervention and support through good childcare and pre-school provision ensures a secure foundation for learning when pupils transfer to formal schooling and continued education into secondary school. School staff should also be aware of any adverse childhood events however that may have impacted negatively on a child in their early years, as these can have long lasting implications for social and academic development and health. Having an understanding of child development and taking a trauma informed approach to support a child will be helpful in such situations.

1.8   It is important to ensure effective transition arrangements are in place for all learners at key stages in the learning process. These include the following:-

- From home into early years provision
- From early years/nursery into infant classes
- From primary into secondary school
- From secondary into Further Education/Training and Employment
- From or to specialised provision and mainstream provision
- From school to school

1.9   In order to support transition, guidance exists to ensure the effective transfer of information and continuity of experience for learners at the above stages of the learning process. This guidance emphasises the need to ensure effective joint working with other agencies as appropriate and the requirement to transfer relevant information from one named person to the next.   These arrangements also include a three year planning cycle (apart from pre-school/infant transitions) where relevant issues are identified in relation to:-

- Provision of appropriate specialist equipment and accommodation needs (3 years before transition)

- Relevant significant staff training and development needs eg in relation to specialist teaching expertise (2 years before transition)
- Detailed transition arrangements in relation to the management of individual cases (the year before transition)

1.10   Where additional support, training or adaptations are required, Headteachers / the Named Person will need to manage the transition in collaboration with the Area ASN Manager, ASN staff and other services and agencies.   This will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for children/young people well in advance of their transfer to the next stage in the learning process. These arrangements should be built into schools' development planning processes and liaison arrangements within the Associated School Group. Multi-disciplinary groups at school level have a key role to play in relation to the management of transition for pupils with high levels of needs.

2   Support for Learning - An Integrated Approach

2.1   Supporting learning is a collaborative activity in which school staff, those involved in the wider Children's Services network and parents, make key contributions. The child/young person is at the centre and at every stage must be given opportunities and support to participate in making decisions about their learning in school, the local community and at home.

2.2   The educational experience of learners is influenced by all members of the school/learning community.   However, class/subject teachers and additional support staff who work directly with pupils on a daily basis have the greatest influence on the learning process.   It is important that this key relationship is acknowledged and supported in individual school policies for Support for Learning. Those staff have a key role in identifying the support learners require and making provision through appropriate differentiation and seeking additional advice and guidance from school management and specialist Additional Support Needs staff, in managing the staged approach for requesting further assistance
https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/230/highland_practice_model_-_delivering_additional_support_for_learners

2.3   In the classroom, support may take one or more of the following forms:

- One to one direct teaching
- Group teaching
- Co-operative learning
- Individual pupil support
- Observation leading to support being provided at the earliest opportunity
- Environmental adaptations
- Use of ICT or other specialised equipment

2.4   Additional Support for Learning staff have an extended role outwith the classroom. This involves advising senior management and teachers about the curriculum; facilitating

and contributing to Childs Plans or Individualised Education Programmes and offering strategies to meet pupil need; providing specialised services to individual pupils and contributing to staff development.

2.5   Guidance staff in secondary schools have a key pastoral and advice function to individual pupils and families in relation to meeting their additional support needs. Where they are the named person or lead professional, they provide the single point of contact for pupils and have a distinctive contribution to make to pupils with additional support needs. Accordingly, Guidance and Additional Support for Learning Teams will work closely together under the management of the Depute Head with responsibility for Pupil Support.

2.6   Pupil Support staff and tuition staff external to the school are members of an area team and are employed to work with pupils, staff, parents and others to support the promotion of positive relationships across primary and secondary schools in their area.   Some members of these teams have a key function in staff development and training.

2.7   In addition, to support staff based in schools, the following specialist services are centrally co-ordinated and offer outreach services to support and advise school staff on the development and implementation of objectives noted in the Childs Plan:-

- Deaf Education Service
- Assistive Technology Support Service
- Positive Relationships Team
- Education Vision Support Service
- Interrupted Learners
- Psychological Service (including the Preschool Home Visiting Teaching Service for children with ASN)
- Primary Mental Health Worker Service
- Speech and Language Therapy Service
- Occupational Therapy Service
- Dietetics Service
- Physiotherapy Service

While professionally managed centrally, these services are deployed to Areas and as far as possible will support across designated associated school groups. Head Teachers can therefore directly contact their link professional from these teams, who will be able to provide direct advice, consultation or interventions as appropriate.

2.8   At the local level children's services come together under the management of the Care and Learning Manager, who has responsibility for health, education and social care within their Area, including the various Family Teams which include Children's Service Workers, Social Workers, School Nurses and Health Visitors. This structure enables:

- The establishment of appropriate assessment, planning and resourcing networks
- identifying children with complex needs and can link this with planning and the allocation of resources

- issues of policy and practice to be considered in consultation with elected members and Heads of Service.

2.9   Supporting Learning is therefore a collaborative process in which a wide range of professionals make key contributions in partnership with the learner and parents or carers.   There are, therefore, important issues for senior staff in schools in ensuring the effective deployment and management of Additional Support for Learning staff teams in schools and liaison with multi-disciplinary teams and clear communication with all involved.

3   Identifying and Supporting Needs

3.1   The identification of needs is central to Additional Support for Learning. This process begins in the classroom/nursery at the pupil/teacher interface. Staff who work most closely with the learner are best placed to identify the support the individual learner requires.   Where needs are identified which cannot be met by the class teacher, additional support should be requested through the agreed staged approach. This may require consultation with specialist Additional Support Needs staff based outwith the school or with the educational psychologist, community paediatrician etc.

3.2   Learning is a partnership between pupils, parents/carers and education staff supported appropriately, where required, through a Child's Plan.   The Child's Planning process is of central importance in identifying and meeting needs. It provides a clear focus for the collaborative involvement of the pupil, parents/carers and colleagues in other services and agencies with education staff. Headteachers should ensure the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in this process. The authority expects Childs Plans to be produced using the format agreed. http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/5-practiceguidance/

3.3   Where pupils are identified as having a long term need for significant Additional Support for Learning from a variety of agencies additional to education, they may require a Coordinated Support Plan. Following consultation and where appropriate further assessment will be undertaken and consideration will be given as to whether a Coordinated Support Plan will be opened as part of the Child's Plan. Further guidance on this process can be found at
https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/230/highland_practice_model_-_delivering_additional_support_for_learners

3.4   In line with the principles of Inclusive Schooling all children are regarded as having an entitlement to Gaelic Medium Education (GME).   If there are exceptional circumstances in which GME is requested, but considered not to be in the best interests of a child, these should be discussed with parents who should be consulted fully regarding the appropriate course of action.   Otherwise, the observations and recommendations in this document apply equally to pupils in Gaelic Medium education.   Where there are aspects in which Gaelic Medium differs from English Medium education, the factors and processes involved are set out in Identifying and Managing Additional Support Needs in Gaelic Medium Education. https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/150/identifying_and_managing_additional_support_needs_in_gaelic_medium_education

3.5   As the curriculum is delivered wholly through the medium of Gaelic at all stages in GME, this presupposes that the Authority and other agencies involved will be able to provide the requisite support in that language.   This is essential for direct teaching and differentiation of materials and is desirable for consultancy and advice.   All involved in providing support for pupils in GME should be conversant with the Council guidelines, Gaelic Medium Education: Language

Guidelines. https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/283/community_life_and_leisure/335/gaelic/2

3.6   Children who are learning English as an additional Language (EAL) will require careful consideration of their individual needs. Requests for service for children for whom English is not their first language can be made to EAL teachers, who can support schools through advice, consultation and direct intervention where required. https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/18269/eal_highland_council_policy_2017

4   Resourcing Additional Support for Learning

4.1   The diversity and rurality of Highland places significant demands on the Council in delivering a wide range of public services. The Council allocates a significant budget to meeting additional support needs in schools. Much of the budget is held at Area level and is managed by Area ASN Managers, who provide an annual allocation to each school on the basis of a detailed audit of needs and in line with a council wide agreed model https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/971/adult_and_childrens_services_committee The allocation of resource is provided to each Head Teacher and is expected to be used flexibly to meet the overall needs as determined by school staff. A Central budget provides for the specialist services, training and short term funding to support care experienced children and young people.

5   Training and Staff Development

5.1   The success of Support for Learning is judged on how effectively identified needs are met, and how far barriers to learning are removed, resulting in enhanced outcomes for learners. Successful Support for Learning is dependent on skilled, well trained staff. Support for Learning is a shared responsibility between class/subject staff and Additional Support for Learning staff. Team working is a key feature in supporting learning, be it in early years provision, in the classroom, between the teacher and the Pupil Support Assistant and the learner, or in the special school class setting between the teacher for children with additional support needs, the Pupil Support Assistants and the pupil.

5.2   The effective management of Support for Learning requires promoted staff to be aware of relevant legislation, developing practice, the needs of all staff and current models of effective service delivery. Continuing Professional Development opportunities are available for newly appointed head teachers and for existing head teachers and senior managers, to support them with their responsibilities in relation to additional support for learning, equalities, diversity, inclusive practice etc.

5.3   In secondary schools Support for Learning departments are frequently the largest department. This places significant responsibilities on promoted staff to ensure the effective management and deployment of staff through a team approach and the identification of school development priorities through the self-evaluation/development

planning processes. Principal Teachers (ASN/SfL) are offered training leading to the Certificate of Inclusive Practice or Diploma in Inclusive Practice, to help them in their role.

5.4   Current pre-service training does include some training on Support for Learning issues. The Highland Council also provides, through the annual staff development programme, a comprehensive programme for all newly qualified teachers, on meeting additional support needs and to good practice in learning and teaching at all levels.

5.5   Schools are required, through their annual staff development planning cycle, to ensure development priorities and associated staff development needs for Support for Learning and Inclusion are identified and delivered to both teaching and non-teaching staff as appropriate.

5.6   The PSA Handbook details the CPD requirements for all staff in this role. https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/10912/pupil_support_assistant_handbook It identifies the range of training opportunities open to them and the minimal requirements for safe practice. Managers have a responsibility for ensuring that PSAs are able to access these opportunities within a reasonable timeframe on appointment and that they are able to attend refresher courses as appropriate.

6	Conclusion

There are a range of policy and guidance documents that support this framework and which should be read in conjunction with this summary paper. These can be found on the Additional Support Needs pages on the Council's website.
https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/886/schools_-_additional_support_needs/1/support_for_learners/4 Any issues or concerns about meeting additional support needs should be addressed in the first instance to the named person in the school (usually the head teacher in primary school or the guidance teacher in secondary school). However the details of the relevant Area ASN Managers and ASN Officers can be accessed on the Council's website and the Head of Additional Support Services can also be contacted at the following address:
bernadette.cairns@highland/gov.uk