



# STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT AITHISG INBHEAN IS CÀILEACHD

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**2024-2025**

## BALNAIN PRIMARY SCHOOL



Kindness   Respect   Teamwork   Creativity

# Introduction: Local and National Context

## Ro-ràdh: Co-theacsa Ionadail agus Nàiseanta

This Standards and Quality Report is influenced by both Highland and national priorities. These can be summarised as follows:

### Highland Priorities



### National Improvement Framework Priorities



#### Entitlement, Excellence & Equity:

We will raise attainment and achievement for all, especially for children and young people from disadvantaged circumstances, including rural deprivation. We will focus relentlessly on improving standards and the quality of learning and teaching, to ensure that entitlement, equity and excellence are delivered across the system.

#### Empowerment & Leadership:

We will develop leadership skills at all levels of the system, for now and the future, building a culture of empowerment and professional capital.

#### Relationships:

We will maximise health and wellbeing for all children and young people, to give them the best possible start in life. We will ensure every child and young person feels part of the community they live in.

#### Opportunity:

We will maximise opportunities for our children and young people, and for the wider Highland community and its visitors, through the provision of high-quality services.

The key priorities outlined in the National Improvement Framework are:

- Placing the **human rights and needs of every child** and young person at the centre of education
- Improvement in children and young people's **health and wellbeing**
- **Closing the attainment gap** between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
- Improvement in skills and **sustained, positive school-leaver destinations** for all young people
- **Improvement in attainment**, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

#### Self-evaluation

To support self-evaluation, quality indicators from the national evaluative framework *How Good Is Our School?*<sup>4</sup> are referenced.

Links to these sources (and others referenced) can be found here:

[National Improvement Framework Improvement Plan](#)  
[HGIOS? 4](#) and [HGIOELC](#)  
[Health and Social Care Standards](#)  
[National Gaelic Language Plan](#)

In this report the following words are used to describe the numbers and proportions used:

All	Almost all	Most	Majority	Less than half	Few
100%	Over 91%	75% - 90%	50% - 74%	15% - 49%	Up to 15%

We are pleased to present our Standards and Quality Report for Session 2024-25. This report provides important information regarding our school's progress to date and our next steps in school improvement.

**Self-evaluation for self-improvement** is at the heart of what we do. We continue to develop our practice in making robust use of evidence as a basis for judgements regarding the impact of our work on our learners. All staff understand that self-evaluation is an integral aspect of our approach to continuous improvement through addressing the 3 key questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

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. We inform decision making and actions through a continuous process of looking inwards, outwards and forwards.

#### **Looking inwards - starts with those working with our children and young people**

We focus on the impact on outcomes for learners. Our self-evaluation processes triangulate information, data, people's views and observation of practice to measure impact and inform planning for improvement.

#### **Looking outwards - learning from others**

Looking to others for new ideas that challenge our practice and support continuous improvement allows us to learn from what works and what doesn't. This includes practice in other schools, learning communities and learning from educational research.

#### **Looking forwards - creating a vision and planning for implementation**

Through leadership at all levels, we anticipate challenges and explore creative solutions. This helps us to create an aspirational vision for our school which shapes our actions and provides a focus for 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 to shape our improvement journey.

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



Together we are working hard to ensure the Highlands is the best place for children and young people to grow up safely, learn, develop and achieve.

With positive experiences, our children and young people will always see the Highlands as home.

Le eòlasan deimhinneach, bidh ar cloinn is ar n-òigridh daonna a' faicinn na Gàidhealtachd mar dhachaigh.

Mrs Julie MacLeod  
Head Teacher  
Balnain Primary School

## School Profile

### Pròifil na Sgoile

The following information can be found on [Parentzone Scotland](#). It is important to remember that statistical data alone is not a measure of how well we are doing. All schools are unique. To understand how well we are doing it is important for us to look at a range of different data sources.

**Attendance**  
**94.6%**

**Average Class Size**  
**10**

**Meeting PE Target**  
**Target Met**

**Pupil Numbers**  
**21**

**Teacher Numbers**  
**2**

**Pupil Teacher Ratio**  
**10.5-1**

Balnain Primary School is a small rural school, situated in the picturesque community of Glen Urquhart.

There are 21 children attending the school ranging from P1 – P7. Pupils are organised into two composite classes: P1-3 and P4-7.

The headteacher, Mrs Julie MacLeod, has overall leadership responsibility for Balnain Primary School and also has a teaching commitment of 3 days. The headteacher is supported by a Management Time teacher. The school has a full-time class teacher, and a part time PSA and Clerical Assistant also support our school, along with our Additional Support for Learning Teacher.

The main drivers for our curriculum are our community, natural environment, culture and heritage and wider experiences for our pupils. We use these to support our learning across the curriculum. All staff know the children and their families very well and are extremely committed to the school, pupils and their own professional development. Parental and community support in the school is high and they take an active role in supporting school events and learning. We continue to work closely with our other associated primary schools – Cannich Bridge Primary and Glenurquhart Primary and with Glenurquhart High School.

As the school roll comprises a small number of children, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels. This is to ensure the identity of individuals is not disclosed.

Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is very good. Children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy and, across the school, a few children are exceeding nationally expected levels. Almost all children who face barriers to learning are making very good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Overall children are making the following progress:

**Reading**

Very good progress

**Writing**

Very good progress

**Listening and  
talking**

Very good progress

**Numeracy**

Very good progress

Our attendance data is high, and we have had no exclusions this session.

## School vision, values and aims

### Lèirsinn, luachan agus amasan na sgoile

#### Our Vision:

To provide motivating learning experiences to develop our pupils' skills and talents which will prepare them for learning, life and work in the future. We will do this within a supportive, challenging and safe environment where everyone is valued and respected. At Balnain Primary School, we work together in a caring community to bring out the best in each other and support all of our learners to achieve their best in life.

#### We aim to do this by:

- Providing a safe, welcoming, caring and happy environment where all children are valued as individuals and have their rights respected.
- Ensuring that our pupils are listened to and are actively involved in their learning.
- Developing positive relationships based on respect for each other with a focus on inclusion and equality.
- Providing an engaging and challenging curriculum with opportunities to develop every child's personality, talents, and abilities to the full, encouraging achievement and celebrating success.
- Working with community partners to offer exciting, engaging and relevant learning experiences.
- Preparing pupils for their lifelong journey of learning and help them develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work in the future.
- Developing an awareness of the world of work.
- Providing a sense of local community, culture and heritage.
- Connecting our learners to the wider world, beyond our local community, to learn about global issues and encouraging them to be respectful of diversity in the world.
- Encouraging an active, healthy and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, showing care and respect for the natural environment.
- Evaluating and reflecting on our work regularly and identifying areas for improvement.

#### Our school values are:

Kindness   Respect   Creativity   Teamwork

## Review of progress for session

### Ath-sgrùdadh air adhartas airson an t-seisein

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

School Priority:

### Continuous Profiling

#### **Purpose:**

We would like to increase pupil engagement with profiling and increase pupil ownership of profiles by creating digital profiles to share their personal learning and successes with their families. We aim to increase family engagement by providing regular access to learner profiles throughout the school year. Through creating digital profiles, pupils would develop their digital skills, which would support our intention to gain a Digital School's Award.

#### **Progress:**

- ✓ We have developed a whole school approach to digital profiling.

#### **Impact:**

- ✓ All pupils are engaging in the process of profiling.

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- ✓ Parents and carers were invited to an information afternoon to launch the digital profiles.
- ✓ We have appointed 4 pupils as Digital Leaders across the school.
- ✓ Digital profiles are regularly updated by pupils with teacher support and digital leader support.
- ✓ All teaching staff and support staff have upskilled their digital skills to navigate Google Sites.
- ✓ Pupils in P4-7 have developed their digital skills to navigate Google Sites.
- ✓ Teaching staff have participated in ASG moderation of profiling.
- ✓ Parents are provided with continuous access to pupil profiles throughout the year.
- ✓ Almost all families came to our digital profiling information afternoon and provided positive feedback.
- ✓ Our Digital Leaders helped staff to trial the digital profiles and supported peers in the initial stages of set up and as a result, have developed their leadership skills.
- ✓ Almost all profiles are up to date and highlight recent learning and achievements.
- ✓ All teaching staff and support staff feel they have the skills required to help pupils to regularly update their profiles.
- ✓ Almost all pupils in P4-7 can update their profiles independently.
- ✓ As a result of ASG moderation, teaching staff have identified what's working well and what aspects could be improved.
- ✓ All parents can access pupil profiles and as a result have access to regular updates on pupil progress throughout the year.
- ✓ Good progress was made in this area.

#### Next steps:

- Continue to further embed continuous profiling next session and provide regular opportunities for pupils to update their profiles.
- Use assessment results as part of staff-pupil learner conversations as this can help to improve target setting.
- Aim for more frequent target setting and review.
- Include section for adding parental comments, invite all families to engage with this each term.
- Review the format of paper profiles for any families that do not wish to engage in the digital profiles.
- Provide new families with an information session on digital profiles.
- Add an information section to the school website about digital profiles.

#### School Priority:

### Writing

#### Purpose:

Across the school, it was noted that attainment in writing was not as strong as reading and numeracy. Staff wanted to develop their knowledge and skills of new approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in order to raise attainment in writing.

#### Progress:

- ✓ Staff have completed Stephen Graham training on 'Explicitly Teaching Writing'.
- ✓ Teaching staff have begun to use some of the teaching strategies from the training with pupils across all stages in the school.
- ✓ Teaching staff and PSA have engaged with writing rubrics to assess writing.

#### Impact:

- ✓ Staff have a better understanding of how to teach the skills for writing across different text types.
- ✓ Pupils are developing an understanding of the purpose and requirements of different text types.
- ✓ Through in-service engagement, teaching staff and PSA all have a better understanding of the writing benchmarks required for each level.

- ✓ Teaching staff have moderated the assessment of writing.
- ✓ Teachers and PSA are aware of importance to provide P1-3 pupils with opportunities for writing through play.
- ✓ P1-3 teacher has completed training The Drawing Club training from Greg Bottrill.
- ✓ Teaching staff have discussed writing attainment in termly attainment meetings.
- ✓ All pupils have experienced a 'Meet the Author' event during Book Week Scotland.
- ✓ All pupils participated in a storyteller session and wrote creative short stories.
- ✓ Pupils in P1-5 entered a local story writing competition.
- ✓ Teachers are more confident in using the benchmarks to make judgements on achievement of a level.
- ✓ Teachers are facilitating further opportunities for P1-3 pupils to engage with mark making and writing during their play.
- ✓ P1-3 teacher has started to implement Drawing Club sessions for pupils to develop skills for writing through drawing.
- ✓ Teachers are becoming more confident in identifying next steps for learners.
- ✓ Pupils enjoyed the experience and as a result staff have reported an increase in their motivation and enjoyment for writing.
- ✓ Feedback from pupils indicate increased pupil motivation and enjoyment for creative writing.
- ✓ P1-5 pupils came second in the story writing competition. This experience has helped them to understand the purpose of a narrative text and has increased their motivation and enjoyment in story writing.
- ✓ Good progress was made in this area.

#### Next steps:

- Agree a whole school progressive approach to the teaching of writing to include grammar, spelling and coverage of text types.
- Staff will assess writing termly using writing rubrics and provide feedback for pupils.
- Staff will refer to assessments during learner conversations so that pupils are aware of their next steps.
- Pupils will use their learning profiles to record targets for writing.

#### School Priority:

### Digital Schools Award

#### Purpose:

Over the past few years, staff and pupils have been continuously developing their digital skills. A minority of parents have expressed concern around digital wellbeing and online safety, therefore by following the steps to achieve the Digital Schools Award we will ensure that we are adhering to national guidelines whilst developing the digital skills of our pupils and teachers.

#### Progress:

- ✓ Staff have created a digital strategy for our school.
- ✓ Staff have viewed the new Highland Council draft digital skills progression.
- ✓ 4 pupil Digital Leaders were appointed this year.
- ✓ Digital Leaders worked with other Digital Leaders across ASG to share ideas for Safer Internet Day.

#### Impact:

- ✓ All staff are aware of our school approach to using and developing digital skills.
- ✓ Teaching staff are becoming familiar with the digital skills progression and are beginning to use it in their planning.
- ✓ Pupils have developed their leadership skills by supporting staff to trial use of technology and support peers.
- ✓ Digital Leaders developed their leadership skills by planning and delivering assembly for Safer Internet Day with key messages for pupils on internet safety.

- ✓ School has shared Safer Schools App information with parents.
- ✓ Staff have participated in CPL training with a digital focus throughout this year.
- ✓ P1-4 have had visit from UHI to deliver coding.
- ✓ P4-7 pupils have visited the Newton Room and participated in 'Robotics and Mathematics' workshop.
- ✓ Parents can access regular news and updates on Internet Safety.
- ✓ Teaching staff have further developed their digital knowledge and skills.
- ✓ Pupils have further developed coding skills.
- ✓ Pupils have further developed skills in programming and can link this to mathematics.
- ✓ Some progress was made in this area.

#### Next steps:

- Continue to gather evidence for Digital Schools Award.
- Continue to provide staff with CPL opportunities to develop their digital skills.
- Further embed planning for digital skills progression across the school.
- Apply for accreditation for Digital Schools Award.

## Progress and impact of Pupil Equity Fund

### Adhartas agus buaidh Maoin Cothromas Sgoilearan

We have effective systems in place to monitor attainment and target interventions. Additional PSA hours from Pupil Equity Fund were planned to support individuals to increase attainment in spelling and maths. Due to changes in PSA staffing in September, we had to change our PEF plan to use funding for additional supply teachers to support class teachers to complete baseline assessments and deliver targeted interventions. We subscribed to Nessy, an online pupil resource for Spelling, to provide support for individuals. All pupils used Nessy regularly, in addition to Wraparound Spelling and 1 minute spelling with PSA. This is helping to reduce attainment gaps and support individuals to make good progress. Targeted pupils made progress over 6 months with gain in spelling age of 10 months. Additional supply teachers allowed class teachers to focus on targeted interventions to raise attainment in maths. Basic facts were a focus, and Nessy Number Sense was used to develop basic number skills. Targeted pupils increased their Highland Numeracy Diagnostic Assessment by one level in 6 months.

## Wider achievements

### Coileanaidhean nas fharsainghe

- \*All children confidently performed in our school Christmas Show in front of our community audience.
- \*Our school raised £260 for MFR Cash for Kids Appeal.
- \*We supported the Highland Food Bank Appeal.
- \*All children entered a drawing competition for Highlife Highland Countryside Rangers project 'Puddles to Ponds'
- \*4 pupils had winning entries in the drawing competition their artwork will be on display at Highland Folk Museum.
- \*All pupils entered artwork into a local ASG Art Exhibition at Glen Urquhart High School.
- \*All pupils experienced live author events at our local library during Book Week Scotland.
- \*All pupils participated in a creative writing workshop during a visit from a storyteller.
- \*Pupils in P1-5 wrote a collaborative story for a local writing competition and were awarded second place.
- \*Almost all pupils in P4-7 competed in the INVOC Schools League orienteering events.
- \*Balnain Primary School won the INVOC small school trophy for orienteering.
- \*6 individual pupils were awarded medals for their orienteering success.
- \*P6/7 pupils organised bake sale and coffee morning to raise funds for Loch Insh Residential.
- \*All P6/7 pupils participated in residential experience with outdoor adventurous activities.
- \*All pupils entered the Mod Art Competition.
- \*All P6/7 pupils completed level 1 and level 2 Bikeability Training.
- \*All pupils participated in a block of 8 swimming lessons.



\*Our school organised an after-school 'Cards Club' which almost all pupils engaged in along with members of our local community.

\*A few of our pupils entered the UHI Shinty Tournament and represented Glen Urquhart Shinty Club along with fellow teammates from Glen Urquhart Primary School.

\*Balnain entered a team into the Small School Shinty Competition.

\*Our Junior Road Safety Officers helped us to work with parents and transport providers to campaign for safe end of day collections.

\*We entered a team of P6/7 pupils into the Inter-School Sports and Team Balnain came in second place in our section.

\*All pupils participated in rugby taster sessions.

\*Most of our P4-7 class participated in the Great Glen Rugby Festival.

\*All of our P4-7 pupils participated in the Great Glen Cross County event with many individuals awarded medals for their achievements and Balnain won the P4/5 Girls Trophy and we won the P6/7 Boys Trophy.

\*Balnain Primary entered a team into the McRobert Cross Country event.

\*We entered a P6/7 team into the Primary Maths Challenge event.

\*P4-7 pupils engaged with the Science Skills Academy and had a visit to the Newton Room for Robotics and Mathematics as well as an outreach visit from a member of their STEM team focusing on Satellites.

\*P1-4 pupils had a visit from UHI to develop their coding skills.

\*P1-3 engaged with Kodaly music sessions and pupils in P4-7 engaged with traditional music sessions from Feis Ross.

\*All pupils participated in drama workshops from a visiting drama specialist as part of Social Studies projects.

\*All pupils participated in outdoor learning visits from Aigas Nature Days.

\*All pupils participated in a workshop from a visiting artist and illustrator.

\*All pupils experienced drama productions in Eden Court: the pantomime 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and the West End production of The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe.

\*All pupils in P1-4 participated in the Baillie Cup athletics event as a joint team with Cannich Bridge Primary School. 6 of our pupils were awarded medals and we won the trophy for fastest relay team.

\*Our pupils and parents are involved in the planning process for upgrading our community playpark.

\*Our Parent Council are supporting the school with playground improvements and helping to add new play equipment in our playground.

\*Our School and Parent Council have worked together to organise a successful Summer Fete which is a popular community event.

## Comments from learners, families, stakeholders and staff

### Beachdan bho luchd-ionnsachaidh, teaghlachan, luchd-ùidhe is luchd-obrach

#### Learner Comments:

- I feel respected and included in school.
- Everyone respects everyone in school.
- I feel I am achieving because the school lets us take part in lots of competitions.
- I feel included because we all play with each other in school.
- We loved doing the Christmas Show. The audience really loved it!
- The people in our school always respect me and I respect them.
- I feel respected because people take me seriously and listen to me.
- I feel a part of this school. People listen to me and my feelings.
- I feel responsible because I help other people and I can lead things.
- I liked all the trips we've had!
- I liked organising the bake sale and coffee morning and I loved working as a waiter.
- Loch Insh was amazing! It was great to try all the different activities and to stay away from home.
- I love our swimming lessons!
- We loved doing the Baillie Cup with Cannich Bridge Primary and winning our trophy!
- I love all the art this year.
- We loved doing orienteering and winning the small school trophy!

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#### Parental Comments:

- The school has developed my child's confidence, helps her to feel safe and supported.
- The school has provided many opportunities for my child: library visits, drama, singing, swimming lessons etc.
- My child likes the way staff treat everyone and support everyone.
- My children have loved all the out of school learning experiences and swimming lessons.
- My child has enjoyed the trips, all the art, singing and sport and has also enjoyed all the schoolwork.
- It is inspiring and refreshing to see how the staff go above and beyond for the children, sacrificing evenings and weekends for their benefit.
- The staff have a welcoming and approachable manner which filters down to all the children and becomes the culture.
- We are so impressed with how well the staff see and know our child.
- My child has enjoyed all the science-based trips, visits and projects.
- The school has not only supported my child but has supported me too.
- My child has been doing loads of creative things at school and really enjoying it and there is lots of variation to their activities, lots of outside time and thoughtful work. I am so grateful that Balnain are continuing to offer this diverse range of activities and good quality learning, and I wanted to say thank you.
- I wanted to acknowledge something which I think is particularly amazing from the Balnain children, and must be to do with the way the school is run and the children are treated. When the children get together, with or without adults, they work together in such a collaborative and positive way - they help each other, they look out for each other, and they genuinely seem to enjoy each others company from p1 right through to p7. It really is heart warming to see. It is also such a strength for them, I think that they will have had this experience in childhood of how people can be together in a really harmonious way. For me as a mum, this means so much.
- We thought the school show was amazing and everyone was brilliant!
- I love the school website and blog with photos of what they've been up to.

#### Partner Comments:

- The children are so enthusiastic, and you can do so much with them because they all behave so well.
- What a great group of children! They listen well, are so enthusiastic, they are keen to learn and they support each other so well!
- What a lovely group of children! They were so polite and well mannered. They listened so carefully and asked really intelligent questions. They all worked together so well too and supported each other. What a pleasure to work with!
- We've never worked with such a great group of children! We could do so much with them because they are so polite and respectful, they listened well to us and they wanted to learn! They are all so capable and they were such a pleasure to work with.
- What an enthusiastic bunch! Love how they work so well together and support each other. They are all genuinely interested and want to learn.

## Capacity for continuous improvement

### Comas airson leasachadh leantainneach

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Using indicators from 'How Good is our School 4' together with learner, parent, carer, partner and community feedback we believe we have made the following progress this session:

PRIMARY	
<b>QI 1.3</b> Leadership of change	Good
<b>QI 2.3</b> Learning, teaching and assessment	Good
<b>QI 3.1</b> Wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Very good
<b>QI 3.2</b> Raising attainment and achievement/Securing children's progress	Very good

Our overall evaluation of our capacity for continuous improvement is:

We are confident in our capacity for continuous improvement.

## Key priorities for improvement planning

### Prìomhachasan airson planadh airson leasachadh

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Continue to gather evidence for Digital Schools Award

Writing – continue to raise attainment by agreeing a whole school progressive approach to teaching of writing and assessment.

Outdoor Learning – gain Eco-School Award

## Planning ahead

### A' planadh air adhart

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Full details of the school's 2025/26 improvement priorities and actions are detailed on the school improvement plan, which can be accessed on our website

<https://sites.google.com/glenurquharhigh.org.uk/balnainprimary/home> or by contacting the school office.