



STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT

HELMSDALE

PRIMARY SCHOOL

2024-2025



Introduction: Local and National Context

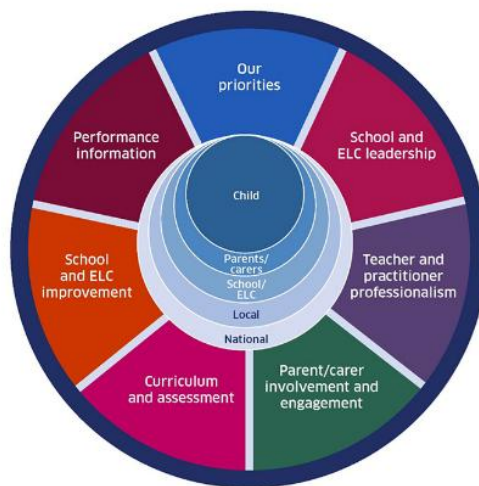
Ro-ràdh: Co-theacsa Ionadail agus Nàiseanta

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?* 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

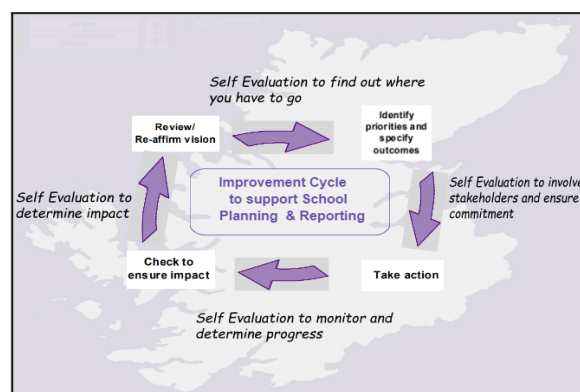
Looking to others for new ideas that challenge our practice and support continuous improvement allows us to learn from what works and what doesn't. This includes practice in other schools, learning communities and learning from educational research.

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 daonnan a' faicinn na Gàidhealtachd mar dhachaigh.

Head Teacher: *Mrs Shelly Taylor*
Helmsdale Primary School



School Profile

Pròifil na Sgoile

It is important to remember that statistical data alone is not a measure of how well we are doing.

All schools are unique, especially so with very small class sizes and % data.

To understand how well we are doing it is important for us to look at a range of different data sources.

Attendance
92.4%

Average Class Size
20

Meeting PE Target
Target Met
(visiting specialist CCR)

Pupil Numbers (inc nursery)
40 (+8 ELC)

Teacher Numbers
3 (2 Fte)

Pupil Teacher Ratio
20:1

Helmsdale Primary school is in the East coast village of Helmsdale in Sutherland, serving the local community of Helmsdale and Strath of Kildonan. The recently appointed headteacher has overall leadership responsibility, for the management and running of the school and ELC setting and is also class committed 3 days-a-week. At Helmsdale Primary school we value the pivotal role of parents and families take pride in being an integral part of the community and have good working relations with many key stakeholders.

As the school roll comprises a relatively 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. Across P1-7 we currently have 40 learners. Our ELC which is now registered for children ages 2-5years, currently has 8 children (6 due to transition to P1).

A significant number of learners in the school are classed as having ASN as per the Highland Council staged approach (47.5%). We have a visiting Additional Support Needs Teacher (ASNT) for 1.5 day per week. Children with additional support needs are supported mainly within the mainstream classes. Staff consult with ASNT and other agencies such as- Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist to ensure strategies are in place and needs are met to the best of our provision and ability.

Helmsdale Primary School sits within an area of deprivation as per the SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) index. We have an increasing number of families on low income, which is demonstrated by the amount of PEF (Pupil Equity Funding) for our small school.

Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. 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 good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Overall children are making the following progress:

Reading

Good progress

Writing

Satisfactory progress

Listening and
talking

Good progress

Numeracy

Good progress

We have had no exclusions this year



‘It takes a village to raise a child’

Vision

- Our Vision is to work in partnership with pupils, parents, and the wider community.
- Our Vision is to create an inclusive and welcoming environment where learning is exciting, challenging, and relevant and everyone is valued and encouraged to achieve their potential.

Values

‘Growing’....

- 🌿 To be kind
- 🌿 To be respectful
- 🌿 To be resilient
- 🌿 To be motivated to achieve our potential
- 🌿 To be curious
- 🌿 To be creative



Aims

- ❖ To provide a safe, happy, and caring environment for learning.
- ❖ To provide stimulating and challenging teaching and learning experiences both within and out with the classroom.
- ❖ To foster effective partnerships between pupils, staff, parents, outside agencies, and the wider community, working together to create a cohesive learning environment.
- ❖ To encourage pupil achievement and attainment by developing skills and positive attitudes, encouraging successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.
- ❖ To deliver a broad balanced and differentiated curriculum encouraging children to progress at their own pace with appropriate support promoting and encouraging appropriate level of independence and learning skills for the future.
- ❖ To work closely with the schools in the Golspie ASG fostering links with colleagues, monitoring standards, and developing effective transitions.



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:

Raising Attainment in Literacy Overall

Purpose:

Developed in response to overall attainment in literacy, being impacted by the achievement of writing in particular.

Progress:

1. Class teachers across all stages committed the September 2024 Inservice day to the 'Literacy for All in a world of diversity' professional development training.
2. Early Years workers & support staff engaged in training through 'Learning through Landscapes' which focused on taking literacy outdoors.
3. Class teachers completed the remainder of Stephen Graham's 'Explicitly teaching writing' sessions (5/9 completed the previous academic year)
4. [PM reading assessments](#) were carried out in term 1 by our PEF funded children's services worker.
5. Class teachers engaged in sessions with Highland Council Literacy officer, focusing on Listening and talking.
6. An engaging and creative whole school workshop was held with local author/illustrator, [Jenny Grant](#).
7. Learners in middle/ upper primary submitted work to various writing competitions (Rotary, YoungWriters, BBC)
8. A focus group of learners in Primary 4 were supported weekly with comprehension and basic writing skills.

Impact:

1. Teachers are more aware of the rationale and identification process for dyslexia + interventions/ ways to support families.
2. Staff working in Early years gained confidence taking literacy outdoors. The ELC garden has a wider range of mark making resources and staff across the school make better use of the outdoor space.
3. Teachers use some of the strategies and resources outlined by Stephen Grahame in practice (LI/SC), but, staff felt the sessions were not as beneficial as the previous year.
4. A clear and robust level of attainment was gathered & used to inform groupings of learners. (No re-test due to staff changes)
5. Most learners are now more accountable in their listening and talking and demonstrate greater awareness for others.
6. Learners enjoyed the session, and many were enthused to write their own mini books-check the [reel](#).
7. Some reluctant learners were encouraged to write for a purpose and a significant number of our learners were recognised for their efforts- certificates/ published work.
8. A majority of learners made consistent progress in writing grammatically accurate full sentence answers, and support will continue in this fashion when they go on to Primary 5



Satisfactory Progress was made in this area

Next steps:

- Make consistent use of materials and strategies for teaching writing across all stages- greater focus on spelling/punctuation/grammar- highlight importance of reinforcing basic skills at home.
- Further develop ways to explicitly teach listening skills, linked to writing.
- Highland is part of the National Improving Writing Programme- delivered by Local Leads, the CYPIC Team (The Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative) and Education Scotland. We will continue with a focus on improving attainment in writing for our children and young people- staff have signed up to The National Improving Writing Project (Cohort Five).



Implementing further use of technology & developing understanding across the school community

Purpose:

There was a pivotal need to improve the wifi across the school.

To make better use of digital technology and roll out consistent use of chromebooks from Early-Second level.

To equip our learners with skills for the future & further strengthen partnerships with a STEM link.

Progress:

1. Teaching staff completed a series of Digital CLPL twilight sessions led by Robert Quigley/ Strategic Improvement officers.
2. Online Safety awareness became a major focus across the whole school- P7 learners took on the role of 'Digi-buddies' for our ELC children.
3. Safer internet use was promoted beyond the school gates.
4. THC Swan2 network migration/ ICT refresh took place in October 2024.
5. 1-1 devices were assigned for learners in Primary 1-4, as well as P5-7. Chrometabs were purchased for Early level learners.
6. Homework was allocated online via Google Classroom for Upper learners from the end of term 1 onwards.
7. A [Padlet](#) of evidence was submitted to the Digital Schools Award Scotland to gain accreditation for our efforts to improve.
8. Partnerships were strengthened; some which were pre-existing were further enhanced + new links made.
9. New welcome sign + QR code purchased.

Impact:

1. Staff now have a greater awareness of the role digital technologies has within CfE and use THC 'Digital skills progression' to inform planning.
2. Children at all stages learnt about the importance of online safety & in turn became more accountable and confident.
3. A parent/carer workshop was held and well supported across the ASG.
4. Connectivity across the school has vastly improved.
5. We have worked hard to ensure resourcing and access is equitable for all our children & young people.
6. An increase of over 20% in submission of homework, following a shift to online/hybrid + families note they prefer this method.
7. Helmsdale Primary School achieved recognition for excellence in integrating digital technology across learning & teaching.
8. Many unique opportunities were provided for our learners- Visit to recording studios, Podcast series in collaboration with local museum etc.
9. Communications have improved- direct link to website for the parent body/passing public.

Very Good Progress was made in this area



Next steps:

- Profiling & Reporting-Focus on creating and transferring to a digital format.
- Continue to further embed the use of technology across the curriculum.
- Continue the positive working in partnership to ensure links remain, long term.
- Digital Schools accreditor suggests we share our good practice with other rural schools.



Progress and impact of Pupil Equity Fund

Adhartas agus buaidh Maoin Cothromas Sgoilearan

PEF support is crucial to Helmsdale Primary School; Our PEF funding was again spent, invaluable on providing extra support time for our children and young people, to give them the tools they need, and a focused boost to become more successful in their learning.

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 session this was through the charity, 'Action for Children', via a young persons' practitioner.

At the end of term 2, due to staffing changes, the support was then altered and shared between two THC employees to alleviate any periods of absence or longer-term disruption.

- ✓ Almost all learners in receipt of support for HWB targets have increased in resilience and shown greater awareness for others and score higher on the SHANARRI indicators survey wheel.
- ✓ Learners across all stages have made a marked improvement in their reading skills through use of games, increased opportunities to read aloud and through use of sound screening checks.
- ✓ Several learners have made improvements in achieving writing benchmarks at First level.
- ✓ Second level learners in receipt of support, have made marked improvements in their facility for number and times tables recall.

Wider achievements

Coileanaidhean nas fharsainghe

We recognise success of both an academic and non-academic nature and value the skills our children and young people gain from participating in varied extra-curricular activities.

Wider achievements are recognised at assemblies and families are encouraged to share good news with class teachers via ClassDojo.

Headteacher award certificates are now commonplace, and wider achievements tracked.



Winning House= Bunillidh



Swimming Gala – overall winners

Benchball- small school winners

Basketball- small school winners

Badminton- overall winners

Football Festival- 2nd small schools

First time participation in Cross Country Series + new running vests



- ✓ Pupils chosen to meet King Charles on his visit to the village
- ✓ East Sutherland Rotary Club Writing Competition winners in Upper
- ✓ Fundraising successes- Mikeysline, Tesco blue tokens- to enhance ELC outdoor resources, Scottish Charity Air Ambulance skyward challenge
- ✓ Successful Upper Primary Residential Trip- first in many years
- ✓ ELC balance bike brigade



Comments from learners, families, stakeholders and staff

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

ELC Learners:



- ✚ "We go on the bikes EVERY DAY!!"
- ✚ "My buddy showed me how to get on and keep safe on the tablets."
- ✚ "It's fun when we build dens outside."
- ✚ "I go to after school club!"
- ✚ "My teachers are kind."



Primary 1-4 Learners:



- ✚ "Some of us have got so good at times tables!!"
- ✚ "I love Tuesdays- we get P.E."
- ✚ "The plants project and garden centre role play area has been good fun!"
- ✚ "We had a workshop where we got to be doctors and nurses and learn about first aid."
- ✚ "Everyone is Moomin crazy!"
- ✚ "I think my writing has got better and I like doing stories in free time."
- ✚ "It will be very quiet with no P4s next year!"
- ✚ "We got to use technology more this year, I love coding!"
- ✚ "We had the mums and dads in for Easter time."



Primary 5-7 Learners:



- ✔ "The WW2 topic was interesting, I knew a lot anyway and like it but enjoyed doing it in school too."
- ✔ "The residential was THE BEST!! Especially zip lining."
- ✔ "I have enjoyed doing the podcast series and hearing from different people and learning interview skills."
- ✔ "Taking part in the cross country has been epic!"
- ✔ "I liked the visits to the Newton Rooms, working in groups to use the Mindstorm robots was cool."
- ✔ "Feis music is good, we played spoons in the class and got juice and shortbread on the last day!"
- ✔ "I liked writing stories for the competitions; I like to type then write."
- ✔ "We have done some interesting stuff with tech. I liked the stop motion animation days"
- ✔ "I have just about completed the whole 'beat that maths' challenge this year."
- ✔ "I was nervous about the summer show but ended up happy- we were all buzzing after!"



Families:

- ❖ “We think HPS is highly proactive and competent in seeking and making partnership working happen within the community.”
- ❖ “I think that the school works very well with other establishments and the children have good opportunities and many visitors and volunteers. For a small school there are a wide range of endeavours on offer.”
- ❖ “We have noted more engagement with parents as to what’s going on or coming up this year as a positive. We are happy with the running of the school”
- ❖ “My daughter has very much enjoyed all the digital opportunities, and the various workshops have been well received. I enjoyed the animal visit myself too!”

Stakeholders:

❖ JA, Timespan heritage/ digital curator

“Timespan has enhanced its partnership with Helmsdale Primary School over the past year by working across the curriculum, utilising digital technology to offer more in-depth and interactive learning to raise awareness about climate change and the challenges faced by young people living in remote areas.

This includes a series of podcasts focused on climate justice and youth-led climate action.



The initiative is part of the People’s Mobile Archive community well-being and connectivity program, which is funded by the Community Regeneration Fund. Through this project partnership, the pupils have developed skills in using sound recording equipment and scripting questions. The students have also gained confidence in critical thinking and in expressing their thoughts on issues that affect them, while learning from the experiences of others. The podcasts are designed to inspire youth-led actions and amplify their voices for change. These partnerships assist Timespan in achieving its mission and working more equitably with schools and younger people.”

❖ BM, Feis Music

“It is always a great pleasure visiting Helmsdale Primary School- we are always made to feel so welcome and that our input is truly valued! The staff are very friendly and get involved, we all have great fun with the kids. It was fantastic to have an ex-pupil along to assist this year too!”

❖ Parent Council

“The Parent Council have had opportunities to hear and discuss improvements made and feed into future improvements that the school wish to implement. The Parent council would like to further develop partnerships with all parents and stakeholders.”

❖ RQ, Collaborative Lead

“I was extremely impressed with the work that the school has developed over the course of the year with their digital journey. Not only in the enthusiasm that is always given to any digital training events that I have run, that staff have attended, but particularly in the work done around online safety. I delivered a training session for parents in April’25 and although the numbers of parents who attended was lower than had been hoped for, the engagement and interest from the parent body was excellent and I believe this was largely down to the enthusiasm of the school and the HT who had stressed great importance on this key aspect of digital development.”



Staff:

Early Years:

"The ELC has enjoyed having more opportunities this year, especially the huge success of the balance bikes fundraising drive which helped further develop the children's skills on bikes. We also had the opportunity to build on digital skills and the children worked alongside their buddies to learn about digital safety. Our transition opportunities were also further developed this session."

Primary:

"It is great to work as part of such a supportive team. Our partnership working has gone from strength to strength this year and there have been increased opportunities for our younger learners with after school activities too."



Capacity for continuous improvement **Comas airson leasachadh leantainneach**

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:

	ELC	PRIMARY
QI 1.3 Leadership of change	Good	Good
QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	Good	Satisfactory
QI 3.1 Wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Good	Good
QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement/Securing children's progress	Good	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

- ✓ We will continue with the drive to raise attainment in literacy across the school- looking to purchase a progressive spelling and grammar scheme and focusing on writing skills.
- ✓ We will encourage reading for enjoyment and foster a love of books from ELC up, through working towards the 'Reading schools' accreditation.
- ✓ We will focus on Profiling & Reporting, with a view to a shift to a fully digital platform.
- ✓ We will continue our RRS journey- embedding mutual respect across the whole school community.
- ✓ We will familiarise ourselves with Meta skills and introduce the concept to our learners.
- ✓ We will engage with the new ELC framework and staff will work on meeting the needs of 2Yos.

Planning ahead


A' planadh air adhart

Family Friendly School Improvement Snapshot



Helmsdale Primary School: 'Stakeholder Friendly' School Improvement Plan 2025-2026

Each year school staff must identify areas to focus on within the school, these are linked to Quality Indicators (QI's) & gives us areas to improve on throughout the year. (QIs are set out in 'How Good is Our School?' 4th Edition which is created by Education Scotland & used for self-evaluation of the school and for inspections.)

Focus 1: Profiling & Reporting Why?	Focus 2: Attainment in Literacy Why?	Other/ongoing developments Why?
<p>To improve communications & engagement with home, regarding what your child is learning To document achievements more effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across the school/ ELC we will continue to use ClassDojo as our main communication platform, parents/carers are to use this to contact staff and share wider achievements.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers will create a planning snapshot, outlining curriculum coverage, to be shared with families at the beginning of each term, ELC will continue to plan responsively and share the 'road to learning' with families. Profiling will shift from the 'blue folders' to a digital platform, where every pupil in the school will have their own unique site- which will be accessible for families to feed into. Termly High-quality assessments will be conducted and shared, to encourage greater reflection and evaluation. 	<p>The need to raise standards in writing, remains to improve attainment overall. There is a requirement to re-instate a love for reading for enjoyment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across all stages there will be greater progression and consistency in the teaching of spelling, grammar and technicalities of writing- all stages P2+ to use newly purchased progressive schemes of work.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff will commit to completing the 'National Improving Writing Programme' training with Highland Council Literacy Development officers- to improve pedagogical approaches and pupil participation. There will be a school wide focus on working towards the achievement of 'Reading Schools', research proves that reading for pleasure supports equity & wellbeing, impacts learners' attainment & encourages critical thinking, creativity & empathy. 	<p>To keep up with latest developments & meet the needs of our youngest learners in ELC- we now provides places for 2YOs. To embed understanding of rights/responsibilities & build respect across the whole school community. To continue very positive partnership working with other agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff working in ELC will engage with the new Quality Improvement Framework for Early Years; becoming acquainted with the new quality Indicators and striving to appropriately meet the needs of our youngest learners.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue our Rights Respecting Schools Journey- with the intention of achieving silver RRSA accreditation by November 2025. We will explore Meta skills and global citizenship as an emerging theme in Scottish Education, introducing the concept to our learners across the curriculum, encouraging high quality oracy and highlighting the links with our school values. We will endeavour to provide further opportunities for active & experiential learning and continue to work closely in partnership with external agencies and community groups.

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 Helmsdale Primary School [website](#) or by contacting the school office- helmsdale.primary@highland.gov.uk .

