

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Education & Learning Report and Improvement Plan



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

The statutory guidance Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (as amended 2016), states that education authorities must prepare and publish an annual plan for the year ahead taking account of the requirements of the current National Improvement Framework (NIF) and an annual report on the progress made against the previous year's plan. This Education & Learning Improvement Plan (ELIP) describes how The Highland Council Education and Learning Service intends to take steps to support all children to achieve their potential, reduce inequalities of outcome experienced by pupils as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, and fulfil the requirements of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) for Scottish education.

It is a duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to submit this plan to Scottish Ministers each year.

The National Improvement Framework 2025 published in December 2024 describes the vision for Scottish education as ambitious, inclusive, and supportive in order to deliver:

- Excellence through raising achievement and improving outcomes: ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards they can.
- Achieving equity: ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed.

The key priorities of the National Improvement Framework are detailed below:

- 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; and
- Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

The outcomes that the NIF expects to achieve are:

- A globally respected, empowered, and responsive education system with clear accountability at every level that supports children, young people, and adult learners to thrive. The system enables the development of their knowledge, skills, values, and attributes that give them the best opportunity to succeed and contribute to Scotland's society and economy.
- Young people experiencing the benefit of schools and early years settings working in excellent partnerships with wider children's services and other partners, families, and communities, in line with the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach.
- Inclusive and relevant curriculum and assessment which gives young people the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to society, and shape a sustainable future, while celebrating and supporting progression for all.

- High levels of achievement across the curriculum for all learners, with action to close the poverty-related attainment gap.
- Highly skilled teachers and school-leaders driving excellent learning, teaching, and assessment for all, especially those with additional support needs.
- Improving relationships and behaviour, and attendance, with increased engagement in learning and a culture of dignity and respect for all. • An education system engaging in digital technology to enhance all aspects of learning and teaching, supported by a digitally skilled workforce and tackling digital inequality.

Our annual Education & Learning Improvement Plan, reinforced by our Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy, along with other important strategies, policy and guidance shown in Appendix 1, will support The Highland Council Education and Learning Service and its schools and ELC settings to progress towards realising this vision for Scottish education.

1.2 HIGHLAND LOCAL CONTEXT

Geography

Highland covers one third of the land area of Scotland and is nearly the size of Belgium.

19,019

Pupils live in Urban and Small Towns

10,321

Pupils live in a rural area

65%

of people in Highland live in remote rural, accessible rural areas or remote small towns.

Schools

In session 2025-26, there are



195 schools

- 29 secondary schools
- 163 primary schools
- 3 special schools

Free School Meals & Clothing Grants

4,530

Pupils are entitled to Free School Meals



11.17%

of pupils are entitled to claim a Clothing Grant

Care Experienced Children & Young People



There are **580** Care Experienced Children & Young People in Highland.

That's **2%**

Gaelic Medium Education

The Highland Council is the largest provider of Gaelic Medium Education.

6.96% of pupils in P1-P7 in Highland are in GME settings.

1,896 total pupils in GME 3-18.

Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig

Pupils

In Highland, there are

13,619

Secondary school pupils

15,525

Primary school pupils

196

Special school pupils

Overall attendance is

90.1%



Deprivation & Poverty

2,929

School-aged children live in 20% most deprived areas in Highland.

10.3%

Pupils live in SIMD1&2.



1 in 5

Children are affected by poverty.

Additional Support for Learning

12,434

Pupils have one or more recorded need(s) for ASfL (all sectors)

That's **42.4%**



7.2%

English as an Additional Language

Colleges & University

32.1%

Of young people leave school to go into **Higher Education**

20.4%

Of young people leave school to go into **Further Education**



Education & Training

9,785 16-19 year olds are in education, employment or training. That's

2,325 Modern Apprentices are in training.

283 Young people aged 16-19 are not participating, with 228 unconfirmed.



95%

1.3 PLANNING FOR 2025/26

The 2025/26 ELIP outlines the high-level areas for improvement across all aspects of the Education and Learning Service and schools and details how we will realise the ambition set within our Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy. Both align closely to various other plans across the Council such as The Highland Council Delivery Plan, The Integrated Services Plan, The Child Poverty Action Report, The Gaelic Language Plan, and My Highland Future Plan.

The ELIP reflects this vision and the Council’s core values of **Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected**.

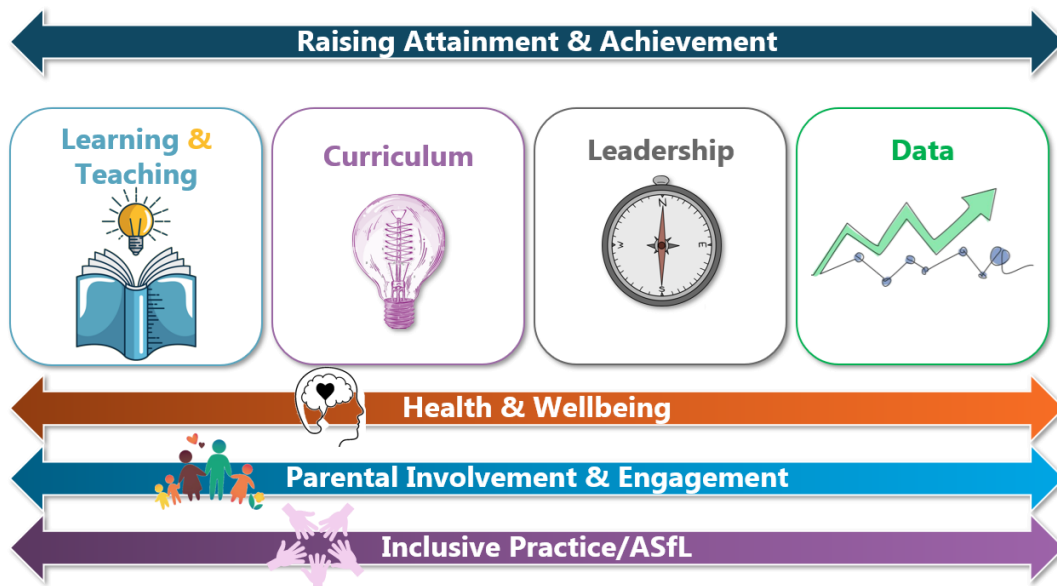


This plan sets out the ambition of The Highland Council Education and Learning Service to improve attainment and achievement and reduce inequity by prioritising improvement in four key themes:

- Leadership
- Learning and Teaching
- Curriculum
- Data Analysis for Improvement

Three foundation principles sit alongside each of these themes and act as a common thread between them:

- Inclusive Practice/ Additional Support Needs
- Health and wellbeing, including Relationships and Behaviour
- Parental Involvement and Engagement



It focuses on supporting delivery of national legislation, policy, and strategic priorities for education.

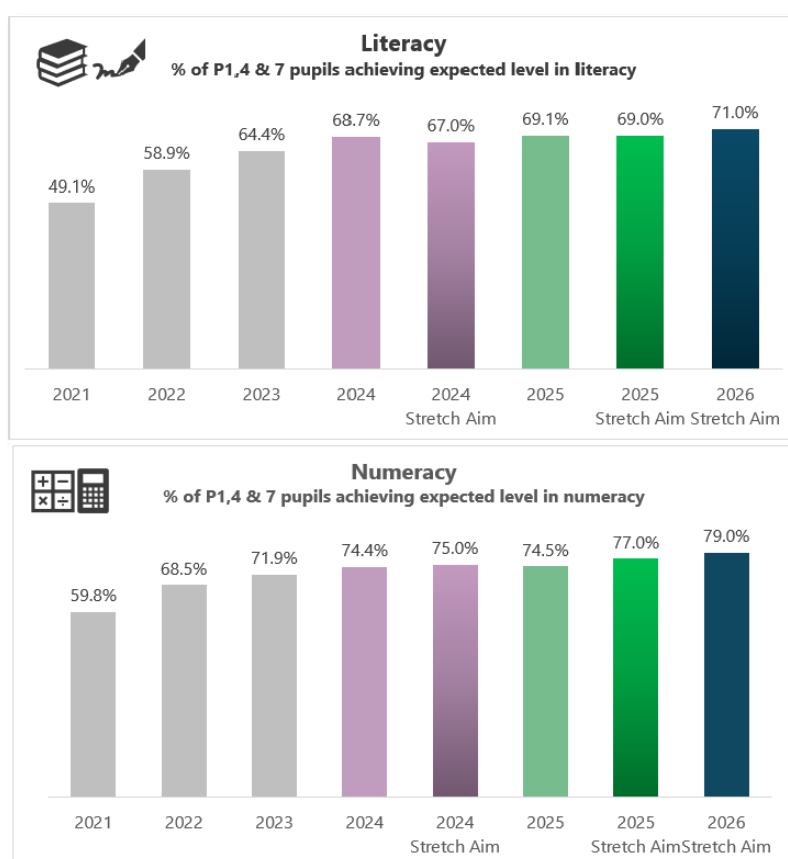
2. PROGRESS TOWARDS STRETCH AIMS 2025/26

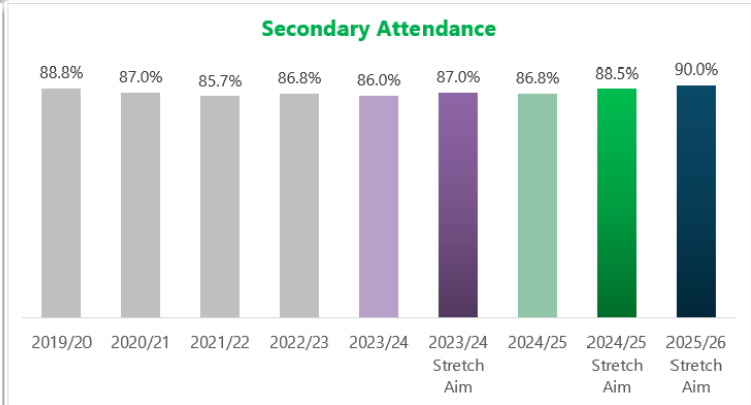
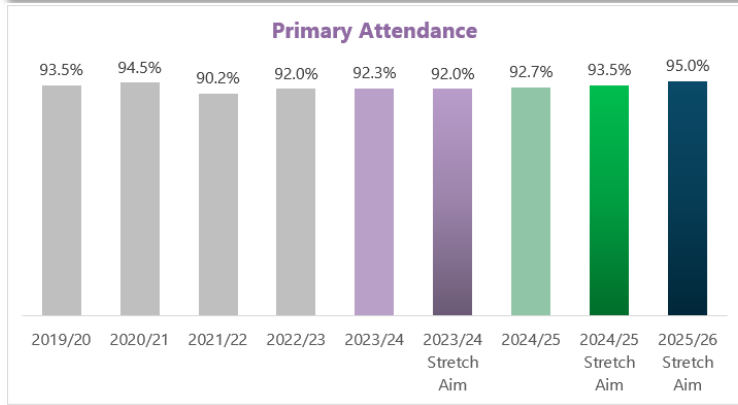
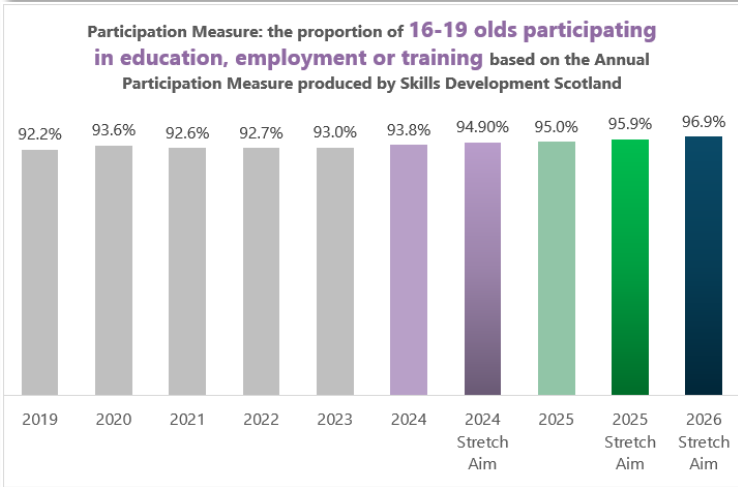
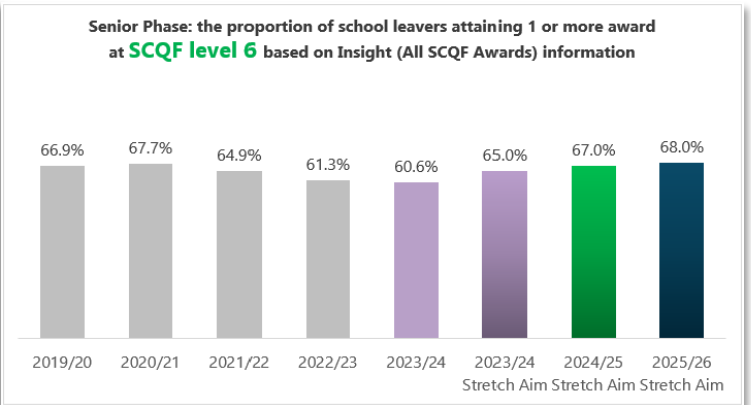
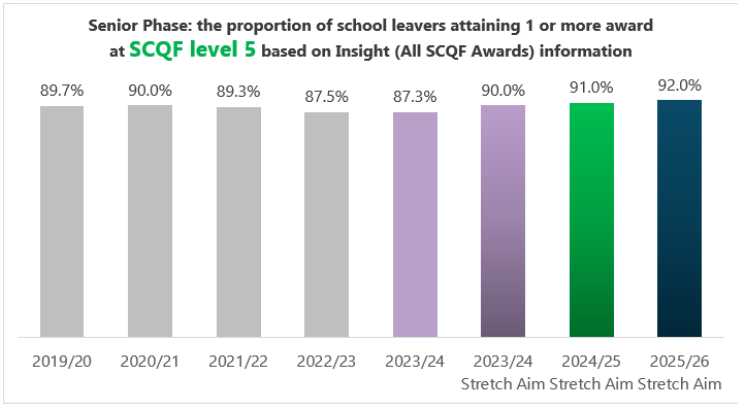
The Stretch Aims, agreed in 2024, use the core model stipulated by the Scottish Government: the "core" sets a minimum requirement for key measures based on national data, and local data for health and wellbeing.

The core stretch aims, highlighted below, have been developed to improve outcomes for all children and young people whilst closing the poverty-related attainment gap. They articulate ambitious. They have been supported and challenged through professional dialogue with Education Scotland to drive improved outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty across Highland.

Stretch Aims Core	2024	2025	2026
ACEL Combined Data Literacy	67%	69%	71%
ACEL Combined Data Numeracy	75%	77%	79%
SCQF Level 5	90%	91%	92%
SCQF Level 6	65%	67%	68%
Participation	94.9%	95.9%	96.9%
Attendance Primary	92%	93.5%	95%
Attendance Secondary	87%	88.5%	90%

The graphs below show an improving trend towards 2026-27 stretch aims.





3. PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-2025

3.1 Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education.





Children's Rights are realised in an increasing number of schools and early years settings. We continue to develop a strong ethos & culture of rights & respect based on UNCRC. 68% of School Standard and Quality Reports for 2024/25 session highlight active involvement with the Rights Respecting Schools agenda. 16 schools have already achieved gold status, 41 silver, 80 bronze, and all other schools have now registered to begin their improvement journey.

Work undertaken through our Educational Psychology Service detailed below to ensure Children Rights and Voice are an important part of our culture and their work on Participation in Practice: Children Shaping Highland's Future has been recognised nationally. We have been shortlisted for the National COSLA Excellence Award.

800+ children of all ages helped co-produce [The Children and Young People's Participation Strategy](#). A section on the [Children's Rights Highland](#) website, includes a process for gathering consultations undertaken with children and young people.

Workshops and focus groups involving 40 children and young people have been undertaken to co-produce a set of activity cards to inform professionals about 'Capacity' in children. This work has further informed the Highland Council Child Friendly Complaints process.

A myth buster series of resources have been developed to support understanding of children's rights. Two examples are illustrated below.

<p>MYTH! Children under 12 can be assumed not to have capacity</p> <p>MYTHICAL MUNGO Mungo got parental consent to work with a child, but did not ask them if it was OK or give them any choices. He wrote a report without consulting on the contents</p> 	<p>NOPE! Capacity is not determined by any age or developmental cut-off. It is a function of both how well the child understands and how well we explain the choices for them</p> <p>CAPACITY CALLUM Callum carefully explained what the work was, and what it would be like, and checked the child understood. He asked for and recorded the child's consent, and checked what to report afterwards</p> 	<p>MYTH! Adults know better than children what is best for them</p> <p>MYTHICAL MUNGO Mungo thought it was obvious what to do so just went ahead; when it all went wrong, he realised the child had important information that would have made a difference</p> 	<p>NOPE! Sometimes true, but in any decision or situation there are elements that affect the child that they will have views about. Taking account of these leads to better outcomes.</p> <p>CAPACITY CALLUM Callum checked his plan with the child, and learned important information that led to new ideas.</p> <p>These helped change things for the better.</p> 
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Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

Children and young people increasingly have their needs identified, assessed, and met by skilled and confident staff working in effective multi-agency collaboration.

The multi-agency GIRFEC training has been refreshed in light of local and national guidance. Feedback from the pilot was very positive and monthly face-to-face training has been arranged for 2025-26 with pre and post training feedback on skills development being undertaken by the Psychological Service.

The [Supporting the wellbeing of our C&YP](#) website has been updated to take account of changes in national policy and practice. There were 671 visitors to this site, which is an increase of 291 from 2023-24.

The use of the [Neurodevelopmental Assessment Profile](#) in schools and ELCs is now accepted practice. A review of its use in 2025 has reinforced its usefulness as an early assessment tool to support child development.

20 training sessions on Promoting Positive Relationships were delivered by the Psychological Service during 2024-25. These were attended by 304 practitioners from schools and ELCs and a training module has been specifically created for ELCs.

Highland Lifestyle Survey conducted in session 2024/25 was completed by pupils in P7, S2 and S4 with a response rate of approximately 50%, providing around 3000-3500 pupil responses. Results show that children and young people have become more aware that they have a range of rights and increasingly school staff are delivering lessons on the UNCRC. The Rights Respecting Schools Programme has significantly helped with this work. In general terms, children have consistently reported that they feel their key rights are being met.

When asked the following questions high numbers responded positively.

- Are you aware that all children and young people have rights? **95%**
- Does anyone in school talk to you about your rights? **79%**
- To what extent do you feel the following rights are being met at least partly:
- Your right to education **96%**
- Your right to relax and play **93%**
- Your right to have a view and have this listened to **92%**
- Are you familiar with the term wellbeing? **92%**
- Does anyone in school talk to you about wellbeing? **66%**

When asked how that felt in terms of SHANARRI Indicators (Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected Responsible and Included), wellbeing averaged at **75%** of respondents answering positively about their wellbeing.

School attendance levels across all Highland sectors have increased on the previous year by 0.4% in the primary sector and 0.8% in the secondary sector.

The focus of our plan last year was predominantly directed towards secondary schools and so impact across that sector is outlined below:

A new attendance framework and supporting resources has been created and is now fully implemented and embedded into secondary school practice. This includes the introduction of a process for fortnightly review of attendance data.

Education Scotland launched the Improving Attendance and Engagement Quality Improvement Programme last year and five secondary schools from Highland participated (Alness Academy, Dingwall Academy, Invergordon Academy, Inverness High School, and Tain Royal Academy). The programme provides information on the national picture of school attendance in Scotland and encourages use national resources to support improvement and ensure positive impact. Four of the five school attendance increased with the collective school attendance of the five schools improving by 0.2 %.

Training on Emotionally Based School Avoidance is regularly available to school staff by the Psychological Service. This training has been well evaluated. Overall, before training 45% of participants report being unclear how to identify Emotionally Based School Absence (ESBA) in children and young people. By the end of the training all participants feel they understand how to identify children and young people experiencing ESBA. 75% of attendees report that they have used the knowledge from this training in their practice.

An average of 1512 individual children access counselling over the course of a year. When asked (Lifestyle Survey 2025), 69% of those receiving counselling would recommend it to a friend.

3.2 Closing the gap between most and least disadvantaged children and young people.

The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare is impacting positively on children's outcomes, providing opportunities for early learning, and building skills through play. Data collected and analysed shows that the poverty related gaps in children's early development are reducing slightly. For children entering Primary 1 for session 2024-25 the gap had reduced slightly overall on the 2022-23 cohort. There a 3% increase for girls in both our most and least deprived vigintiles achieving all developmental milestones. However, the difference for boys was more significant. There was an increase of 10% of boys in vigintiles 17-20 who achieved all milestones and a 12% increase in relation to boys in vigintiles 1-4. Overall, however, girls still out-perform boys and while girls living in poverty have made improvement over the years, boys living in our most deprived areas continue to do less well than all other groups.

A new system for ensuring robust tracking and monitoring was established across all primary schools. A Progress and Achievement Dashboard is now used by all primary schools to support and inform planning to ensure pupil progress in learning. This allows school leaders and classroom practitioners to predict and monitor progress and includes options to filter data to enable greater scrutiny, particularly for targeted groups.

All primary headteachers engaged in attainment meetings with central officers to ensure rigorous scrutiny of school level attainment data. Through this process seventeen schools were identified to participate in centrally supported moderation activity. All teachers in these schools engaged in sessions with Curriculum Development Officers and Collaborative Lead Officers to ensure greater consistency in assessment of literacy and numeracy.

178 schools across Highland receive Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and create detailed plans for their spend on areas such as purchasing equipment and materials, staff training, employing additional staff (for example Children's Service Workers to provide planned support within and outwith school to identified children, families and groups) or increasing hours for exiting staff members to lead interventions. Each school also reports progress and impact annually. Two case studies exemplify progress below:

Case study – Caol Primary School, Fort William



PEF was carefully targeted at learners who required support to improve their attainment in literacy. PEF funding has been used to buy additional hours for a pupil support assistant to provide literacy interventions. To ensure that the support was given to children who need it, the school used a variety of baseline assessments, including phonological assessment information and Scottish National Standardised Assessments. Children have been able to access targeted support sessions, working through phonics and reading programmes.

What was the impact of this action?

P1 – P4 phonics focus: 100% of pupils increased their standardised score.

P1 – P7 reading focus: 55% of targeted pupils are on track and all pupils have been observed to make progress in their reading.

Case study – Millburn Academy, Inverness



A poverty-related gap was identified regarding attendance at the school. Over session 23.24, attendance for the target group decreased. A drop in attendance was targeted through a programme of intensive support and repurposing a job role to allow for further targeted interventions and impact analysis. Interventions included partnership work with families alongside provision of a Nurture space. By supporting young people and families, the school's aim was to improve attendance and engagement at school and build positive, nurturing relationships with families.

A PEF coordinator is responsible for monitoring, tracking, working with young people and families and liaising with Guidance and Year Heads to support attendance at school. This provides oversight of attendance with an opportunity to build trusting relationships with family members and each young person, responding quickly to family needs.

What was the impact of this action?

Attendance and engagement have improved for most cohorts.

3.3 Improvement in skills and sustained positive school leaver destinations for all young people

The 2023/24 National Initial Leaver Destination Report shows that 96.5% of the 2629 Highland school leavers entered an initial positive destination on leaving school with 94.2% sustaining a positive destination 6 months later. Both sets of statistics are above the National average.

This positive impact is supported by Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) improvement activity embedded into a number of strategic plans across the council, included in portfolios within The Highland Council Delivery Plan and some notable achievements are detailed below:

- Improved approaches to destination planning in schools with better partnership working with schools, Skills Development Scotland and DYW. There is improved sharing of information and consistent training to support experiential career learning.
- Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) delivery in Highland schools continues to show strong growth. An upward trajectory continued, with current figures indicating that around 10% of the Senior Phase cohort are now participating in 10 out of the 15 available FA frameworks across SCQF levels 4, 5, and 6.
- As part of the Council Future Workforce workstream, a Paid Summer Placement Pilot ran over the summer holidays, offering seven Senior Phase pupils four weeks of real-world work experience across six council services. Participants earned the Scottish Living Wage and received structured training, mentoring, and exposure to career pathways in local government and regional development.

3.4 Improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy

All schools now have experienced training in Literacy for All. This allows a whole school approach to tracking literacy difficulties starting at the end of Primary 1, so that by Primary 4 much evidence has been gathered as to where the difficulties lie and what intervention is required to provide the necessary support. This is becoming embedded in most schools now. Training is now available online to all schools for use as refresher training or for staff who are new to the school.

The National Improving Writing Programme is proving impactful in school across the Highlands. This session we have trained cohorts three and four bringing us to having 37 schools involved. We have recruited an additional four NIWP Local Leads (all headteachers) who will be trained to help to ensure the stability of the programme. Overall, we have seen an average 27.5% increase in the A Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) data from the predicted data for the classes who have been involved in the programme.

All secondary schools and some primary schools have undertaken self-evaluation activity using the Northern Alliance learning and teaching toolkit. As a result, they now have clear plans for improvement in learning and teaching.

“Literacy Deep Dive” videos that explore specific aspects of primary literacy teaching have been created to support new teachers, those teaching a new stage, and support staff by offering clear, accessible guidance on key literacy practices.

Numeracy

All schools now have access to an updated Highland Numeracy Progression. This allows for adequate coverage of all numeracy and mathematics organisers building on skills and knowledge progressively across BGE. They have been supplemented with links to recorded training sessions, Summary Guidance documents, example activities, and resources. Four schools opted into in-person support provided by Development Officers to plan, model use of progression, advise on resources, support with analysis and evaluate of assessments and improving attainment.

A professional learning network for Early Years, Primary and Secondary practitioners was established following Highland Numeracy Champions programme in 2023 - 24. Practitioners attended six twilight sessions across the year. Sessions were well attended, with each session averaging thirty participants. Members were encouraged to take part in discussions and to be willing to share their ideas and suggestions, creating a network of peer support and collaborative learning.

3.5 Leadership & Professional Learning

Across Early Learning and Childcare settings, the National Induction resource has been accessed by staff to promote foundation knowledge and identify pathways for professional developments. Practitioners have reported improved confidence in delivering quality experiences and opportunities for children, understanding their roles and responsibilities and feel they have the underpinning knowledge and skills as they undertake the relevant qualifications to meet registration requirements.

Probationers have a comprehensive programme in place to support professional development and to help them develop their learning and teaching practice. 23 out of our 37 Primary 24/25 Probationers secured posts and 15 out of our 24 Secondary 24/25.

Lead On is a 15-month professional learning programme. Participants also supported to engage in a research-based change initiative in their own school that will provide the vehicle through which they can practice their developing leadership skills. The programme has GTCS professional recognition as a verified Masters Level course, meeting the standards required for teachers studying at a higher level. 16 course participants successfully completed the course with 5 of the teachers receiving professional recognition for their study and work.

Evaluations show that 100% of new and acting headteachers stated that they were well supported or very well supported as a result of the induction programme.

Staff across schools benefited from a wide range of learning and development opportunities and a few evaluations comments are highlighted below.

“The course helped to give me more confidence when helping the children understand maths and showed me different ways of helping them.”

“I feel it is important to know your children well and to be aware of barriers they may face regarding their learning in literacy. The course has made me think carefully about the different areas of literacy where problems may occur.”

“All good, very informative Found the elements on “what the developing brain needs: moderate resolved stress, responsive care (mind -minded), physical care & play stimulation”, and highlighting staff supporting child to develop self-regulation of stress as child unable to do this within staff support very helpful and useful”.

4. EDUCATION & LEARNING IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025/26

Priorities for Session 2025/2026 are detailed below in the Education and Learning Improvement Plan and have been developed as part of The Highland Council Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy. This is based on four key improvement themes: Leadership; Learning and Teaching; Curriculum; and Analysis of Data for Improvement. In addition, three foundation principles underpin these themes: Parental Involvement and Engagement; Health and Wellbeing including Relationships and Behaviour; and Inclusive Practice/Additional Support Needs.

4.1 Theme: Leadership

Overall aim: All school leaders will engage with the refreshed offer and drive forward the raising attainment and achievement in their own school context.

Improvement Outcomes	Planned Action	How will we know?	National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priority
By June 2026 all leaders, teachers and practitioners will have a heightened awareness of and engagement with the RAAS.	<p>Review and refresh Headteacher/Middle Leaders engagement with a focus on leading improvement in learning and teaching, curriculum, and use of data including leadership of Early Learning and Childcare.</p> <p>National professional learning offers will be delivered as part of leadership offer.</p> <p>All Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) will have a focus on Raising Attainment Strategy and Closing the Poverty related Attainment Gap including Induction programme for new Headteacher,</p>	<p>Headteacher induction will include core modules on the raising attainment strategy and poverty related raising attainment gap. Probationer training will include core modules on the raising attainment strategy and poverty related raising attainment gap.</p> <p>Headteacher Development Sessions will have a focus on data analysis for improvement and improvement methodologies.</p> <p>Feedback demonstrates an increased awareness of the RAAS agenda at all levels of the system.</p> <p>Quality Indicators 1.3 and 3.1 will show an improving picture as part of external scrutiny inspections.</p>	<p>Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.</p> <p>Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.</p>

	<p>Middle Leaders and Probationer Teachers.</p> <p>Review and refresh current Collaborative Improvement Framework to ensure 3-18 approach in readiness for consistent implementation across all eight areas.</p> <p>Plan opportunities across all eight areas to look outward within and out with THC. Implement school meetings planner, creating a variety of forums.</p> <p>Investigate establishment of Gaelic School Leaders Network.</p>	<p>Gaelic Network established and well attended</p>	
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4.2 Theme: Learning & Teaching

Overall: There is improved practice in learning and teaching across schools and more consistent approaches to moderation and assessment.

Improvement Outcomes	Action	How will we know?	NIF Priority
<p>By June 2026 school will have engaged with robust self-evaluation and improvement activity around Quality Indicators 2.3 and Learning, Teaching and Assessment QI within the ELC Quality Improvement Framework.</p>	<p>All schools identify Learning Teaching and Assessment (LTA) theme to improve based on evidence of need. Using the Northern Alliance toolkit school staff will answer all questions within the chosen theme to identify gaps and narrow focus for improvement.</p> <p>Create LTA policy for all schools to personalise. Short Life Working Group to review L&T Framework to ensure aligns with new policy.</p> <p>Review the Equity and Excellence Lead role in ELC, in line with the review commissioned by Scot Gov to identify impacts.</p> <p>Strategic roll out of the LTA policy through engagement with whole school programme.</p>	<p>Improved scores from baseline data. Increase school evaluations for Learning Teaching and Assessment Quality Indicator 2.3.</p> <p>Quality Improvement Visit records show improvements in LTA as a result.</p> <p>Feedback from children and young people and families.</p> <p>Highland wide annual survey demonstrating improved learning experiences.</p> <p>All schools will have a Learning & Teaching policy in place consistently applied by all staff.</p> <p>Consistent approaches to observations of learning inform school self-evaluation and improvement planning.</p> <p>CLPL overview in place to support development of Learning and Teaching with ongoing monitoring of uptake and pre/post evaluations from participants.</p>	<p>Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.</p> <p>Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.</p>

	<p>LTA focus for Quality Visits across identified schools.</p> <p>All CLPL opportunities with a focus on LTA element (specifically Literacy and Numeracy) take cognisance of research and Education Scotland advice.</p> <p>All schools to complete Highland Council Assessment and Moderation self-evaluation toolkit to inform moderation strategy at school and (Associated School Group) ASG level.</p> <p>Gaelic standards will be incorporated into all above.</p>		
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4.3 Theme: Curriculum

Overall aim: The offer experienced by children and young people across schools encompasses the 4 capacities and the totality of the curriculum.

Improvement Outcome	Action	How will we know?	NIF Priority
<p>By June 2026, all schools will have a heightened awareness of the National Curriculum Improvement Cycle and consider how it impacts on their improvement journey.</p>	<p>Establish overview of staff who are engaging in CIC at national level, engage with them in progressing curricular areas as technical frameworks develop.</p> <p>Develop Literacy and Numeracy Framework further to ensure with 3-18 pathway considered.</p> <p>Primary schools will create or revisit their curriculum rationale with focus on developing learning across the 4 contexts. Establish routine curricular review across Highland.</p> <p>Secondary curriculum support groups to be established and supported to hold INSET training in February.</p> <p>Deliver professional learning linked to national work on Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC).</p>	<p>Increasing number of practitioners involved in work at national level.</p> <p>Curricular leads established for subject areas, with staff from all schools attending the Inset sessions.</p> <p>All schools will use Highland literacy and numeracy frameworks to inform planning and assessment.</p> <p>More than 60% of primary schools will report consistent use of the Emerging Literacy approach in Early Level.</p> <p>All primary schools will have an agreed curriculum rationale in place with processes for review.</p> <p>Headteacher and middle leader development sessions will have a focus CIC.</p> <p>The ELC/CLPL Framework will be updated and reviewed by June 2026.</p> <p>CLPL overview in place to support curriculum developments with ongoing monitoring of</p>	<p>Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education.</p> <p>Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.</p> <p>Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.</p>

	<p>CLPL will take cognisance of national work on CIC, research, and Realising the Ambition in primary.</p> <p>Develop play pedagogy across the early stages of Primary starting with Primary 1.</p> <p>Establish play strategy and create play (interaction, experiences, and spaces) audit tool for use across identified ELC and Primary 1 classrooms.</p> <p>Gaelic will be considered within all of the above actions.</p>	<p>uptake and pre/post evaluations from participants.</p>	
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4.4 Theme: Use of Data

Overall aim: Leaders/School staff will systematically use data effectively to drive forward school improvement.

Improvement Outcome	Planned Action	How will we know?	NIF Priority
<p>By June 2026, all staff use data to influence both children and young people progress, and the improvements required to raise attainment.</p>	<p>Use developmental overview data to plan next steps and progression for children in ELC and Primary 1.</p> <p>Evaluate the current Primary Highland tracking system, identify necessary improvement, and refresh as required.</p> <p>Continue to develop the Secondary Highland tracking system.</p> <p>Tracking, Monitoring and Reporting Policy finalized and implemented consistently across all schools.</p> <p>Further develop a data dashboard for all schools. All schools issued with a data pack to support their improvement journey.</p>	<p>Increased number of children meeting all milestones on entry to P1.</p> <p>Progress & Achievement – data entry completed and Progress & Achievement dashboard template in place for all schools.</p> <p>All schools complete their annual Attainment Template.</p> <p>Attendance at data clinics for all Headteachers. (P&A Dashboard Clinics)</p> <p>Attendance at Insight Analysis training delivered for all secondaries.</p> <p>Attendance of class teacher analysis training delivered– Feb inset day</p>	<p>Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.</p> <p>Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.</p> <p>Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.</p>

	<p>Build system to ensure heightened awareness and celebration of effective practice.</p> <p>Develop a self-evaluation programme “Improving Highland”. Work with school leaders to agree system to capture and record self-evaluation activity conducted throughout the year ensuring full QI coverage over 3-5 year cycle.</p> <p>Design a local authority performance calendar of analysis to support progress towards targets. AQIM Quality Assurance calendar/ Revised Collaborative Improvement Framework. Working group with Highland Associate Assessors to develop rigorous system of quality assurance/improvement activity.</p> <p>Develop a training strategy to improve knowledge and understanding of school inspection processes. Associate</p>	<p>Improved confidence and support around inspection school processes – measure HT confidence before/after training.</p> <p>CLPL with a focus on data analysis will be incorporated into all networks.</p> <p>Risk management system tracking shows improvements in data through Universal, Focused, and Intensive support.</p> <p>Improved school self-evaluation and average Education Scotland evaluations.</p> <p>Increasing levels of profiles across Early Level show evidence of consistent use of early level literacy and numeracy progressions.</p> <p>Individual school level data show improvement and moving towards closing the poverty related attainment gaps.</p>	
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	<p>Assessors to co-construct / lead local area delivery.</p> <p>CLPL opportunities will be available at all levels to ensure effective use of systems to support data analysis for improvement.</p> <p>Schools will use pupil surveys (e.g., Lifestyle Survey data) and consultations, to inform and monitor the impact of decision making and interventions.</p> <p>School level stretch aims will be set as part of data analysis for improvement on an annual basis.</p> <p>Use all inspection feedback to prioritise and promote improvement across all schools and ELC, learning shared across Highland.</p>		
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4.5 Theme: Health and Wellbeing

Overall aim: To develop a Health and Wellbeing Framework (HWB) and associated plan

Improvement Outcome	Planned Action	How will we know?	NIF Priority
<p>By April 2026 HWB Framework will be launched.</p> <p>Restorative approaches will be embedded as a positive means of creating, repairing, and restoring positive relationships in schools and ELCs</p> <p>Improved attendance across all sectors.</p>	<p>HWB Framework will be modelled on the national framework, with actions co-created by staff, wider professionals, parents, and children.</p> <p>Staff at all levels in schools and ELCs will be encouraged to refresh their knowledge of these approaches through attendance at training delivered by Psychological Services and follow-up coaching conversations.</p> <p>Secondary schools' attendance framework will be embedded. Refresh Primary guidance.</p> <p>Creation of an Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) website by the Psychological Service to support staff who attend EBSA training and support sessions.</p>	<p>HTs will be familiar with the framework and use it to inform actions within their SIP. (Number of SIPs referring to the framework).</p> <p>Promoting Positive Relationships and Restorative Practices offered to all ELC, teaching and support staff have positive training evaluation results and impacts can be seen in Quality visits across participating schools.</p> <p>EBSA website will be created and populated with relevant resources. Monitor usage/downloads etc through 2025-26</p>	<p>Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.</p>

	Establish a primary fortnightly attendance process which will support school leaders, area teams, and families to improve primary attendance.		
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4.6 Theme: Parental Involvement and Engagement (PIE)

Overall aim: Implement PIE strategy

Improvement Outcome	Planned Action	How will we know?	NIF Priority
<p>By April 2026 schools and ELC have engaged with the PIE 3-year action plan and parent forums will have raised awareness of the PIE strategy.</p>	<p>Investigate the formation of Area Parent Council forums. Identify an effective online resource for parents.</p>	<p>Survey responses from parents, HSHA and PHRG meetings Focus group feedback from HTs, PC group, HSHA, PHRG agree on identified resource.</p>	<p>Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.</p> <p>Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.</p>
<p>Develop Parent Councils</p>	<p>Promote the establishment of Parent Councils in schools and support their operation.</p> <p>Explore the options for family learning support for schools within existing Council and partner resource.</p> <p>GME provision will be considered as relevant school context.</p>	<p>Increased number of parent councils established in school.</p> <p>By June 2026 schools and AQIM cluster teams are aware of available family learning resources for their area for session 2026- 27 and are able to start partnership work in the new session.</p>	<p>As above</p>

<p>Behaviour policies in line with Scottish Government guidance</p> <p>By June 2026, GIRFEC principles will be routinely used by all schools and ELC to ensure that all practitioners are working to support learners reach their full potential.</p>	<p>The implementation of the ASL Staffing Standard will be reviewed during the session.</p> <p>The Local Authority will update its policies on improving relationships and behaviour in schools.</p> <p>All schools will have an update relationships and behaviour policy that will be co-created by staff, pupils, and parents.</p> <p>The CIRCLE resource to support Inclusive Learning and Collaborative working will be promoted to Primary and Secondary schools with training available from the Educational Psychology Service.</p> <p>Professional accreditation for de-escalation and escape strategies will be reviewed.</p> <p>Stage intervention approach refreshed so that all schools understand and implement this approach to supporting learners.</p>	<p>Review will have been completed.</p> <p>All Named Persons in schools and ELC managers will have attended the refreshed GIRFEC training delivered by the Psychological Service.</p> <p>Children's views will be heard and recorded in 95% of Child's Plans.</p> <p>The format of integrated children services meeting agreed Implementation plan agreed and meeting taken place in all ASG.</p>	
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	Establish Integrated Children's Services meetings will be held on a regular basis in each ASGs.		
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It should be noted that all work to progress improvement in skills and sustained positive school leaver destinations for all young people is detailed through The Highland Council's Delivery Plan and associated plan, My Highland Future.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation of Progress

The outcomes and associated actions outlined within this plan will be closely monitored by the Education and Learning Chief Officers, along with Area Quality Improvement Managers. Progress and impact will be monitored each term, with an annual update provided to Education & Learning Committee.

A final evaluation report will be contained within the 2026/27 Education and Learning Improvement Plan.