



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 24 AUGUST 2022**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK
REPORT AND PLAN**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the annual National Improvement Framework (NIF) plan return which is submitted to the Scottish Government by the end of August.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:-

- (i) scrutinise and note the contents of the Moray Self-evaluation document and National Improvement Framework Plan;**
- (ii) recognise the work progressed in a year of significant Covid-19 disruption, staff absence and reduced capacity due to vacancies;**
- (iii) recognise the resilience and dedication across the wider Education service to continue to provide creative learning experiences and to improve service offer where this has been possible given restrictions; and**
- (iv) agrees the annual National Improvement Framework (NIF) which includes the Executive Summary return to be submitted to Scottish Government by 31 August 2022.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The NIF for Scottish Education was launched in January 2016. The framework supports the Scottish Government Ambition to achieve excellence

and equity for every child in Scotland and guides on the Raising Attainment for All (RAFA) agenda. It places a legal duty on local authorities to actively address the poverty related attainment gap.

3.2 The Framework is underpinned by a series of planning and reporting duties designed to support transparency and accountability. These legal duties have been integrated into the Standards in Scotland's Schools' etc Act 2000 through amendments contained in Part 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. The Scottish Government produces annual advice in December to provide the focus for the NIF for the following year. Prior to December 2021 there were 4 key priorities for action however the 2022 NIF has been updated with the following 5 priorities:

- 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 attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy

3.3 The Scottish Government has published statutory guidance to support education authorities to carry out the legal responsibilities. The statutory guidance clarifies how the 2000 Act has been amended through the 2016 Act in order to:

- impose duties on education authorities to enhance equity and promote a reduction in inequalities of educational outcome experienced by pupils as a result of socio-economic disadvantage;
- impose a duty to secure improvement in the quality of school education with a view to achieving the strategic priorities of the NIF; and
- impose duties in relation to annual planning and reporting; and annual school improvement planning

3.4 Local Authorities must produce a NIF work plan on an annual basis which is then submitted to Scottish Ministers. The purpose of the plan is to outline key actions that the Local Authority will take to address the excellence and equity agenda. The Education Strategic Plan 2020-23 provides a vision for the Education department and for associated officers within Education Resources and Communities. Although the key priority areas do not exactly match the NIF priorities, there are clear links and associated actions within the service plan, cross referenced throughout. Officer work plans are reviewed annually with progress monitored by the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on a quarterly basis.

3.5 Head Teachers are also expected to produce an Annual School Improvement Plan (SIP) which takes forward developments at a local level. These plans are informed by the NIF, the appropriate Local Authority strategic plan (Corporate Plan, Moray Children's Services Plan, Education Strategic Plan etc). The plans are submitted by 30 June each year and are subject to

scrutiny by the Quality Improvement Team. All Moray SIPs are aligned with the NIF and local priorities

- 3.6 The NIF plan is expected to be in place by the end of August each year.
- 3.7 In Moray, Officers and Head Teachers have continued to lead positive work in spite of the pandemic and raising attainment has been high on the agenda for all. This is particularly challenging given the context of lockdown and disruption with positive cases and periods of self-isolation. The impact of the pandemic cannot be underestimated however with local evidence of an impact on behaviours of children and young people and the loss of education during the 2 lockdowns has impacted negatively on Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy and literacy at key stages ie P1, P4 and P7. Although additional staffing was provided to support recovery, the absence of staff over the course of the last year has been significant with additional staff being used to keep schools open rather than undertake targeted interventions. There was significant disruption to learning due to Covid outbreaks and absence and this will have had an impact on children's learning experiences and attainment. Although remote learning was provided, not all children and young people were able to undertake this due to illness or other reasons.
- 3.8 Over the course of session 2021-2022, central Officers were relocated to schools and nursery settings in order to keep as many schools and nurseries open. This impacted on the ability to take forward key work as part of our strategic priorities as previously reported to Committee.
- 3.9 The Education Strategic Plan 2020-23 was developed during the pandemic as a result of a review of the 2018-21 plan as well as the bridging plan for Education Recovery over the summer of 2020 to the latter part of the year. The Education Plan captures a combination of key strategic areas for improvement as well as aspects of development that will deliver the NIF priorities.
- 3.10 The Moray Education Self-evaluation 2021-22 document in **Appendix 1**, gives a fair and balanced overview of the Education Service and the improvement journey over the course of the last year and in particular, the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on children, young people and families in Moray as well as highlighting progress in key areas and next steps.
- 3.11 The NIF Plan 2022-23 is shown as an executive summary on the final page of the Self-Evaluation document. Officers report progress over the course of the year to Committee through various reports including performance, attainment and achievement. The Executive Summary illustrates a high level plan which is then supplemented by a suite of operational work plans produced by Officers and monitored by senior Officers. It should be noted that this work sits across the wider Education Service incorporating both Education and Education Resources and Communities teams. Committee is aware of the capacity issues within central teams and Officers will be ensuring that work plans include the key priorities. Care has been taken to identify key priorities and development work which can be progressed within current

capacity and will have potentially maximum outcomes measures which will contribute to the NIF.

- 3.12 Committee is reminded that there was no National collection of Curriculum for Excellence Achievement of a Level (ACEL) in 2020 due to Covid-19. From August 2021 there was a return to 'normal' reporting arrangements with ACEL returns and moderation processes currently being completed to meet Scottish Government deadlines.
- 3.13 As part of the NIF, Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) has been provided for almost all Moray schools. A separate report to this Committee provides information regarding the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the range of local funding received.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This report was informed by the priorities within the Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan and in particular to Our People, Our Place and Our Future and A Growing and Diverse Economy and Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Education Act and Standards in Scotland's Schools Act have been adhered to.

(c) Financial implications

The cost of all improvement actions are undertaken within schools existing budgets and through the central Education budget. Any additional funding has been through Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocations as well as any additional Covid-19 grants received.

(d) Risk Implications

Covid-19 absence continues to impact on service and service delivery which could have a negative impact on progress throughout the session. Vacancies in key strategic roles will also have an impact. Lack of progression in recruiting additional Research and Information Officer to support Education's plan to explore Power BI to improve data access, and reporting. Potential risk that even with the planned work, the Council does not close the poverty related attainment gap.

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff absence, including those in leadership roles, has an impact on the ability to improve service offer.

(f) Property

There are no property issues arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The National Improvement Framework is aimed at reducing inequalities.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

None

(i) Consultations

The Head of Education Resources and Communities, the Head of Financial Services, Head of HR, ICT and OD, Quality Improvement Manager, the Business Support Team Manager, and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer, have been consulted on this report and agree with the sections of the report relating to their areas of responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Committee is asked to review the evidence provided in the NIF return documents, acknowledge the continued impact of the pandemic and agree the submission to Scottish Government due by the end of August 2022.

Author of Report: Vivienne Cross, Head of Education

Background Papers: [National Improvement Framework](#)

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