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**REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**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 Council on the National Improvement Framework plan return which is submitted to Scottish Government as requested, in September this year as opposed to the normal August return date.
- 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 Council;**

- (i) **scrutinises and notes the contents of the Moray Self-evaluation document and National Improvement Framework Plan; and**
- (ii) **agrees the annual National Improvement Framework (NIF) return to be submitted to Scottish Government by 30 September 2021.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The National Improvement Framework (NIF) for Scottish Education was launched in January 2016. The Framework supports Scottish Government ambition to achieve excellence and equity for every child in Scotland and builds 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 NIF identifies 4 key priorities for action:
- Improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy;

- Closing the attainment gap between most and least disadvantaged children;
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; and
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

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 workplans are reviewed annually with progress monitored by the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Committee on a quarterly basis.

3.5 Head Teachers of schools 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). They 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, however guidance received from the Learning Directorate, Scottish Government in May 2021, extended the deadline to 30 September 2021 in cognisance of the challenging year for schools and local authorities responding to the pandemic

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 Covid cases and periods of self-isolation.

3.8 The Education Strategic Plan 20-23 was developed during the pandemic as a result of a review of the 18-21 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.

- 3.9 Council is well aware of capacity concerns within the Education central team and across Education Resources and Communities with vacancies and turnover. This has meant that progress in some areas ie Curriculum, particularly Broad General Education (BGE) has not been as significant as in other areas however Officers and schools continue to make use of the Regional Improvement Collaborative and support from Education Scotland where necessary.
- 3.10 The Moray Education Self-evaluation 20-21 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 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 National Improvement Framework Plan 2021-22, **Appendix 2**, shows progress over last year and identifies next steps which are incorporated into Officer work plans and will be reported to Committee. In presenting this document, it is worth noting and recognising the developing journey the Council is on in relation to performance management and the intention to continue the development of this work as we move through the next academic year in anticipation that at some point it will be more 'normal'. In addition, Officers hope to report under the headings of the NIF priorities in next year's plan.
- 3.12 Council is reminded that there was no National collection of Curriculum for Excellence Achievement of a Level (ACEL) in 2020 due to Covid-19. We continued to gather data from the most recent tracking run which would have been early indication data pre Covid-19 Lockdown in March, three months earlier than the normal collection date in June. Therefore the figures were not subject to the normal moderation and verification processes as children were in lockdown for the final term of 2019-20. In addition from August to December 2020, there was a considerable time spent in school on recovery and ensuring the well-being of our children as they became accustomed to a very different school experience with increased mitigations and processes. This will have impacted on educational delivery as well as any outbreaks and periods of self-isolation which started post October break.
- 3.13 Schools were encouraged to have literacy, numeracy and health and well-being as a clear focus during the recovery period so that gaps in learning could be identified. With less emphasis on other key curricular areas, there were less opportunities for teachers to plan the application of skills and knowledge which is part of the moderation process. Teacher judgements therefore will be impacted by this for the data collection for 2021.
- 3.14 The lockdown in March to June 2020 also had an impact on transition at all stages but particularly from nursery to P1, P7 to S1 and from secondary BGE to Senior Phase. As evidenced in various surveys, remote learning was limited during the initial lockdown and staff across Education dealt with

recovery and identifying lost gaps in learning through lack of engagement or participation over the first and subsequent lockdown periods.

- 3.15 This year's return takes cognisance of the impact of Covid-19 and the additional asks on Local Authority teams, in spite of which, progress has continued to be made. Additional Covid monies have been received by the Council, firstly to support recovery in August 2020. Evidence of impact is at an early stage. Additional monies, subject to Council approval on 30 June (para of the minute refers) will require time to build up the evidence of the impact to support longer term decision making around additional resources.
- 3.16 As part of the NIF, Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) has been provided for almost all Moray schools. PEF is provided to schools and Head Teachers to identify the most appropriate way of using the funding to close the attainment gap at school and Associated School Group (ASG) level. All plans have been submitted and are monitored by the Quality Improvement Team. Head Teachers report on this in their annual Standards and Quality Report and many highlights were featured in the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) Report 2015-2020 as reported to the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee on 26 May 2021 (para 10 of the minute refers).

#### **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 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. With national collection of data eg Achievement of a Level (ACEL), exclusion data and others as well as an Alternative Certification Model in place for SQA examination diet, there are risks in comparing data across Local Authorities and Nationally.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

We aim to improve our use of data in our approach to continuous improvement and consideration will be given to resourcing this to maximise impact.

**(f) Property**

There are no property issues arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

The annual National Improvement Framework Plan returns assist Moray Council in addressing inequalities arising from socio-economic differences, especially in relation to the attainment gap.

**(h) Consultations**

The Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), the Head of Education Resources and Communities, the Head of Financial Services, Quality Improvement Managers, Quality Improvement Officers, Head Teachers, Early Years' Service Managers, Senior HR Advisor, LNCT Joint Secretaries, the Equal Opportunities Officer 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 Council 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 on 30 September 2021.**

Author of Report: Vivienne Cross, Head of Education (Chief Education Officer)

Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-1315769894-145  
SPMAN-1315769894-146  
SPMAN-1315769894-147