



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Item: 6

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 12 November 2025.

National Improvement Framework.

Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

- 1.1. In August 2022, the education service began the implementation of a 3-year strategic plan: Excellence and Equity, National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2022/23. The current review and plan, attached as Appendix 1, covers the final phase of the original three-year plan and establishes the next 3-year plan, covering the period 2025-2028.
- 1.2. The Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education was first published on 13 December 2016. The document set out the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland's children and young people which can be summarised as follows:
 - Excellence through raising attainment and improving outcomes: ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to shape their future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.
 - Achieving equity: ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.
- 1.3. The 2025 update of the National Framework Improvement was published by the Scottish Government in December 2024 and in January 2025, details of the actions to be taken to deliver the outcomes set out in the framework, along with the measures to be used to evidence progress, were published.

- 1.4. Each local authority is required to submit a local progress report and plan, outlining the work being carried out in relation to making the National Improvement Framework relevant at a local level and meeting the needs of learners in their communities.
- 1.5. An annual review and plan for Orkney have subsequently been approved and submitted to Scottish Government for each year it has been required.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
 - i. Approve the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2025/28, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, for submission to the Scottish Government.

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** all aspects and actions within the plan are assumed to be achievable within existing resources. Consequently, there are no financial implications arising from this report.
2. **Legal:** The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 introduced the requirement for local authorities to plan and report on the measures that they are taking to address the key priorities of the National Improvement Framework.
3. **Corporate Governance:** Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources:** Not applicable.
5. **Equalities:** The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken ahead of adoption of the initial 3-year plan has been reviewed and updated as appropriate, and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** As the plan being reviewed in terms of this report has been assessed as being unlikely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in Orkney, a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
 - ☒ Growing our economy.
 - ☒ Strengthening our Communities.

- ☐ Developing our Infrastructure.
 - ☒ Transforming our Council.
- 8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:
- ☐ Cost of Living.
 - ☐ Sustainable Development.
 - ☒ Local Equality.
 - ☐ Improving Population Health.
- 9. Environmental and Climate Risk:** Not applicable.
- 10. Risk:** Not applicable.
- 11. Procurement:** Not applicable.
- 12. Health and Safety:** Not applicable.
- 13. Property and Assets:** Not applicable.
- 14. Information Technology:** Not applicable.
- 15. Cost of Living:** Actions within Excellence and Equity are designed to reduce poverty over time by inspiring attainment. Consequently, there are links relating to the cost of living.

List of Background Papers

National Improvement Framework (NIF): <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/>

Education: National Improvement Framework and improvement plan 2025: [Introduction - Education - achieving excellence and equity: National Improvement Framework 2025 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/)

Education and skills - National Improvement Framework 2025: improvement plan: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/2025-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/>

Appendices

Appendix 1 – The National Improvement Framework

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Equity and Excellence in Education



The National Improvement Framework

**Orkney Islands Council Review (2024-2025) &
Three Year Strategic Plan (2025-2028)**

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Introduction

In 2022, Orkney Islands Council published a 3-year improvement plan for the education service. An overview of the original plan (2022-2025) is given below:

Priorities	Year 1 (22-23)	Year 2 (23-24)	Year 3 (24-25)
Inclusion and Wellbeing	Staged Intervention		
	Health and Wellbeing		
	UNCRC		
Learning and Achievement	Curriculum Review		
	High Quality Learning and Teaching		
	Scottish Attainment Challenge		
Systems and Processes	Self-Evaluation for Continuous Improvement		
	Professional Learning		
	Resources and Management Systems		

Figure 1 Overview of themes within Excellence and Equity

In each of the subsequent years, the Council published a report on the work carried out over the preceding 12 months and details of the activities to be undertaken over the next 12 months. This process has involved 3 key elements:

- ✓ **Consideration of Progress and Impact:** This involves reviewing progress and impact, with respect to targets and outcomes set. It includes, where appropriate, any recommendation to 'park' or 'delete' aspects of the plan to make efficient and effective progress with identified priorities.
- ✓ **Consideration of Data:** This involves the collection, collation, evaluation, and analysis of key performance data (including Scottish Attainment Challenge Triannual Reports). It includes 'Horizon Scanning' with respect to the changing landscape of 'demand and expectation', both nationally and locally.
- ✓ **Consideration of Feedback:** This involves analysing ongoing and/or continuous (structured and informal) feedback, for example: from activities and meetings with individuals, teams, and heads of establishment. It includes observations made during school/setting visits by the extended directorate team as well as listening to specific feedback, for example: from inspection activity by HMIE (participative, thematic, school or setting specific) and the Care Inspectorate.

As the end of the original 3-year plan has now been reached, the aim (in the first part of the current document) is to once again report on the last 12 months, but also, with respect to the 3 key areas set out in the plan, reflect on the 3-year improvement period.

In the second part of the document, the aim is to set out a new 3-year plan, with additional details of the actions in year 1.

Vision, Values and Aims

The overall ambition of the Council's education service is for 'equity and excellence', hence the title of this plan. In practice, equity and excellence means:



Figure 2 Examples of Equity and Excellence in Education

'Equity and Excellence in Education', the plan, is encompassed by the Directorate Delivery Plan and aligned to Orkney Islands Council's Strategic Plan, in particular, its vision of 'Working Together for Orkney'. Equity and Excellence in Education is specifically aligned to the National Improvement Framework Priorities and Drivers, as illustrated below:

Local Priorities	Link to NIF Priorities/Drivers
Inclusion and Wellbeing	• 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.
Learning and Achievement	• 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.
Systems and Processes	• School and ELC leadership. • Teacher and practitioner professionalism. • Parent/carer involvement and engagement. • Curriculum and assessment. • School and ELC improvement. • Performance information.

Figure 3 Links to National Improvement Framework Priorities and Drivers

Looking Back: Overview of Priorities for 2024-2025

The following table sets out an overview of the priorities and key activities (focus) for the academic year 2024-2025:

Local Priorities	Focus for Year 3 (2024-2025)
Inclusion and Wellbeing	Staged Intervention: Getting it Right Refresh, Child's Plans, Team Around the Child.
	Health and Wellbeing: Trauma Informed Practice, Positive Mental Health, Whole Family Wellbeing, Staff and Team Wellbeing.
	UNCRC: Rights Respecting Schools, LGBT Charter, The Promise Award.
Learning and Achievement	Curriculum Review
	High-Quality Learning, Teaching and Assessment Gathering feedback, peer observation, cross sector trio moderation, professional learning priorities.
	Scottish Attainment Challenge Working towards meeting stretch aims, BGE S1-S3 attainment.
Systems and Processes	Professional Learning Supporting Learners, Learning, People and Practice.
	Resources and Management Systems Self-evaluation and Quality Assurance, Balancing the Budget, DSM Implementation, Engaging with Communities, Digital Learning Strategy.

Table 4 Overview of the Priorities and Key Activities 2024-2025

Inclusion and Wellbeing: Year 3 Progress Review

Theme 1: Staged Intervention

Proposed Action	Outcome
Short-term working group reviews and refreshes the staged intervention process	A refresh of Staged Intervention practice, leading to robust practice guidance for schools and establishments.
Progress and Impact: A short-term working group has been set up, and the first two meetings have taken place to review the staged intervention process, levels and evaluate against other authority guidance. The early years' guidance is in place and now sits within the Orkney Nursery Handbook Teams page. Support documents have been refreshed in line with current practice.	

Proposed Action	Outcome
Refresh Getting it Right awareness, training and practice	Staff teams understand the principles of Getting it Right and are able to apply approaches in collaboration with colleagues across a range of services
Progress and Impact: Work is in development and will be carried over. Progress to date includes: Modelling and developing along with members of the Support for Learning and Inclusion Team how Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support (SCERTS) targets can be incorporated into the Childs Planning process, continuing to stress the importance of long-term goaling as well as planning for short term outcomes. The early years family team have supported settings and parents to use SCERTS to plan for children more effectively, including establishing very small steps to support and measure progress. Seeking to link with Social Work to look at different levels of planning, including where Co-ordinated Support Plans are an appropriate measure Planning with Support for Learning and Inclusion Team Manager to deliver training to schools on the management of CSPs and taking the lead on creating CSPs	

Theme 2: Health and Wellbeing

Proposed Action	Outcome
Promote cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approaches with pupils in Personal and Social Education (PSE) eg Stress Control and Decider Skills	Young people develop independent strategies to manage stress and anxiety
Progress and Impact: Work is in development and will be carried over. Progress to date includes:	

Modelling the use of Decider Skills at a targeted level e.g. embedded in Childs Plans

Plans made to link with Shetland Educational Psychology Service to create Decider Skills interest groups for whole school approaches

Delivering training which links CBT based approaches with the use of CBT approaches, ie CBT approaches can be a part of children's emotional toolbox

Proposed Action

Outcome

Educational Psychology will deliver Save a Life Training across all education settings.

Trained staff will feel confident holding conversations about mental health

Progress and Impact:

Work has begun and will continue. Progress includes:

Delivery of a multidisciplinary training session September 2025, which included Guidance Teachers

Multidisciplinary session planned for June 2025

Proposed Action

Outcome

Promote relational approaches as key to quality learning and teaching

Nurseries and schools have both embedded practice and written guidance on relational approaches

Progress and Impact:

Creation of the Promoting Positive Relationships, Learning and Behaviour Policy

Promoting the core concepts within the above policy

Offering and delivering training on relational approaches featured within the policy

Participating in the National Relational Network and disseminating information from the network meetings.

Proposed Action

Outcome

Support Staff and Team Wellbeing through practices such as coaching, mentoring and supervision

Staff feel supported and safe in the work that they are doing

Progress and Impact:

Work is in development and will be carried over. Progress to date is described below

Highland Educational Psychology Service have shared their model for mentoring, and this has been discussed in approaches made to specific schools who have expressed an interest in staff wellbeing support.

The early supervision project has just started and has been carried forward into 2025-26, due to staffing pressures 2024-25.

Theme 3: UNCRC

Proposed Action	Outcome
All schools and establishments to engage in the inclusive schools' network facilitated by the Service Manager, Support for Learning and Inclusion.	All Primary, Junior High and Secondary schools awarded Silver Rights Respecting Award.
Progress and Impact: This group has been established and has agreed terms of reference. Next steps for schools and establishments to self-evaluate practice using the UNCRC framework self-evaluation tool. Parallel to this, a corporate strategy group will explore responsibilities and approach across OIC. Initial meeting set up with Rebecca Spillane (National Lead Officer) for May 2025.	

Proposed Action	Outcome
Monthly rolling agenda to include a range of key areas including UNCRC, Rights Respecting School, LGBT award, The Promise award and additional agenda items as identified.	Junior High School and Senior Secondary schools achieve LGBT award.
Progress and Impact: This is a work in progress and is a continuing action for 2025-2026.	

Proposed Action	Outcome
All schools and establishments are working towards compliance and service awards.	All schools complete the Promise Award programme.
Progress and Impact: The Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) coordinator ran a training session in May 2024 for education Heads of Establishment in relation to the roll out of Promise training for staff. To date thirteen schools and Early Learning and Childcare establishments have enrolled and are taking part in the training. One school has received their 'We Promise' award and five other schools are close to completing. Three Early Learning and Childcare settings have also achieved their 'We Promise' award. Across Orkney, two hundred and ten 'I Promise' certificates have been issued to individual staff members. Moving ahead, schools and settings will continue to be supported to raise awareness of 'The Promise' and staff encouraged to complete the training.	

Link to Council Delivery Plan:

Embed the vision and outcome of The Promise (C6)

In partnership with other services and sectors, support the delivery of The Promise to support children and young people who are Care Experienced. Education Service, Service Manager, Support for Learning and Inclusion engaged in the promise subgroup of the Children's Services Strategy Group.

Progress and Impact:

A Promise Board, led by the Chief Social Work Officer, has been established during 2024-2025. This brings a wide partnership which is invested in ensuring the best possible outcomes for care experienced children and young people.

From September 2023, the Quality Improvement Officer for attainment and achievement and the Care Experienced Children and Young People's (CECYP) Coordinator ran awareness raising sessions for all schools on the Scottish Attainment Challenge which included looking at the impact of poverty on families and the key features of The Promise. Out of 22 schools, 16 schools (73%) ran these sessions for their staff. This introduced staff to The Promise and feedback from surveys at the end of each session were positive in relation to the improved understanding highlighted by staff.

The CECYP coordinator facilitated a kinship carers group from Nov 2022 for approximately 18 months. There has been a fluctuating attendance by families but those who did attend appreciated the opportunity to get together and share experiences.

A young people's group was established in November 2024 to run parallel to Orkney's Promise Board for children and young people aged between 12-17. This is held monthly and incorporates activity opportunities while giving space for young people to share their experiences of the care system. Discussions and views are then fed back to the Promise Board, as and when required, opening communication channels with corporate parents and young people.

In moving ahead, planning sessions are being organised to outline projects that young people feel are important to them, including planning an event for care experienced week and ways to reduce the stigma around care within school environments.

Inclusion and Wellbeing: Other relevant Developments

Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Orkney

The service's QIO (Attainment and Achievement) has a remit to raise awareness of child poverty and the impact of this on families and children/young people. Since the posts inception in Jan 2023 activity has focused on raising awareness through the following key activities:

Book group Using Morag Treanor's book, 'Aspiring to Survive Childhood Poverty', a 10 week programme of professional learning was created in partnership with the Third Sector. This programme has now run twice and approximately 17 teaching staff have attended along with a few others. This has led to staff being more aware of the impact of poverty and as a result, staff in their schools have begun to implement actions to support families to mitigate against poverty and the cost of the school day. For example, increased use of clothing swap shops, having food more readily available to those who need it, costumes and resources provided for key events, eg World Book Day, a very successful toy swap at Christmas 2024 was supported by many headteachers. Staff who attended were more confident in talking to families about money and they were also more confident in making referrals to the Orkney Foodbank. Morag Treanor also attended the last session of each book group which added hugely to the depth of the discussions which took place.

Let's talk money As an offshoot from the Book Group, the QIO teamed up with the OIC communications team and the Third Sector to raise further awareness of the help available to families. This resulted in a monthly media communication, focussing on a different aspect of financial support each month, eg free school meals, CAB support for debt, foodbank, Thaw Orkney etc. It has not been possible to have clear data on the impact of this. Anecdotally, families who attended the toy swap were very clear about the positive difference that this would make to their children's Christmas.

Participation fund Over the last 2 years, £82,000 has been distributed to schools from the Islands Cost of Living Crisis Fund. Each school now has a participation fund to be used flexibly by schools in a way that best meets the needs of their families. For example, supporting access to school trips through providing clothing, overnight essentials etc as well as reducing the actual cost of the trip, providing footwear, outdoor jackets, participation at extra-curricular clubs and activities as well as transport for these events where needed.

Inter- island Travel 2023-2024 £9,000 was used to ensure that all children from P6 to S6 living in the isles had free ferry vouchers for 8 return journeys. Children from Papa Westray and North Ronaldsay had vouchers for plane journeys. Young people were very positive in their response to this support and cited that the fund allowed them to undertake examples of the following: catching up with friends on the Mainland or on other islands, attending sporting events, participation at community events, eg County Show.

Free school Meals during school holidays With the help and support of the Island's Cost Crisis Emergency Fund (ICCEF), the scheme to provide direct cash payments in lieu of a free school meals for entitled children and young people during school holiday periods has been extend for a further year. The scheme is of direct benefit to around 300 (10%) children and young people and their families. 100% of parents report that this money is very helpful to extremely helpful and helps to take the worry away from the cost of lunches during the holidays.

Inclusion and Wellbeing: Key Performance Indicators

Measure (as noted in baseline plan)	Source	Base	Final	Trend	Note
Attendance	LGBF	95%	92%	↔	Overall attendance in Orkney remains above the national average, with Orkney ranked 11th in relation to the other local authorities. In the primary sector it is stable (while the national trend is falling); in the secondary sector it falls slightly across the year, mirroring the national trend, but is above the national average. However, the number of children and young people with attendance of less than 70% has increased. More encouragingly, engagement with families remains high and absence rates recorded as 'reason unknown' are amongst the lowest in Scotland.
Attendance for Care Experienced Children and Young People	Manual	86%	78%	↓	Overall attendance for care experienced children and young people has declined. The drop since 2024 is nearly 2% in primary and almost 6% in secondary. This is concerning and needs to be a focus in moving ahead.
Exclusion (per 1000 pupils)	LGBF	6	15	↔	A revised exclusion policy is due to be introduced early in 25-26 Over time, the exclusion has risen. In part this is due to more accurate recording (especially of short-term exclusions)
Exclusion Rate for Care Experienced Children and Young People	Manual	-	8%	-	Data for 2024/25 gives a figure of 6 exclusions for children and young people who have experienced care. These are all in secondary. This is 13% of the secondary children and young people who have experienced care. The 8% figure is related to the full cohort.
Bullying Incidents (per 1000 pupils)	SEEMiS	18.6	77.0	↑	The policy was updated in June 2024. This included taking account of changes in legislation including UNCRC. Work to support

Measure (as noted in baseline plan)	Source	Base	Final	Trend	Note
Child's Plan (% of those with an additional support need)	ScotGov	38%	43%	↑	implementation continues and recording of incidents improves as this still appears variable across school, indicating a risk of underreporting 34% of primary aged pupils and 59% of secondary aged pupils are recognised as having an additional support need. Over time, the apparent trend is for an increasing number of Child's Plans to be opened. This relates to the level of complexity and consequential requirement to have a multi-agency team supporting the child and family. Around 1 in 5 pupils currently have a Child's Plan
Variable Timetables	Manual	37	40	↔	Generally variable timetables (often based on part-time attendance) are offered as a solution of last resort to promote a pathway to full inclusion and/or avoid exclusion.
Out of Orkney Placements	Manual	<5	<5	↔	The number of placements (for education and care) remains relatively low; additionally, a small number of young people are placed away from Orkney for care.
Rights Respecting Schools	Manual	70%	70%	↔	From April 2025, membership of the scheme is no longer directly funded by Scottish Government. Consideration to be given early 25-26 on maintaining a commitment to the specific scheme given the current commitment to UNCRC
LGBT Charter	Manual	0	0	↔	Systems and process review scheduled. Refresh monitoring and tracking progress
Promise Award		0	73%	↑	73% of schools/nurseries have run sessions for staff. Feedback from surveys at the end of each session were positive in relation to the improved understanding of The Promise highlighted by staff.

'Arrow' indicates change relative to previous year

'Colour' indicates change over time (trend)

Inclusion and Wellbeing: 2022-2025 Progress Overview

Inclusion and Wellbeing	Orkney's performance is not an 'outlier' when compared to other parts of Scotland, generalised improvement would reflect a better life experience for our children and young people was being achieved. While many of the children and young people in need of additional support receive appropriate interventions, the level of 'unmet need' (as reported by head teachers) has increased over the period. This means that the original ambition, that all children and young people receive appropriate interventions, has not yet been overtaken. Staged intervention guidance was issued and then has further revised. Ensuring that this now supports the allocation of additional resources remains a work in progress. Over the period 2022-2025 there have been a number of significant changes, these include: an increase in the number and complexity of children and young people identified as having additional support needs; and changes in practice, systems and culture (as well as staffing change) with respect to the various partner agencies and services that usually work together in collaboration. The combined impact has been to place significant pressure on the service, which in turn has led to delays in providing support and/or reduced availability of support. slow down progress. Consequently, continuing, and re-focusing, the work established in relation to inclusion and wellbeing remains a key priority for the planning period 2025-2028. Across all schools and settings, there is a greater awareness and appreciation of the rights of the child (UNCRC) and many positive examples of what this means in practice. Events such as the Chamber Debate and Youth Conference (organised by colleague in CLDE) serve to illustrate practice, however across and within individual schools there is greater and more consistent evidence of consistently positive practice. Embedding consistency for all as well as overall sustainability will need to feature in future plans.
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Learning and Achievement: Year 3 Progress Review

Theme 1: Curriculum Review

Proposed Action	Outcome
Planning for Senior Phase curriculum updates for 2025-26 based on 2023-24 Curriculum Review.	Senior Phase Review delayed from 23/24 and now rescheduled for 25/26
Progress and Impact: This work has been postponed pending the outcome of the national Curriculum Improvement Cycle process (see section 2.4 of the 2025-2028 plan below).	

Proposed Action	Outcome
Review of the S1-3 Broad General Education Curriculum, building on the outcomes of the 3 Islands Review.	Broad General Education review rescheduled (see above) for 25/26
Progress and Impact: This work has been postponed pending the outcome of the national Curriculum Improvement Cycle process (see section 2.4 of the 2025-2028 plan below).	

Theme 2: High Quality Learning Teaching and Assessment

Proposed Action	Outcome
Baseline survey evaluating learning and teaching with learners P4 and older, parents, teachers and classroom-based support staff to be carried out in August 2024 and repeated by the end of March 2025.	Baseline established in August 2024; improvement evident in March 2025.
Progress and Impact: The baseline survey was carried out in Aug/Sept 2024 but had a very low uptake. The deadline for completion was subsequently extended. The summary is as follows: Response return: • Secondary Teaching Staff – 78 Responses. • Secondary Pupil – 662 Responses. • Secondary Parent/ Carer – 96 Responses. • Primary Teaching Staff – 38 Responses. • Primary Pupil – 105 Responses. • Primary Parent/ Carer – 239 Responses. • Classroom Based Support Staff- 22 Responses. Positive messages: • Positive relationships are evident in primary and secondary – acknowledged by pupils, staff and parents/ carers. • Children enjoy their learning experiences.	

- Children's rights are evident and understood.
- Learning is appropriately challenging.
- Teaching staff are creative in their teaching approaches.

Areas for further consideration were identified as follows:

- Assessment and moderation are most frequently mentioned as areas for development.
- Pupils were less sure about how their progress is assessed (primary and secondary).
- Parents/ carers were slightly less confident about how their children's progress is assessed (primary).
- Parent/ carer involvement in the school was rated lower (secondary).
- Staff don't feel they are given opportunities to use peer observations and feedback to improve practice.
- Support in class and schools for challenging behaviour and children with additional support needs.

Already the survey feedback has led to the following:

- Schools have indicated they are using this information for self- evaluation purposes.
- Schools have used this as a baseline to identify and address some issues with parents/ carers.
- An opportunity for schools to consider where more information is needed.
- Authority wide- moderation and assessment activity – separate events for primary HTs and secondary teachers.
- Increased opportunities for peer observations.
- Identify good practice and share.

Proposed Action	Outcome
School QA calendars in all schools include planned opportunities for peer observation using the school's lesson evaluation toolkit.	Improved approaches to learning and teaching as evidenced in March 2025 survey.
Progress and Impact: Following an audit of QA calendars in April 2025, most schools had peer classroom observations in them. Although this was included in most calendars, only 36% of schools managed to deliver on this fully with 55% partially delivering peer observation. Schools reported that best practice was shared, teacher's confidence grew, there was a greater awareness of strengths and areas for development and increased professional dialogue took place as a result of this activity.	

Proposed Action	Outcome
Cross-sector trios of Head Teachers carry out peer moderation of HGIOS Quality Indicator 2.3 through school visits.	Feedback from Head Teachers indicates improved confidence in the quality of self-evaluation judgements for HGIOS Quality Indicator 2.3.
Progress and Impact: During session 2024/25, moderation trios with HTs took place. Supplementary material to support these days was provided by the LA. Additional CPD budget was used for release	

of teaching HTs and for all who needed to travel to undertake the visits to and from isles schools.

This project was very positively evaluated by headteachers. The priority placed on this by the local authority and the CPD funding for release and travel was welcome.

Headteachers prioritised the days in the calendar to carry out the peer visits. They liked the capacity to make the process fit their school and that they had ownership of the self-evaluation activity. The documentation created to support the process was welcome. As a result of their peer visits, headteachers felt that they became more confident in the judgment being made against QI 2.3. The visits also provided headteachers with the opportunity to work closely with peers and to learn from things going on in different schools. This process supported schools to have greater clarity in their next steps in moving ahead on improving learning and teaching.

All groups feel that the moderation trios should continue next session. An aspect of the isles visits was the shorter day due to travel restrictions, and a suggestion was the possibility of overnight stays to allow for the longer day. Two of the groups felt the trios should continue with the same staff membership as it would help build relationships and the knowledge of each other's schools. The linked headteachers were concerned about their capacity to move forward when they had more than one school. There were some thoughts to continue the focus on learning, teaching and assessment but others wanted to focus on a different aspect of school improvement. It was also suggested that the trio work took away from the capacity to have other cluster meetings.

Proposed Action

Outcome

All schools to report a self-evaluation of 4 or above for QI 2.3, with improved confidence in the quality of the judgement by LA and Head Teachers.

All schools to report a self-evaluation of 4 or above for QI 2.3.

Progress and Impact:

By June 2025, 59% of schools reported that learning, teaching and assessment was good or better. A significant number of school inspections in the last three years has verified these evaluations. This target remains a priority in the next service plan.

The development of learning and teaching toolkits within schools was seen as a positive development and again the priority given to this by the local authority was seen as helpful. Schools were confident to make small changes to their learning and teaching toolkits where required. This is leading to more positive engagement with peer observation and increased learning walks in schools. This is at an early stage of development, however, and a clear impact is not yet directly seen in improving learning in classrooms.

Headteachers cited concerns relating to time to free up staff for peer observations and the use of the WTA to facilitate this. More sharing of practice between schools was considered useful eg. Sharing strengths and areas for development to see if there was any commonality. There was some thought about the role of middle leaders in the secondary schools and the development needed there to facilitate this more fully.

Proposed Action	Outcome
Collate professional learning priorities from schools through the PRD process to ensure that support from the Quality Improvement Officer for Learning and Teaching is appropriately targeted.	The Quality Improvement Officer for Learning and Teaching responds to need with the provision of appropriate resources, for example via Northern Alliance Toolkit.
Progress and Impact: There has been an increase in the professional development of staff through opportunities for reading groups and learning together sessions. This is leading to increased conversations around improving learning and teaching. This has been helped by having the clear local authority priority and expectations on all staff. In some schools, practitioner enquiry is beginning to have a positive impact on improving aspects of learning and teaching in the classrooms. PRD meetings have had a clearer focus on learning and teaching supported by the use of some materials provided by the local authority although there is still some feedback that would suggest the impact of the PRD meeting is still not as consistent yet as it could be. In moving forward there was a continuing emphasis on professional learning for staff in relation to meeting children's needs and the inclusion agenda. There was also feedback in relation to staff wanting to have access to what is regarded as best practice both within Orkney and from outwith, including support from Education Scotland and other national groups. This would include ongoing support for moderation of CfE levels and high-quality assessments.	

Theme 3: Scottish Attainment Challenge

Proposed Action	Outcome
Continue to work towards meeting stretch aims in primary BGE and in attendance.	Stretch aims trajectories met.
Progress and Impact: Primary schools continue to use the BGE tracking toolkit on a regular basis to continue to track and monitor the attainment and progress children are making in their learning. All classes have a class target to help schools evaluate their progress towards the stretch aims. Stretch aims are monitored in December and June every year. From June 2025 actual data the following statements apply: • P1/4/7 literacy combined 82% - means that we met the lowermost point of the stretch aim trajectory • P1/4/7 numeracy combined 91% - means that we are in the mid-point of the stretch aim trajectory • primary attendance is currently 94.17% and with rounding, would meet the stretch aim	

Proposed Action	Outcome
Continue to work towards meeting stretch aims for BGE S3, including attendance, and ensure that these are a clear focus for secondary schools.	Stretch aims trajectories met.
Progress and Impact: In S3 BGE attainment, all areas have improved since last session, and we have met one of the four stretch aims, as follows: S3 3rd level literacy 88% - a rise of 9 percentage points from 2024 and meeting the top end of the stretch aim trajectory. S3 4th level literacy 52% - a substantial rise of 25 percentage points from 2024, but below the annual stretch aim trajectory of 61-64%. S3 3rd level numeracy 91% - a rise of 1% from 2024, but 2-3 percentage points below the stretch aim trajectory of 93-94% S3 4th level numeracy 63% - a rise of 7 percentage points from 2024, but remaining below the stretch aim trajectory of 70-72% Secondary attendance published in the Education Scotland Local Authority Statistical Summary Report in February 2025 was 87.43%, compared to a national rate of 87.64%. This figure relates to attendance in 2023-24 and is just below the 23/24 stretch aim trajectory of 87.7 – 91%.	

Proposed Action	Outcome
Create clear action plan for monitoring and tracking attainment in BGE S1-S3 during the course of the school year.	Increased confidence in the robustness and reliability of BGE data in secondary schools by school senior leadership teams and LA officers. Improved attainment in BGE S3 third and fourth level.
Progress and Impact: S3 has been a focus for work during 24/25 to improve attainment levels. Moderation sessions have provided some support for English staff across Orkney and reported attainment has increased. A BGE tracker has been developed for Junior High Schools to continue to track attainment building on from Primary. This is to be introduced in session 25/26. Monitoring and tracking of BGE attainment in S1-3 across all secondary schools will continue to be a priority in the next iteration of the service plan.	

Proposed Action	Outcome
Expand the primary BGE tracking toolkit with pilots in 2/3 schools to ensure children who are benefiting from PEF interventions are identified, tracked and monitored	Amended toolkit provides easier and more efficient tracking and monitoring of children's attainment where PEF is being used to support their learning. Evaluation and feedback from pilot schools.
Progress and Impact: An additional column has been added into the toolkit which schools are completing. An extended toolkit was not required with the addition of this column. Schools are using data more effectively to target support and to know their equity and attainment gap. Schools now report and plan PEF from April to March in line with the financial year. Almost all schools submit robust plans with targeted actions. Greater impact is being evidenced across the reports. Schools need to continue to monitor interventions closely to ensure that accelerated progress occurs.	

Link to Council Delivery Plan:

Development of Learning Provision and Pathways (C3)
Develop and promote sustainable learning provision and pathways, considering improvement based on local needs and skills gaps. Providing all age holistic, bespoke and person-centred support and opportunities to increase confidence, skills and knowledge to ensure individuals progress into positive destinations. UHI Orkney functions as a core part of this learning provision.
Progress and Impact: Approximately 300 secondary school pupils have undertaken courses at UHI Orkney as part of their school timetable in the 2024/25 session. This enables young people to gain work-related skills and qualifications and experience the further education setting as a taster for potential future study. The percentage of Orkney school leavers in a positive destination was 94% for 2023/4, slightly below the national figure of 96%. A new SDS Participation Portal was opened in the latter part 2024/25, allowing officers to gain up-to-date information on young people's participation gathered from multiple services. This has the potential to allow more accurate targeting of support for those not engaged in education, employment or training and it'.
Improve Education Standards (C4)
Raise attainment and improve outcomes by ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to shape their future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors. Achieve equity by ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Progress and Impact:

Schools have become more adept at identifying their equity attainment gap. Schools use a variety of data to do this. The data collected includes SIMD data, Free School Meals and Care Experienced Children and Young People. Schools also consider the 6 national poverty indicators. Schools within PEF plans create a clear rationale for interventions and target support for children within the equity gap, this can be both to seek those who should be offered the chance to exceed and to ensure that children meet the national benchmarks at the appropriate time. The QIO engages with all schools to support them in this process which results in planning being more impactful, and greater awareness within schools of the challenges facing children and their families within or at risk of the equity gap. The QIO has supported schools to increase their confidence of the professional judgement of a national level.

Learning and Achievement: Other Relevant Developments

Preparation for Inspection sessions:

During 2024/25, the Service Manager (Primary Education) and the Quality Improvement Officer (Attainment and Achievement) planned a series of 12 sessions for 8 HTs whose schools were most likely to be inspected given the time frame since their last inspection. These sessions ran from September 2024 until March 2025. These were very positively received and helped HTs to prepare for the self-evaluation and evidence required for a school inspection.

Learning and Achievement: Key Performance Indicators

Measure (as noted in baseline plan)	Source	Base	Final	Trend	Note	
Children meeting development milestones (Health Visitor 27 Month Check)	LGBF	89%	88%	↔	This data relates to the health visitor check done at 27 months. Post Covid, significant concerns remain about both children’s development and wellbeing on entry to nursery, and this would match with national research which highlights the impact of lockdown on babies and very young children. For children leaving nursery in 2025, there has been a dip across all d24evelopmental milestones, in particular in wellbeing. These children would have been born and spent their early life during lockdown, so impact for them would have been significant.	
Achievement of Care Experienced Children and Young People from P1-P7	Manual	R	29%	63%	↑	There is significant improvement in the attainment across all 4 organisers. This has narrowed the gap between children who have experienced care and their peers. However, a considerable gap persists.
		W	14%	50%	↑	
		L&T	43%	67%	↑	
		N	17%	50%	↑	
Achievement of Children and Young People entitled to Free School Meals from P1-P7	Manual	R	54%	68%	↑	There is a significant improvement across the 4 organisers. There still remains a gap between children who are eligible for FSM and their peers.
		W	40%	59%	↑	
		L&T	62%	74%	↑	
		N	48%	70%	↑	
Proportion of 16- 19-year-olds Participating in education, employment, or training	APM - Skills Development Scotland (Aug 25)	94%	94%	↔	Orkney is consistently achieving above the national average in this measure. The 2024-25 rate of 94.4% is above the national rate of 93.3%.	
P1/4/7 Reading	Manual	80%	87%	↑	Attainment continues to improve through the rigorous approaches to tracking and monitoring in the primary	
P1/4/7 Writing	Manual	74%	83%	↑		

Measure (as noted in baseline plan)	Source	Base	Final	Trend	Note
P1/4/7 Talking and Listening	Manual	84%	92%	↑	schools. However, the small numbers can make a difference in attainment year on year.
P1/4/7 Literacy	LGBF	68%	81%	↑	Attainment now exceeds national average in all areas.
P1/4/7 Numeracy	LGBF	75%	87%	↑	Maintaining the high level of attainment is a priority.
National 5 Pass Rate	Attainment Report 23-24	80%	78%	↓	For SQA attainment 2018-19 is used as base level, as courses and assessment methods were modified in 2019-20 and 2020-21 as covid mitigations. National 5 pass rates in Orkney in 2023-24 were slightly higher than the national rate, just as they were in the previous 2 years. Both National and Orkney rates continued the trend of a slight decrease on the previous year.
Higher Pass Rate	Attainment Report 23-24	80%	75%	↓	The Orkney Higher pass rate is on a par with the national average, as it was the previous year. Both National and Orkney pass rates show a decrease on the previous year
Advanced Higher Pass Rate	Attainment Report 23-24	87%	78%	↑	The Orkney Advanced Higher pass rate has risen slightly and is 2.2 percentage points above the national rate. Small cohorts at Advanced Higher make this a measure where individual young people can have a significant impact on the overall percentage.
5 or more National 5 qualifications gained in S4	Attainment Report 23-24	55%	54%	↓	After a sustained upward trend and a particularly strong performance in 2023, Orkney attainment in this measure has dropped back to on par with the national average.
Leavers gaining 1 or more Level 5 qualifications	Attainment Report 23-24	93%	90%	↔	Orkney is consistently 2-4 percentage points above the

Measure (as noted in baseline plan)	Source	Base	Final	Trend	Note
					national average in this measure
Leavers gaining 1 or more Level 6 qualifications	Attainment Report 23-24	64%	61%	↑	Orkney is consistently slightly below the national average in this measure. However, the Orkney rate has risen by 4.45 percentage points compared to 2022- 23, moving towards our stretch aim of 68%.

‘Arrow’ indicates change relative to previous year

‘Colour’ indicates change over time (trend)

Learning and Achievement: 2022-2025 Progress Overview

Learning and Achievement	From the beginning of the current stretch aim targets (Session 2023/24) in the primary sector, there have been significant improvements in reducing the attainment gap between children who are eligible for free school meals and their peers who are not, and again with children who have experienced care and their peers who haven't. In all of these data sets, the stretch aim trajectories have been exceeded. These measures, reflect a reduction in the attainment gap, but it is important to acknowledge that the data involves really small cohorts of children and as such the these could fluctuate greatly. Although gaps still exist, they have been narrowed significantly, and this is a really promising picture. Across a wide range of indicators, the data suggests progress is being made towards the overall ambition of achieving excellence and equity in education. Confidence in both the reliability and validity of data is particularly strong in the Primary Sector where we have seen attainment across all organisers improve because of a significant commitment by staff at all levels. A similar process (and support) is beginning for the early stages of secondary education (S1-S3 Broad General Education) and it is expected that this will in future articulate with the more formal and externally validated process associated with the Senior Phase and undertaking national examinations at S4, S5 and S6.
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Systems and Processes: Year 3 Progress Review:

Proposed Action	Outcome	
Implement a budget review and management plan to support the Council's medium term financial strategy, which involves balancing the budget, reducing costs and increasing income across all sectors of the service.	Satisfactory service delivery is achieved and budget management targets, as determined by Council, are met.	HOS
Progress and Impact: A line-by-line review of the budget was completed in preparation for budget setting (2025-2026). Against the challenge of maintaining teacher numbers (Scottish Government priority) and pressures due to the increasing number of children and young people recognised as having an additional support need, a number of potential savings were presented to elected members for consideration. 'Year 1' savings, in the main, related to capitalising on falling rolls/demand (leading to natural savings). Plans for future years are currently being considered. The target figure (of £9m accumulated over 3 years) remains in place, as does the nominal share for Education Leisure and Housing of £3.4m		

Proposed Action	Outcome	
Continue with DSM Implementation, embedding new systems and practices across the service.	Budget holders have access to clear and unambiguous information about budget construction and allocation. Budget processes are understood and completed on time.	HOS
Progress and Impact: A revised scheme has been completed but has not yet been adopted. The new scheme re-aligns budgets to iron out historic anomalies. The proposals align with the budget envelope (budget setting constraints) and highlight areas that should be prioritised in the event additional funding is made available.		

Proposed Action	Outcome	
Review staffing allocation policies for each aspect of the service.	Maximum effectiveness and efficiency (within the given statutory and budget parameters) of staffing allocation is achieved.	HOS
Progress and Impact: Work on this has been temporarily paused, pending the outcome of national and local discussions on reducing class contact time (for teachers), as this will have significant implications for staffing levels and current staffing structures across all sizes and type of school.		

Proposed Action	Outcome	
Continue to evolve and develop systems and process to support Self-evaluation and Quality Assurance within and of the local authority.	Self-evaluation activity systematically and accurately informs improvement activity and outcomes.	HOS
Progress and Impact: Work on building local authority systems and processes to support Self-evaluation and Quality Assurance is ongoing. A visit by HMIE early in the academic year provided useful (external) evaluation and feedback on the work of the local authority in relation to how the local authority supports schools to improve. The inspection process gathered evidence on the following themes: • the implementation of effective improvement planning and standards and quality reporting • self- evaluation and quality assurance • professional learning • universal and targeted support and challenge In relation to each of the themes, inspectors noted the following: Implementing effective improvement planning and standards and quality reporting The education service plan (2022-2025) is aligned to Orkney Islands Council's Strategic Plan and contributes to the overarching themes of 'Growing our economy, strengthening our communities, developing our infrastructure and transforming our council'. The local authority prioritises consultation at the early stages of improvement activities with key stakeholders. Supported by the attainment advisor, the central team provides a programme to schools to understand their data. The central team challenges robustly when data indicates that school performance has fallen below expected standards and use stretch aims to challenge headteachers constructively to improve outcomes for children and young people. A helpful next step will be to share the overview of school improvement priorities with all schools to support them foster other areas of collaboration. Consideration could be given to focusing on points of transition, especially from P7 to S1, to help increase the pace of improvement. Self-evaluation and quality assurance A culture of continuous improvement underpins the work of education officers, headteachers and staff in schools. The local authority recognises high-quality learning and teaching as a key factor in improving children and young people's learning and achievement. It promotes the role of data as a key driver in staff understanding the need for progress and the methods of supporting this. Sector-based service managers and quality improvement officers review and provide feedback on school reports and plans; carry out quality improvement visits; analyse data and participate in monitoring and tracking discussions; and deliver professional learning to headteachers and wider staff teams. Head Teachers welcome increased opportunities to share practice with colleagues across the authority to accelerate school improvement.		

Professional learning

The central team, headteachers and teachers are resilient and solution-focused in finding ways to promote professional learning. They recognise and are creative in finding ways to mitigate the considerable additional challenges of cost, connectivity, travel time and transport within Orkney.

There is a plan in place to collate professional learning priorities from schools through the professional review and development (PRD) process to ensure that the local authority professional learning offer responds to identified need. A number of networks are in place to support staff across the local authority. Staff are supported to engage in programmes delivered by National Organisations, including Education Scotland.

Local authority associate assessors are supporting schools to prepare for inspection.

New headteachers welcome the support they receive, in particular the bespoke one-to-one arrangements.

School leaders are very keen to feel empowered to support continuous improvement at local authority level and to have opportunities to lead on strategic priorities and co-create effective systems and processes.

Targeted professional learning based on 'understanding the standard' delivered alongside this approach would support the local authority ambition of improving standards in schools.

Targeted support for specific schools to improve the quality of education

The range of targeted support varies according to the needs of the individual school, as well as the nature of individual requests from headteachers. Targeted support includes regular headteacher and central officer meetings, new headteacher induction, analysis of data, and professional learning. Schools requiring intensive support are required to have an action plan with clear baseline measures.

Central officers

- discuss school improvement with headteachers at meetings (either face-to-face or online) throughout the year (these meetings focus on aspects of self-evaluation, learning, teaching and assessment and raising attainment)
- are aware of the importance of providing pastoral support as part of their universal offer to schools
- facilitate a range of universal networks for headteachers to attend to support school improvement (these include headteachers briefings, learning and development sessions and termly face-to-face meetings)
- provide a weekly electronic bulletin which signposts headteachers and school staff to local and national updates and offers of professional learning

Headteachers would like to work collaboratively with central officers to set the agenda of meetings.

Headteachers perceive the level of support and challenge provided by central officers as inconsistent. However, they are unaware of the criteria for more intensive support.

Proposed Action	Outcome	
Engage with 'communities of interest' as part of the ongoing process of evaluation and forward planning for the service.	Stake-holders report that they are listened to and involved in all aspects for the service.	HOS
Progress and Impact: A successful programme of meetings with parent Council Chairs has once again been completed. This included spending time on reflecting on the current service plan and looking at priorities for the next 3 years. In particular, feedback on the Vision, Values and Aims (now set out on page 3) was welcome and helped finalise what the focus going forward needs to be. The calendar of meetings with Senior Managers (heads of establishment) continues to be a vital arena for information exchange. Time is divided between development, business and feedback. The survey/questionnaire programme involving young people provided important feedback. There is scope to develop all three strands and extend consultation and engagement to a wider range of professional partners.		

Proposed Action	Outcome	
Should funding from Scottish Government be made available, implement a reduction of teachers' contact hours in line with national policy position.	Teacher contact hours aligned with national agreement.	
Progress and Impact: Discussion in relation to reducing class contact time continues. The Scottish Government position is that the investment to achieve this has already been made, and local authorities are being asked to implement a phased reduction as pupil numbers fall. The assumptions made are a matter for discussion between local authorities and Scottish Government. In particular, the metrics used to determine feasibility do not appear to take into consideration the resource intensive demands of providing an education service across an island community.		

Proposed Action	Outcome
Create and adopt a Digital Learning Strategy for Orkney.	Digital Strategy responds to identified needs, articulates corporate strategy and development as well as informing service activity.
Progress and Impact: This remains a work in progress. Some positive work has been done to extend digital learning opportunities for some of those who find accessing the curriculum by attending school highly challenging. However, this is at an early stage and will benefit from sustained focus and investment (time and resources). Changes in licensing arrangements have been a cause for concern, leading to difficulties for both staff and students. A satisfactory (complete) solution is still being sought. As part of the wider context, a draft policy on the use of mobile phones/devices in schools is in the process of being created. It is anticipated that work on this will extend into the new academic year and evaluating the impact of the policy/guidelines will need to be taken post implementation.	

Link to Council Delivery Plan:

Childcare (C5)

Provide childcare in an affordable way in locations that are convenient by:

- Continuing to develop a new 50-place 0-5 nursery in Kirkwall.
- Supporting individuals to take up child-minding; supporting practising child-minders to develop practice as well as meet and maintain the National Standard; recruiting and supporting child-minders working in partnership with the local authority to provide statutory childcare (including qualifications).
- Establishing a 'grant and subsidy' approach for child-minders in hard to sustain locations (for example where numbers are very small making the business non-viable).

Progress and Impact:

The new nursery has been completed, and two tendering processes have been undertaken. There was no interest during the first round and the second round resulted in no firm offers to enter into an agreement to run the provision. The Corporate Leadership Team and Elected Members will now determine the next steps as appropriate.

The Care Inspectorate (the regulatory body) have completed an initial visit and have been impressed with the overall facilities.

The Early Years Service and Community Learning and Development and Employability have collaborated with the Scottish Childminding Association to recruit and train 7 new childminders in Orkney. A publicity campaign targeted the islands and rural areas. 6 prospective childminders have signed up to start their training, with the majority of these being in Kirkwall.

7 childminders are in partnership to deliver funded early learning and childcare. They attend regular evening support and learning sessions run by the Early Years Service, these are recognised as good practice by the Care Inspectorate and feedback from both childminders and inspection indicates that the training has been effective in supporting practice development.

A number of partnership childminders have accessed Business Gateway funding and are due to start their SVQ qualification after the summer.

Systems and Processes: Other Relevant Developments

Quality Assurance Calendar

The current local authority calendar is well received by head teachers who feel that it is useful and helps keep them on track in relation to expectations and deadlines. It is used to support schools when developing their own in-school quality assurance calendars.

Head teachers asked if this can be given to schools earlier than the beginning of the new school year and this was sent out to schools at the end of term 4 of 2024/25.

Systems and Processes: Key Performance Indicators

Measure (as noted in baseline plan)	Source	Base	End of Year 2	Trend	Note
Complaints (stage 2, closed on time)	Manual	33%	95%	↑	Closed on time includes allowance made for permitted extension; at Stage 2 the majority of complaints are complex and require a significant time commitment from the investigating officer.
FOI Response (on time)	Manual	83%	66%	↓	During the current year, 487 FOI's received, an increase on the previous year. Of these 288 were responded to 'on time'. As well as an increase in volume, there has been an increase in complexity. Both factors, as well as overall workload across teams, have contributed the lower response rate.
Budget Variance (budget control)	Council Perf Mon	16%	14%	↔	There has been little change over the planning period.
Invoices Paid	Council Perf Mon	82.1%	91.1%	↑	The overall trend is improving, and the target of 90% has been met.
Staff Accidents (per 30 staff)	Council Perf Mon	0.57	2.1	↔	A change in how incidents are recorded has led to a significant increase with respect to this indicator. Previously incidents were recorded as 'significant' (and actioned as such), but were excluded from the previous accident reporting process
Sickness Absence (teaching staff)	LGBF	8.2	9.1	↑	The average number of working days per lost through sickness absence, (expressed as a percentage of the number of working days available) remains high with Orkney 'averaging' 26/32 (local authority rankings)

Measure (as noted in baseline plan)	Source	Base	End of Year 2	Trend	Note
Long Term Absence Management	Council Perf Mon	17.9%	79.0%	↑	Although there has been a significant improvement, there are still a number of situations where the management intervention has not been recorded.
Vacancies (still vacant after 6 months)	Council Perf Mon	1.2%	10%	↑	There has been a rise in the number of persistent vacancies and the overall trend is increasing.
ERD/PRD	Council Perf Mon	88.9%	79%	↓	The number of (entitled) staff who have received an ERD has fallen. There is a persistent challenge in relation to temporary, seasonal and part-time (low number of hours) staff.
Mandatory Training	Council Perf Mon	33.8%	79%	↑	While the overall trend is improving, the completion rate falls short of the 90% target.
ELC Settings rated good or better	LGBF	95%	90%	↔	The very small number of settings results in large % variation should a single setting drop below 'good or better'.
Satisfaction with local schools	LGBF	84.7%	82.5%	↓	Position relative to the other 31 local authorities is strong, average over 10 years is 2 nd

'Arrow' indicates change relative to previous year

'Colour' indicates change over time (trend)

Systems and Processes: 2022-2025 Progress Overview

Systems and Processes	Across many of the indicators Orkney continues to perform well and the community continues to hold the service in high regard (see 'satisfaction with local schools' above). However, this position cannot be taken for granted (see 'complaints' above). Relatively high levels of sickness absence continue to place significant stress on both staff and systems. The cost of providing supply/cover staff is high, which in turn creates unrelenting pressure on budgets that are already stretched. At all levels within the service, colleagues work to support each other and strive to maintain a health promoting culture.
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Looking Forward: Overview of Themes for 2025-2028

Context of fiscal challenge

Overview of Themes for 2025-2028				
		ELC	Primary	Secondary
Inclusion and Wellbeing	Inclusion	✓	✓	✓
	Relationships, Attendance and Transitions	✓	✓	✓
	Poverty and Disadvantage	✓	✓	✓
Learning and Achievement	Communication, Language and Literacy	✓	✓	
	High Quality Learning and Teaching	✓	✓	✓
	Attainment, Moderation and Assessment		✓	✓
	Curriculum Refresh	✓	✓	✓
Systems and Processes	Health, Safety and Safeguarding	✓	✓	✓
	Data Intelligence	✓	✓	✓
	Policy Refresh and Development	✓	✓	✓
	Systemic Supervision	✓		
	Quality Improvement	✓	✓	✓

Looking Forward: Overview of Actions 2025-2028

1 Inclusion and Wellbeing

1.1 Inclusion				
Outcome: 1.1.1 Children's needs are effective and robustly tracked and monitored to ensure that the outcomes for identified children and young people are appropriate and leading to improvement.		Measures: 1.1.1 Attainment levels of identified children and young people eg Care Experienced Children and Young People, children in receipt of Free School Meals, young carers etc.		
1.1.2 ELC - Families with young children with autism will have access to support.		1.1.2 Parental feedback.		
1.2.3 Improved attendance levels for identified cohorts, reduced numbers of part-time timetables, reduction in exclusions.		1.1.3 Attendance levels, Numbers of pupils on part timetables, Rates of exclusions.		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
1.1.1	- Ensure all senior leaders are familiar with current child's plan process and guidance. - Briefing for Heads of Establishment in. - Co-ordinated Support Plan awareness briefing session in for Heads of Establishment. - Working party to finalise updated OIC Staged intervention Guidance. To be shared with Heads of Establishment during Face-to-Face day. - Review the collation of additional support of learning data for identified children and young people in the BGE toolkits and within SEEMiS. Pilot this with different sized schools.	- Moderation of assessment of staged intervention levels and support needs. - Secondary Support Resource implemented in Secondary and Junior High Schools. - Professional learning programme in place for support staff. - Increase use of Additional Support for Learning tabs in primary and Junior High Schools within the BGE toolkit. - Secondary school create a system for tracking outcomes of identified cohorts. - Continue to implement SFL Strategy. - Educational Psychology and Support for Learning and Inclusion Development Plans aligned with SFL Strategy, ELH, Children's Service and OIC Plans.	- Moderate early intervention levels/ a new national framework may be required to be implemented. - SFL Strategy incorporated in ECH Plan.	HoS (E) SM (SFL and I)

	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
1.1.1 cont	- Support for Learning Strategy to ECH Committee. (Nov 2025). - Implement SFL Strategy.			
1.1.2	Early Support and Intervention ELC: using the additional Solihull resources, develop a Solihull parent programme group for parents of young children with autism.	ELC Evaluate Solihull parent group delivery and consider if additional resources will enhance the programme.	Establish delivery as part of early years offer.	SM (ELC)
1.3	Inclusive Schools - Developing Inclusive Schools - Inservice Day(s) Oct 2025 - Suicide Prevention – SOS App delivered to school staff (Oct inservice) - All schools to become familiar with UNCRC (Education Scotland self-evaluation toolkit) and ensure statutory requirements in place - Begin review of roles and remits of Support for Learning and Inclusion team. - Most schools and settings to achieve 'The Promise' award by July 2026. - Ensure continued focus in schools and across the service on approaches to meet the needs of identified cohorts of children and young people who find the school environment and learning challenging.	- Schools are familiar with the Inclusion, wellbeing and equalities framework (Education Scotland). - Work on creating transparent process to ensure SFLA provision is stabilised. - Review of roles and remits of Support for Learning and Inclusion team complete. - Exploration of Alternative Education Pathways started. - All schools ensure statutory requirements embedded for UNCRC. - All schools and settings to achieve 'The Promise' award by July 2027. - Ensure continued focus in schools and across the service on approaches to meet the needs of identified cohorts of children and young people who find the school environment and learning challenging.	- Schools are familiar with the Inclusion, wellbeing and equalities framework (Education Scotland) and this is evident in schools. - Alternative Education Pathways progressed. - Ensure continued focus in schools and across the service on approaches to meet the needs of identified cohorts of children and young people who find the school environment and learning challenging.	SM (SFL and I)

1.2 Relationships, Attendance and Transitions				
Outcome:		Measures:		
1.2.1 Overall attendance levels in Orkney reach at least 95% in Primary and 93% in Secondary.		1.2.1 Fortnightly attendance data.		
1.2.2 Effective curricular transitions from Primary to Secondary for all children and young people across all curriculum areas.		1.2.2 Feedback and records of meetings from both East and West Clusters.		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
1.2.1	• Create Operational Guidance for SEEMiS codes for schools. • Refresh OIC Attendance policy. • Create OIC Attendance Strategy. • Face to face day – Focus Attendance and input from Education Scotland. • Communication to wider Orkney Community. • Monitor trends in attendance regularly • Schools to create own actions to improve attendance.	• Continue to monitor trends in attendance • Embed updated OIC Attendance Policy. • If required, schools to have an action in their school improvement plan/ PEF plan. • Communication to wider Orkney Community. • Monitor trends in attendance regularly. • Schools to create own actions to improve attendance.	• Review attendance levels and update actions accordingly.	All SM QIO AA
1.2.2	• Re-establish the East and West Clusters to drive this improvement. • Audit of transition including documents from Primary to Secondary, what's working well and what can be improved. • Identify priorities for action over the year.	• East and West Clusters to review transition arrangements. • Continue to develop refine and develop approaches.	• Review and continue as required.	SM P&S

1.3 Poverty and Equity				
Outcome:		Measures:		
1.3.1 Attainment and attendance gaps for identified cohorts of children and young people will be narrowed as defined by locally set stretch aims.		1.3.1 Schools tracking data. Regular local tracking and analysis of data. Annual review of national attainment data. Fortnightly/national attendance data. Stretch aim data and analysis.		
1.3.2 All schools will be poverty aware and provide practical support to children, young people and their families to ensure there are no barriers to education.		1.3.2 Uptake of FSM meals/Clothing grant SciPs/SQRs and PEF planning and reports. Participation Fund planning and report. Track school use of Cost of the School Day toolkits. Track attendance at professional learning/awareness raising sessions.		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
1.3.1	- QIO continues to focus on attainment and equity. - Revise Raising Attainment Strategy and present to Education, Leisure and Housing Committee March 2026. - SAC Lead, QIO, Service Manager (secondary and tertiary) and Attainment Advisor continue to analyse and support BGE and Senior Phase attainment and attendance. - CECYP co-ordinator to monitor and track CECYP attainment and attendance. - Seek funding for the continuance of the CECYP co-ordinator role.	- Review the impact and consider future of QIO post (SAC funding is not guaranteed beyond March 2027) - SAC Lead, QIO, Service Manager (secondary and tertiary) and Attainment Advisor continue to analyse and support BGE and Senior Phase attainment and attendance.	SAC Lead, QIO, Service Manager (secondary and tertiary) and Attainment Advisor continue to analyse and support BGE and Senior Phase attainment and attendance.	SAC Lead QIO AA

	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
1.3.2	- Establish baseline data of uptake of FSM and clothing grant. Analysis of data from 2024/2025 against 2023/2024 data. - Publicise access to FSM and Clothing Grant over the year. - QIO attendance at the Cost-of-Living Taskforce. - QIO to attend national SAC events – both online and in-person. - Lead sharing and Networking event PEF and Participation – “Taking Action on Child Poverty in Orkney” – September 2025. - Survey of schools’ engagement with Cost of the Day Toolkit. 2026/2027 PEF plans to include professional learning linked to Poverty and Equity. - Seek external funding and implement Participation Fund and free school meals during school holidays. - Trial and evaluate Bright Start Breakfast Provision in 5 schools. - Publicise 2-year-old provision through a comms campaign.	- Analyse uptake of FSM and clothing grant. Continue to publicise the FSM and Clothing Grant over the year. - QIO attendance at the Cost-of-Living Taskforce. - Develop equity planning framework for schools as a replacement of PEF plans. - Schools to ensure they have poverty and equity professional learning within their plans for 27/28. - School to continue to strengthen links with third sector and other agencies. - Continue to seek additional funding to support families impacted by poverty. - If funding is available, review Breakfast provision taking into account pilot findings.	- Analyse uptake of FSM and clothing grant. Continue to publicise the FSM and Clothing Grant over the year. - Continued attendance at the Cost-of-Living Taskforce. - Equity planning continues. - Schools to ensure they have poverty and equity professional learning within their planning. - Continue to seek additional funding to support families impacted by poverty.	QIO AA

2 Learning and Achievement

2.1 Communication, Language and Literacy				
Outcome: 2.1.1 Overall (P1-7) attainment in writing in primary schools will improve from 83% (June 2025) to 89% (June 2028) Year on year trajectories: 2025/26 – 83-85% 2026/27 – 86-88% 2027/28 – 89%		Measures/KPI: 2.1.1 • BGE toolkits and schools tracking data. • Regular local tracking and analysis of data. • Annual review of national attainment data.		
2.1.2 Develop the early years profession's understanding and skills in relation to communication, language and literacy		2.1.2 Impact on practitioner understanding of communication, language and literacy development gathered through end of training evaluations Improved and more focused language and literacy peedie notes Increase in quality of planned experiences (group times) in settings		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
2.1.1	• Create briefing and share key national messages from the national writing programme with primary HTs • Develop an Orkney approach to improving learning and teaching in writing using key elements of national writing programme for implementation in schools in 2026/27.	• Implement writing approach with primary schools who have opted into programme and targeted schools based on attainment data in writing. Schools build this into improvement plans set aside time for professional learning for teaching staff. • Evaluate effectiveness of approaches and amend/adapt as required.	• Continue to implement writing programme with different cohort of schools.	SM (P) QIO
2.1.2	• Develop and deliver a 4 day early years language and literacy course to early years practitioners, focussing on the development of language and literacy, how to support children's development and how to extend and challenge our oldest children. • Refresh and update the language and literacy guidance book to reflect current practice and update theory and approaches.	• Review and evaluate language and literacy course, making modifications to better support practice development. Re-deliver to a second cohort.	• Early years team evaluate practice impact in settings, including peedie notes (observations) and planned experiences.	

	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 1 (26-27)	Action Year 1 (27-28)	
2.1.2 cont	- As part of the national communication and language work, work in partnership with allied services (Early years service, Speech Therapy, Communication Teacher, Health Visitors) to promote singing as a key aspect of language development. - Specialised language input at the October Inservice Day from Speech and Language Therapy and the Communication Teacher.			

2.2 High Quality Learning and Teaching				
Outcome: All schools will report that Quality Indicator 2.3 (Learning, Teaching and Assessment) is Good by 2028 with 50% reporting very good.		Measures/KPI: 2.2.1 / 2.2.2/ 2.2.3 HT trios observations Schools QA evidence CT Peer monitoring feedback HMIE inspection feedback		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
2.2.1	Pace and Challenge - Revisit Learning Intentions and co-creation of Success Criteria. - Revisit effective questioning.	Pace and Challenge Continue to develop use of - Learning Intentions and co-creation of Success Criteria. - Effective questioning. And add in - Development of Higher Order Thinking Skills.	Pace and Challenge Continue to develop use of - Learning Intentions and co-creation of Success Criteria. - Effective questioning. - Higher order thinking skills. And add in - Increased use of a range of creative learning approaches.	
2.2.2	Validated Self-Evaluation - Support HT Validated Self-evaluation. - Amend trio groups. - Provide structure and framework for visits. - Create feedback template – forms	Validated Self-Evaluation - Continue to amend HT trios. - Continue to support validated self-evaluation.	Validated Self-Evaluation - Continue to amend HT trios. - Continue to support validated self-evaluation.	
2.2.3	Professional learning Signpost resources to support schools with professional learning.	Professional learning - Provide professional learning on higher order thinking skills. - Signpost resources to support schools with professional learning. - Highlight areas of good practice within Orkney.	Professional learning - Provide professional learning on creative learning and teaching approaches. - Signpost resources to support schools with professional learning. - Highlight areas of good practice within Orkney. - Create a practitioner showcase of high-quality learning and teaching.	

	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
2.2.3 cont			Develop an Orkney approach to improving learning and teaching in a different curricular area from writing (as per 2.1.1). Attainment data will identify area of priority for implementation in schools in 2028-29.	

2.3 Attainment, Moderation and Assessment				
Outcome: 2.3.1 To continue to raise or maintain attainment for all children and young people. 2.3.2 All schools report full confidence in reliability and consistency of BGE attainment levels in literacy and numeracy by 2028.		Measures/KPI: 2.3.1/ 2.3.2 BGE tracking toolkits ACEL data Senior Phase data		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
2.31	- ELC. Audit tracking data from 25-6 and use this to target settings who would benefit from support to become more learning-focussed in relation to their understanding of progress and milestones, to ensure that tracking data is robust. - Maintaining high levels of attainment through robust tracking and monitoring. - Supporting teacher's professional judgement in identifying where children and young people have exceeded a level. - Introduction of a BGE tracker in Junior High Schools.	- Review tracking in ELC to monitor effectiveness of intervention. Redeliver training as needed. - Maintaining high levels of attainment through robust tracking and monitoring. - Continuing to support teacher's professional judgement in identifying where children and young people have exceeded a level. - Continue to support use of BGE tracker in Junior High Schools. - Implementing fully Senior Secondary schools to create a system to track BGE data	Continue to review and set attainment priorities based on data.	SM Primary SM Secondary QIO AA

	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
2.3.1 cont	- Supporting Senior Secondary schools to create a system to track BGE data. - Analysis of the final stretch aims in June 2026. - Support UHI Orkney to implement tracking and monitoring and post-qualification reviews for Senior Phase courses			
2.3.2	- Audit schools' assessment calendars and working time agreements to ensure they include sufficient opportunities for in-school moderation of BGE attainment in literacy and numeracy. - Officers to continue to link with other LAs in moderating learning and developing approaches. - Provide training on analysis of data from standardised assessments - Support schools to make more effective use of assessment feedback eg SOFAs/SNAs	- Provide professional learning on moderation and approaches to assessment. - Create opportunities for cross school moderation through in-service days - Support schools to identify where learners are exceeding the national levels.	- Provide professional learning on moderation and approaches to assessment. - Create further opportunities for cross school moderation through in-service days - Continue to support schools to identify where learners are exceeding the national levels.	

2. 4 Curriculum Refresh				
Outcome:		Measures/KPI:		
2.4.1 To ensure that all schools plan and use the new curriculum framework for full implementation in session 2029/30		All schools will have curriculum development within their school improvement plans annually from 2026/27.		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
2.4.1	- Raising awareness of curriculum refresh – ongoing updates with Heads of Establishments. - Staff involvement in National groups – feedback from staff during Heads of Establishment meetings. - Nov/ May Face to face days with a focus on curriculum.	- Familiarise with the draft curriculum technical framework and changes to curriculum areas. - Face to face days with a focus on curriculum. - Inservice provision for teaching staff / practitioners - School improvement plans identify actions for implementation.	- Formal adoption of changes and embedding. - Face to face days with a focus on curriculum. - Inservice provision for teaching staff / practitioners. - School improvement plans identify further actions for implementation.	SM ELCC SM Primary SM Secondary QIO AA

3 Systems and Processes

3.1 Health Safety and Safeguarding				
Outcome: 3.1.1 Nurseries and Schools have robust health, safety and safeguarding measure in place in order to protect the welfare and wellbeing of the children and young people in their care		Measures/KPI: All schools and nurseries achieve compliance with respect to the relevant inspection framework		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
3.1.1	All staff undergo refreshed Child Protection Training	All staff undergo refreshed Child Protection Training	All staff undergo refreshed Child Protection Training	HoS SM Resources
	All nurseries and schools visit and review emergency procedures including (where applicable) evacuation, invacuation and lock-down	All nurseries and schools complete annual audit of Health, Safety and Safeguarding, introducing action steps as appropriate	All nurseries and schools complete annual audit of Health, Safety and Safeguarding, introducing action steps as appropriate	
	All nurseries and schools revisit and update emergency planning protocols Local authority officers review outcome of nursery and school audits and introduce action steps as appropriate			
	All staff (cohort 1) undertake PREVENT Awareness Training	All staff (cohort 2) undertake PREVENT Awareness Training	All staff (cohort 3) undertake PREVENT Awareness Training	
	Adverse Event Prevention, Early intervention and Reporting process is updated to achieve consistency and compliance with Councils Health and Safety policies			
	Staff complete Mandatory Training as appropriate	Staff complete Mandatory Training as appropriate	Staff complete Mandatory Training as appropriate	

3.2 Data Intelligence				
Outcome: 3.2.1 To ensure that robust systems and processes are established to gather, review and evaluate data. Ensure that the data is used to inform service self-evaluation and actions as part of the on-going practice of officers.		Measures/KPI: Population of range of data sets from different sources as identified in the KPIs within this service plan.		
3.2.2 Develop a more robust but different digital solution to tracking and monitoring attainment in BGE		New system in place Reduced officer time spent repairing complex spreadsheets Effective system in place – feedback from schools		
3.2.3 Outcome for OIC to have a digital strategy.		Policy and Strategy.		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
3.2.1	Revisit KPIs and ensure that the data being gathered meets identified targeted areas with officers clearly identified in relation to the collation and sharing of this data. Revisit Service Manager meeting structure and ensure that data forms a key part of the regular meetings for discussion and action by officers. Service Managers and Head Teachers become aware of the Islands Data Index through planned meeting with the 3 islands group leads in term 3.	Continue to revisit KPIs and ensure that the data being gathered meets identified targeted areas with officers clearly identified in relation to the collation and sharing of this data. Continue to review SM structure to ensure it delivers continued focus for appropriate improvement and action. HTs arrange 3 collegiate sessions with colleagues in other islands groups with a similar profile to share developments.	Ongoing review of data sources and impact.	All
3.2.2	Explore options away from spreadsheet with colleagues from the improvement service Review and trial some options with schools, getting feedback on development	New tracking system in place in primary schools Ongoing evaluation of new system Make any necessary changes Develop similar approach for secondary S1-3 BGE	Full implementation of new system in primary. New tracking system in place in S1-3 BGE Ongoing evaluation of new S1-3 system Make any necessary changes for implementation in 2028/29	SM (P and S)

	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
3.2.3	Audit current digital structures with a view to creating a digital strategy.	Develop digital strategy including pilot strategies.	Evaluate pilot and begin to implement strategy.	HoS (E) HoS (P&BS) HoS (P&AM)

3.3 Policy Refresh and Development				
Outcome: 3.3.1 Ensure that there are robust policies in place within a regular programme of review and refresh.		Measures/KPI: 3.3.1 Log of policies		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
3.3.1	Portal for agreed OIC policies to be established for access to public and quick links for staff. (July 2026) Ensure all staff are familiar with the portal and have access. Policies to be reviewed, involvement of Service Managers and Heads of Establishment: • Promoting Positive Relationships, Learning and Behaviour • Included, Engaged and Involved; Promoting Inclusion and Reducing Exclusions • Attendance • Mobile Phones in Schools • Raising Attainment Strategy Ensure suite of guidance documents are accessible to all staff. Identification of next policy and guidance documents required along with those that require review and establish a calendar of policy review and refresh.	Learning Teaching and Assessment policy to be reviewed and updated Ongoing review and refresh of policies and guidance documents. Ensure that communication strategies with all policies is in place and applied within all educational establishments.	Ongoing review and refresh of policies and guidance documents. Ensure that communication strategies with all policies is in place and applied within all educational establishments.	All

3.4 Systemic Supervision				
Outcome: 3.4.1 Implement systemic supervision in nursery settings and some primary settings (Supervision is a requirement of the Care Inspectorate)		Measures/KPI: 3.4.1 Staff participation in regular supervision (individual or group) in nursery settings		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
3.4.1	Input and training to - a cohort of ELC managers and - a cohort of head teachers Establish understanding of systemic supervision, and approaches to supervision. Develop the practice of systemic group supervision approaches in the early years team	Evaluate effectiveness of roll out and adjust delivery. Extend roll out to cohort 3	Extend roll out to cohort 4	SM (ELC)

3.5 Quality Improvement				
Outcome: 3.5.1 Local authority quality framework will underpin all self-evaluation activity.		Measures/KPI: 3.5.1 Quality Assurance Calendar Programme of activities		
3.5.2 All ELC establishments will implement a new ELC Quality Improvement Framework. All schools will be aware and implement any changes in the HMIE Self Evaluation framework.		3.5.2. Evidence within Improvement plans and Standard and Quality reports.		
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	Lead
3.5.1	Refresh annual quality assurance calendar in light of Heads of Establishment feedback (Aug 2025) Diarised Service Manager meetings to support self-evaluation and intelligence gathering. Continuing professional development offer to Heads of Establishment – School Improvement through Self-evaluation. (Sep 25 – May 26) Explore further use of the Northern Alliance self-evaluation toolkit to support schools in self-evaluation Continue to develop self-evaluation with national quad families with Service Managers.	Continuing professional development offer to Heads of Establishment – School Improvement through Self-evaluation. Use of the Northern Alliance self-evaluation toolkit to support schools in self-evaluation Continue to develop self-evaluation with national quad families with Service Managers.		HoS SMS QIO AA
3.5.2	Become familiar and embed new ELC Quality Improvement Framework. Engage with HMIE Schools re new framework.	Implement fully ELC framework. Engage with HMIE and ensure schools aware/become familiar with any new self evaluation framework.		All

Appendix 1: Risk Register

Risk Title: Financial Pressures.

Likelihood.	5	Impact.	4.	RAG.	Amber.	Current Risk Score.	20	Target Risk Score.	16.
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Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
Level of funding for the service is insufficient to maintain a minimum safe standard of provision. Inflation and pay settlements, combined with a standstill budget and/or budget reduction further reduces the capacity to maintain a safe standard of provision. Impact of Council's strategic financial plan exacerbates the vulnerability.	Reduced resource base	Lower quality of service as assessed by inspectors and regulators. Reduction in resilience of the service. Reduction in service offer. Disinvestment in professional learning offer for staff teams. Service failure with respect to progress, achievement and attainment of learners. Reputational harm. Loss of community asset with associated negative economic impact. Increase in complaints and/or levels of parent/carers dissatisfaction. Increase in difficulty with recruitment and retention.	Ensure 'fair' distribution of available funding to mitigate differential impacts across the service. Increase budget management and scrutiny to identify both significant and marginal efficiencies. Manage ad-hoc grants to minimise unplanned commitments 'in kind'. Manage vacancies (and other opportunities) to optimise in-year savings. Explore and exploit opportunities for sharing costs and/or community funding.

Risk Title: Recruitment Challenges.

Likelihood.	5.	Impact.	4.	RAG.	Amber.	Current Risk Score.	20.	Target Risk Score.	9.
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Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
Recruitment and retention failures result in un-filled posts. Vacancies remain unfilled for an extended period. Limited access to appropriately qualified workforce hampers recruitment, including the availability of supply and temporary staff. Turnover rate rises to unsupportable levels.	Posts remain unfilled, supply and cover staff unavailable.	Reduction in service offer, including not offering undersubscribed courses. Inability to meet the Safe Staffing Standard. Capacity to deliver specific curriculum subjects compromised. Service failure with respect to progress, achievement, and attainment of learners. Lower quality of service as assessed by inspectors and regulators. Increase in workload and pressure on existing teams. Reduction in staff morale. Increase in staff sickness absence levels. Unmanageable pressure on supply/cover staff budget.	Support access routes (initial training, career change programmes) Provide support to unqualified staff to gain relevant qualifications. Support 'grow your own' approaches to developing managers and for workforce planning. Use recruitment processes to ensure applicants are aware of opportunities and (if unsuccessful) are open to continue to seek employment with the Council. Where possible, use recruitment processes to give access to multiple forms of employment eg job families. Continue to use appropriate alternatives including the use of agency staff.

Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
		Increase in the recruitment challenge.	

Risk Title: Unmet Additional Support Needs.

Likelihood.	5	Impact.	4.	RAG.	Amber.	Current Risk Score.	20.	Target Risk Score.	16.
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Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
Demand for service is outwith capacity to deliver. Impact of available additional support is limited as it is shared across too many needs.	Increased demand for additional support combined with an increase in the indicators of unmet need.	Appropriate additional support (approaches to learning and teaching, support from personnel, and provision of resources) to meet the needs of learners is not available. Service fails to meet statutory duties. Inability to meet the Safe Staffing Standard. Level of dissatisfaction increases. Number of complaints increases; increased possibility formal resolution at Tribunal is required Resources diverted to manage complaints and if necessary, legal challenge, which exacerbates the vulnerability.	Improve and increase efficient and effective use of available resources. Improve and increase staff confidence and capability. Explore and exploit opportunities for collaborative work within and across service and agencies to deliver preventative and early intervention service models. Explore and exploit budget and funding options to increase sufficiency and capacity. Align with Additional Support for Learning review and Staged Intervention outcomes to refresh and create robust Additional Support Needs systems and process within national guidance. Engage, develop professional practice, and upskill staff based on the revised systems and structures.

Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
		Increase in difficulty with recruitment and retention. Reduction in staff morale. Increase in staff sickness absence levels.	Review data and recording to ensure alignment with reporting and develop the Orkney Inclusive school's programme. Invest in learning estate to deliver the Inclusive Schools Programme. Provide clear guidance and information for service users on revised systems and allocation of need.

Risk Title: 04 – Education IT Systems Capability.

Likelihood.	4.	Impact.	4.	RAG.	Amber.	Current Risk Score.	16.	Target Risk Score.	12.
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Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
IT systems insufficiently developed to meet contemporary needs within the education and learning service. Manual systems required to be developed or maintained, resulting in unnecessary/inappropriate use of resources.	Education management information systems (including SEEMiS) fail to support the Service appropriately.	Inability to achieve an acceptable level of efficiency (as might be achievable in organisations with more appropriate IT systems). Needs of children/young people, staff, parents/carers are not efficiently met. Service ability to provide external bodies with the information they require is impaired. Manual/alternative approaches are costly (diverting resources and time away for core activity) and potentially less 'safe'.	Establish a systems review and forward plan. With colleagues across the Council, explore the possibility of taking a project development approach to improvement.

Risk Title: 05 – Expansion of Childcare Provision/Provision of Non-statutory Provision.

Likelihood.	4	Impact.	3	RAG.	Amber	Current Risk Score.	12	Target Risk Score.	10
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Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
Leadership capacity.	Failure to recruit high quality candidates.	Lack of leadership in settings.	Support managers through the leadership pathway and create opportunities for aspiring leaders to develop leadership capacity within the workforce.
Insufficient number of high quality and / or qualified practitioners.	Failure to recruit high quality candidates.	Vacant posts and repeated recruitment. Impact on quality and outcomes for children. Failure to meet National Standard.	Support practitioners to gain BA in Childhood Practice. Implementation of head teacher training to support development of pedagogical leadership capacity. Work with the Orkney College UHI and the Scottish Government ELC Improvement team to plan alternative pathways. Work with Orkney College UHI to review the availability and quality of courses on offer.
Insufficient budget to meet emerging demands of Scottish Government.	New legislation/policy insufficiently funded for the local context (e.g. discretionary deferrals, nursery milk and snack).	Budget overspend.	Lobby Scottish Government so that they take account of the unique island challenges relating to new policies. Ensure Orkney attendance at national meetings / forums to ensure the remote and rural voice is heard.

Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
			Ensure Elected Members and the Corporate Leadership Team are well briefed prior to national meetings.
Financial model for 0-3 service becomes unviable.	Inability to appoint adequate numbers of practitioners to ensure maximum ratio and maximum income.	Greater than acceptable losses. Service failure in workplaces due to lack of childcare available.	Review and revise parental service contract with consideration for advance payments. Carefully monitor occupancy, staff ratios and fee payment to ensure the setting is running as efficiently as possible.

Appendix 2: Glossary

Annual Trajectory	Annual Trajectory	A measure of incremental change with respect to longer term targets set within the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) programme.
BGE	Broad General Education	The phase of learning which lasts from when a child begins early learning and childcare through to the end of S3 in secondary school.
CES	Career Education Standards	The Career Education Standard recognises the journeys that children and young people make as they progress from age 3-18. It focuses on preparing children and young people (3-18) for the world of work.
CI	Care Inspectorate	The national regulator for care services in Scotland, this includes Early learning and Childcare and School Care Accommodation.
CBT	Cognitive Behaviour Therapy	Cognitive behavioural therapy is a type of talking therapy. It teaches coping skills for dealing with different problems. It focuses on how thoughts, beliefs and attitudes affect feelings and actions.
CECYP	Care Experienced Children and Young People	Anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked-after.
Child's Plan	Child's Plan	A personalised plan developed when those working with the child or young person and family identify that a child or young person needs a range of extra support planned, delivered and co-ordinated.
CIQF	Care Inspectorate Quality Framework	Used by the Care Inspectorate to provide independent assurance about the quality of care and support. The framework also supports services to self-evaluate their own performance.
CLD	Community Learning and Development	CLD is a field of professional practice that enables people to identify their own individual and collective goals, to engage in learning and take action to bring about change for themselves and their communities.
CLDE	Community Learning, Development and Employability	CLDE is the team within the Education Leisure and Housing Directorate that support CLD (see above) as well as employability (person-centred support for people who want help to find work and stay in work).

CSP	Coordinated Support Plan	An action plan used for some pupils who need significant additional support with their education; a CSP sets broad and long-term goals for a pupil.
DSM	Devolved School Management	The local authorities' financial processes for funding schools, including how financial decisions are delegated to schools, and the accountability and responsibility for financial decisions.
Education Scotland	Education Scotland	Education Scotland is the national body for supporting quality and improvement of learning and teaching in Scottish education.
ELC	Early Learning and Childcare	The (nursery and childminder) provision available to all three- and four-year-olds as well as eligible two-year-olds.
ERD	Employee Review and Development	The Employee Review and Development approach has been updated and replaced by the Good Conversations Process. This provides for ongoing opportunities to reflect on role, practice and learning through regular conversations supported by an annual review meeting.
FME	Free School Meal Entitlement	All children in primary 1 to 5, attending school, can get free school meals during term-time. For children in P6 and older, entitlement is linked to the benefits the family receive.
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland	The teaching profession's independent registration and regulation body.
HGIOS	How Good is Our School	The national framework that underpins effective self-evaluation in schools. How Good is Our School is also used by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education to evaluate schools.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator	A quantifiable measure of performance over time for a specific objective. KPIs can provide targets, milestones to gauge progress, and insights that support better decision making.
LEIP	Learning Estate Investment Programme	The Scottish Government's programme to see more schools that are low emission, digitally enabled and better connected to their local communities.
LA	Local Authority	The (local) provider of public services, including education, social care, waste management, libraries and planning. Funded by the Scottish Government, there are 32 local authorities (Councils) in Scotland. The local authority in Orkney is also the Harbour Authority.
LGBT LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender	The LGBT Charter is a straightforward programme that enables organisations to proactively include LGBTQ+ people in every aspect of their work.

	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and more	
OHAC	Orkney Health and Care	Orkney Health and Care is a partnership between Orkney Islands Council and NHS Orkney.
PEEP	PEEP	The name adopted by the Peeple (charity) for their programmes.
PEF	Pupil Equity Fund	Additional funding allocated by the Scottish Government directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
PRD	Professional Review and Development	Professional Review and Development (PRD) is an essential part of Professional Update (PU) and professional learning. PRD provides teachers with ongoing opportunities to reflect on their practice and personal learning through professional learning conversations supported by an annual review meeting.
The Promise	The Promise	The national commitment to supporting care experienced children and young people.
PSE	Personal and Social Education	With a focus on the curriculum for personal and social education in schools this may also include pastoral care and guidance, as well as school counselling services.
QAMSO	Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer	Locally based staff participating in wider area and national programmes to support quality assurance and moderation.
QIO	Quality Improvement Officer	A role in the Scottish education system. QIOs are responsible for supporting school improvement, developing strategies to improve performance, monitoring progress, and helping to ensure that national and local educational priorities are being met in schools.
QIM	Quality Improvement Manager	A Quality Improvement Manager is responsible for ensuring and improving the quality of education services within a local authority, locally, this role is designated as a Service Manager.
SAC	Scottish Attainment Challenge	A systematic approach to achieve equity in educational outcomes, with a particular focus on significantly reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy	Treatment, support and care for children who have difficulties with communication, or with eating, drinking and swallowing.
SEEMiS	SEEMiS	The nationally used information management system for schools.
SEF	Strategic Equity Fund	Funding shared by all 32 local authorities to invest in approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (see above).

SERTS	Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support	An evidence-based framework designed to support children with social-emotional development. It provides a structured approach to understanding a child's strengths and needs in key areas, using collaboration between families and professionals to set goals and implement support strategies that foster social motivation and emotional regulation.
Senior Phase	Senior Phase	The senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence lasts from S4 to S6 (from around ages 15 to 18). It follows a young person's broad general education.
SfLA	Support for Learning Assistant	Key group of staff deployed across schools to work alongside teachers and support children and young people with additional support needs.
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation	The measure looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority	The national accreditation and awarding body for Scotland.
Stretch Aim	Stretch Aim	An ambitious and challenging target that exceeds current abilities and resources.
SWIP	Service Wide Improvement Planning	SWIP describes the meeting of education managers (service managers, nursery managers and head teachers) that takes place each term to review overall progress and development stemming from the service improvement plan.
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children.
QA	Quality Assurance	Quality assurance involves the systematic review of educational provision to maintain and improve its quality, equity and efficiency.
QI	Quality Indicator	Used by early learning and childcare settings, schools, Local Authorities and HM inspectors to consider what is going well and what needs to be improved.
SAC	Scottish Attainment Challenge	The Scottish Attainment Challenge is about achieving equity in educational outcomes, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.



Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a proposal or changes by anticipating the consequences and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

Should you have any questions or wish for your draft EqIA to be reviewed by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, please contact OD@orkney.gov.uk.

1. Identification of the Proposal or Change

Name of proposal or change being assessed.	National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan.
Responsible Service and Directorate.	Education, Communities and Housing: Education and Improvement/Leisure, Lifelong Learning and Inclusion.
Date of assessment.	1-10-2025
Is the proposal or change existing? (Please indicate if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	This is an existing plan, which is reviewed and updated annually.

2. Primary Information

What are the intended outcomes of the proposal or change?	
Is the proposal or change strategically important?	Yes
State who is or may be affected by this proposal or change, and how?	

How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this proposal or change?	Head Teachers have been significantly involved in the delivery of the plan to date. Parents (via Parent Council Chairs) have been involved Pupils (via a pupil survey tool) have been involved
Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking.	Scotland's attainment gap is the significant disparity in academic achievement between students from the most affluent and least affluent areas. Most recently, data would suggest in primary education, the attainment gap in literacy has narrowed slightly and is lower than pre-COVID-19 levels. However, figures from 2023/24 exam diet show an increase in the attainment gap for National 5s and Highers
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	The National Improvement Framework sets out to deliver excellence and equity for all children. The current priorities include: • 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. Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan proposes improvement priorities which include inclusion and wellbeing, learning and achievement and systems and processes.
Could the proposal or change have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons:

1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	Yes. The plan includes a focus on staged intervention, health and wellbeing and embedding the UN convention of the rights of children which support a basis of inclusion and valuing difference and will therefore have a positive impact for all.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	Yes. The plan contains outcomes that seek to promote greater inclusion for all children and young people and therefore will have a positive impact on potential gender gaps.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	Yes. The plan includes a focus on staged intervention and health and wellbeing, with specific actions relating to planned LGBTI+ training and awareness.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	Yes. The plan includes a focus on staged intervention, health and wellbeing and embedding the UN convention of the rights of children which support a basis of inclusion and valuing difference and will therefore have a positive impact for all.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	No.
6. Age: people of different ages.	Yes. By its nature, the plan aims to deliver outcomes that will have positive impacts for children and young people.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	Yes. The plan includes a focus on staged intervention, health and wellbeing and embedding the UN convention of the rights of children which support a basis of inclusion and valuing difference and will therefore have a positive impact for all.
8. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	Yes – positive. The plan seeks to address inequalities for children and young people with disabilities through a variety of actions such as improving the additional support for learning provision. Also, the plan aims to improve the preparedness of young people entering the workplace through a more personal progression plan which will likely positively impact future employment outcomes for young people with disabilities.
9. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	No.

10. Caring responsibilities	Yes. The plan includes a focus on staged intervention, health and wellbeing and embedding the UN convention of the rights of children which support a basis of inclusion and valuing difference and will therefore have a positive impact for all.
11. Socio-economic disadvantage.	Yes - positive. Specific actions are identified to address and measure the attainment gap versus deprivation, and this gap is the key driver for the Scottish Attainment Challenge. There will therefore likely be a positive impact for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
12. Care experienced	Yes – the Promise sets out closing the attainment gap between Care experienced children / young people and their peers disadvantaged. This plan therefore seeks to address inequalities in this area and will likely have a positive impact.

3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No.
Does the analysis above identify any potential negative impacts?	N/A.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

4. Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please complete the following action plan where you have identified any differential impacts or potential negative impacts in Section 3 of the Equality Impact Assessment.

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed
No.	Outcomes from the plan that are linked to the Equality Outcomes will be reported annually.	Head of Service (Education)	By Service Managers and Officers through regular/annual reporting as per the Improvement Plan requirements and	If council agrees the plan from November onwards.

			linked to the Equality Outcome reporting where applicable.	

5. Sign and Date	
Signature:	
Name:	Peter Diamond
Date:	1-10-2025