ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Item: 1

Education, Communities and Housing Committee: 11 November 2026.

Annual Education Review and Three-Year Strategic Plan.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

1.1. This report presents the Annual Education Review and Three-Year Plan, linked to the National Improvement Framework, for approval.

1.2. An annual review and plan for Orkney have been approved and submitted to the Scottish Government for each year it has been required since 2016.

1.3. In August 2025, the education service began the implementation of a Three-year Strategic Plan which must align with the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan. The Annual Education Review and Three-Year Strategic Plan 2025-2028, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, covers the first phase of the three-year plan. Review of the first year of the plan has led to further adjustment of the 3-year plan.

1.4. The latest Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education was published on 13 December 2025. 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.

1.5. The 2025 update of the National Improvement Framework details actions to be taken to deliver the outcomes set out in the framework, along with the measures to be used to evidence progress.

1.6. 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.

2. Recommendations

2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:

i. Approve the Annual Education Review and Three-Year Plan 2025-2028, linked to the National Improvement Framework, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, for submission to the Scottish Government.

For Further Information please contact:
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Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** None directly relating to the recommendations in this report. Any additional costs associated with this plan will need to be met within existing resources.
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:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken 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

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

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Annual Education Review and Three-Year Plan 2025-2028, linked to the National Improvement Framework.
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment.

Appendix 1

Equity and Excellence in Education



Orkney Islands Council Education Review (2025-2026)
&
Three-Year Strategic Plan (2025-2028) Linked to the National Improvement Framework 2026

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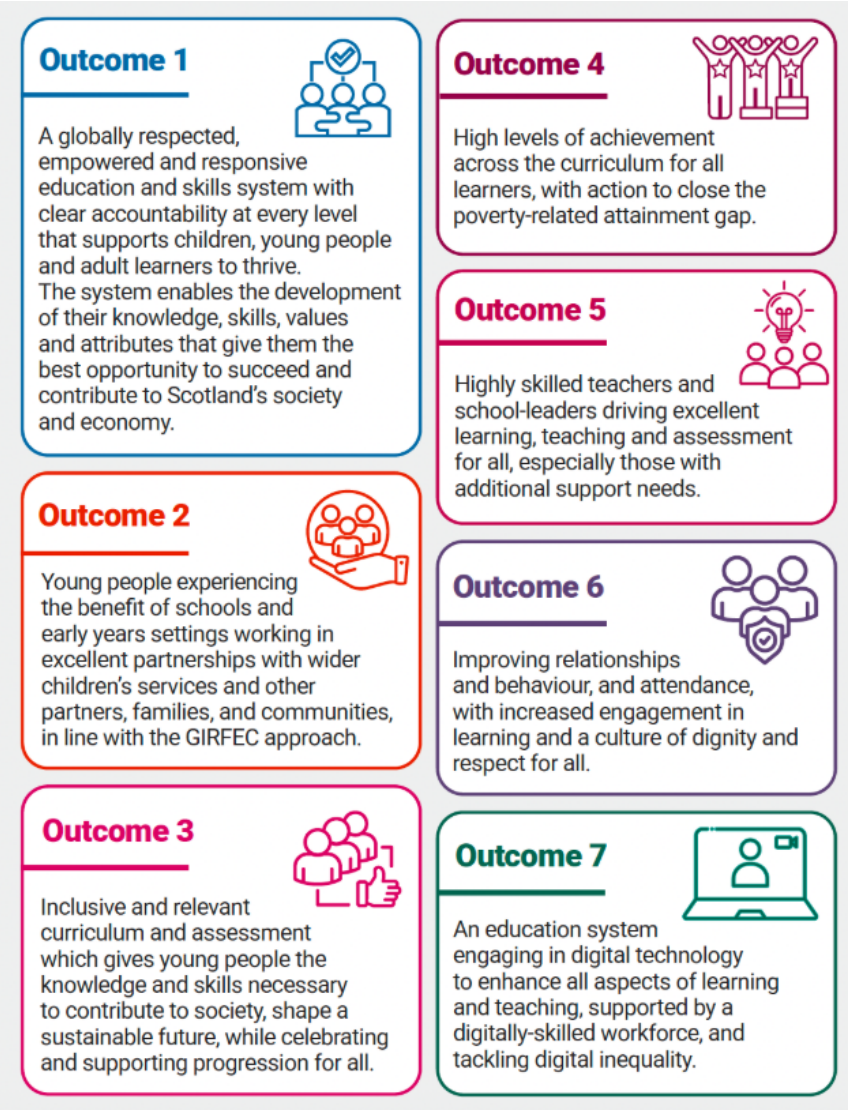
Introduction

This report provides a review of progress towards meeting the outcomes of Year 1 2025-2026 of the 3-Year Strategic Plan. (2025-2028).

Following evaluation of the progress of Year 1 subsequent year's actions have been updated and amended.

Data is extensively used to understand the impact of the work and to evaluate progress made. Key data sources are the school's attainment and attendance data. HMIE Schools Inspections and Care Inspectorate reports. Local Authority quality assurance team visits and individual officer visits to learning establishments.

This report is aligned with the National Improvement Framework (NIF) 2026. It considers the priorities and drivers as illustrated below.



National Improvement Framework Priorities 2026

Vision

Equity and Excellence is central to the plan to improve the outcomes of all our learners.

The service plan is aligned to the Orkney Island Council, particularly focussing on strengthening our communities.



Looking Forward: Overview of Themes for 2025-2028

The themes for 2025-2028 remain unchanged from the last plan. The focus of development remains high-quality Learning and Teaching. Impactful professional learning opportunities have been planned to strengthen this area. High-quality learning and teaching experiences will have a positive impact on all other identified areas of the plan particularly inclusion and wellbeing.

The new programme for the Scottish government has several new policies which will require enhanced focus. The plan reflects this. Two of these key policy areas are the national review of curriculum and the further reduction of class contact time for teachers.

The national review of curriculum and Curriculum Improvement Cycle will require all schools to understand and enact a new curriculum model. This will be achieved through a programme of phased implementation between January 2027 and August 2028.

The reduction in class contact time requires to be in place for August 2026 for Primary teachers and by August 2029 for Secondary teachers. Currently Primary and Secondary teachers in Scotland should have no more than 22.5 hours per week class contact time. Teachers currently receive 7.5 hours per week of non-class contact time to use for preparation and correction. Scottish Government has made a commitment to reduce class contact time by a further 90 minutes. The implementation of this programme will require significant consideration, planning and resourcing.

At the same time, continued increases in the complexity of learners' needs must be carefully tailored to ensure equity of access. The plan includes several actions to support staff including professional development opportunities to ensure improved inclusion within classes.

This programme of work is all being undertaken where the fiscal context remains challenging.

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 Improvement Cycle	✓	✓	✓
Systems and Processes	**Health, Safety and Safeguarding**	✓	✓	✓
	Data Intelligence	✓	✓	✓
	Policy Refresh and Development	✓	✓	✓
	Systemic Supervision	✓		
	Quality Improvement Framework (New)	✓	✓	✓

Looking back a review of 2025/2026

1 Inclusion and Wellbeing

1.1 Inclusion	
Outcome: 1.1.1 Children's needs are effectively and robustly tracked and monitored to ensure that the outcomes for identified children and young people are appropriate and lead to improvement.	Measures: 1.1.1 Attainment levels of identified children and young people e.g. 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.
1.1.3 MOVED TO 1.2 to report 1.1.3 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)	**Evaluation**	**Lead**
1.1.1	• Ensure all senior leaders are familiar with current child's plan process and guidance. • Briefing for Heads of Establishment in Jan 2026.	• A framework for the Child Planning has been reviewed and created by the Principal Educational Psychologist in consultation with education officers, school, early years managers leaders' and the wider multi-agency team including NHS, OHAC and voluntary sector agencies. Professional Guidance and roll out is expected in September 2026. Several briefing sessions have been held to inform and allow discussion on the child plan process. Further sessions to be planned for 2026-2027.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	• Co-ordinated Support Plan awareness briefing session in Jan 2026 for Heads of Establishment.	• 02/12/2025 Govan Law Centre held online Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) training and awareness-raising session. This session was well attended by heads of establishment colleagues and central officers. • 11/03/2026 The Scottish Law Child Law Centre through the Knowledge Exchange Group help bespoke training for Orkney staff. 16 staff attended including the Head of Education, Service Managers, Principal Solicitor, Principal Educational Psychologist, Head Teachers, Depute Head Teachers, Principal Teachers and the OIC solicitor. Delegates received a	

		certificate for attending the training. The feedback comments from the attendees confirmed that the trainer was very well informed. The pace of delivery was good, with real examples of benefit to the course. The course was planned for a group of mixed awareness and with inclusive engagement and range of pertinent information. One suggestion was for a cofacilitator to provide balance from an educational perspective. The satisfaction rating for the CSP session content was 4.7 out of 5, with the trainer was 4.6 out of five, with all delegates of the opinion that the outcome of the course would benefit them in practice. • The outcome of these training events is that staff have a deeper knowledge and awareness of the legal and policy framework for initiating and creating Coordinated Support Plans and the assessment process and time frames associated with this. The number of children considered and meeting the threshold for a CSP has increased since Jan 2026. • Next steps will be to support schools to take ownership for the creation of Co-ordinated support plans through training and guidance led by the Educational Psychology team.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	• Working party to finalise updated OIC Staged intervention Guidance by end Jan 2026. To be shared with Heads of Establishment during Face-to-Face day on 25 Feb 2026. • 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. • Support for Learning Strategy to ECH Committee. (Nov 2025). • Implement SFL Strategy.	• During session 2025 – 2026 a working party was formed with headteachers, support for learning teachers and central officers, to review and develop the Staged Intervention Guidance. All Heads of Establishment were involved in developing the model alongside the working group through a series of workshops and Headteacher face to face days. • Staged Intervention guidance has been refreshed and will be piloted from September 2026. • Data collection remains inconsistent across establishments. Further work to ensure robust data to be a key focus in 2026/2027 • An Additional Support for Learning Review took place with the involvement of colleagues from ADES (Association of Directors of Education Scotland) Jan – June. The findings will inform the ASN strategy moving forward.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion

		• Strategy has not been created, further work to review ASN is required in session 2026/2027.	
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.	• This work is underway, with practitioners from the early years team and the support for learning and inclusion team collaborating on the development of the materials. Due to staffing constraints, which has included shortages of staffing and the need for the team to be deployed to support establishments, delivery has not yet happened and will begin in the 2026-7 academic year.	Service Manager Early Learning and Childcare
1.1.3	Inclusive Schools • Developing Inclusive Schools - Inservice Day(s) Oct 2025. Including, Suicide Prevention – SOS App delivered to school staff (Oct in-service).	• In October 2025 two days inclusive school's in-service training took place in KGS and online for OIC teachers and support staff. The in-service days included keynote presentations from Education Scotland on Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equity, Police Scotland on Child Sexual Exploitation, OIC, SOS suicide prevention app, Child Protection & Safeguarding. Tie also ran a workshop for staff to introduce their materials and resources. This has ensured all staff have been provided with appropriate Child Protection Training. As a result, staff report increased levels of confidence. Awareness of the SOS app had increased.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	• All schools to become familiar with UNCRC (Education Scotland self-evaluation toolkit) and ensure statutory requirements in place.	• Schools were invited to complete the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) audit of implementation using the improvement service framework (a national framework designed to support services to audit their practice and action plan for future implementation work). Returned framework audits were collated and contributed to the Children's Service Plan including 10 Primary, 2 Junior High and 1 Secondary School. This work was compiled and will form part of the Children's Services Strategic Plan. • The UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award puts children's rights at the heart of school life in the UK and aligns directly with the UNCRC. The UNICEF Rights Respecting awards embed these values in daily school life and give children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens. The Award recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond. Initially this award	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion

		was paid for by the Scottish Government, schools now must pay the costs for the award. Some schools have opted out of the certificated recognition framework. However, all schools continue to engage with the UNCRC and ensure that work continues to progress to promote and help enact the rights. • In Orkney, the official baseline data records 16 schools that are eligible to enrol in the program. (UNICEF counts schools slightly differently particularly linked schools and junior high schools). Out of those 16 schools, 76% are actively enrolled or engaged with the program. This means that 12 schools across the Orkney Islands have actively registered, achieved an initial milestone, or are progressing through the accreditation tiers. • Of the 16 schools, the 76% engagement rate represents excellent coverage across the islands. Enrolment remains stable as individual schools transition from the older fully funded national model to independent localised planning. • A full review and evaluation of schools engaged in the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) includes multiple schools actively progressing through the framework, with several successfully holding active bronze and silver accreditations including: • **Shapinsay Community School** formally achieved its silver accreditation. The school's Pupil Council created a comprehensive action plan to map school values and local fundraising directly to children's rights. They even expanded advocacy globally by writing to local politicians about environmental protections. • **Orphir Primary** formally achieved silver status. The school established a pupil-led rights steering group that meets regularly to manage child rights activities and community awareness campaigns • **Glaitness Primary School** achieved its Bronze Award and has explicitly embedded the initiative into its School Improvement Plans to further expand student rights awareness. • **Kirkwall Grammar School** registered and achieved the bronze milestone, committing its secondary education framework to child-centred values.	

	• Begin review of roles and remits of Support for Learning and Inclusion team. • 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.	• The central Support for Learning and Inclusion team undertook a review of roles and workstreams in 2026 and this was documented in the School Improvement Plan in June. The plan outlines progress, actions and areas of priority for 2026-2027. • This includes a review of pupils, staged intervention and attendance levels and levels of associated early intervention and engagement work. In turn, this will lead towards targeted support for individual pupils and schools in the coming school year.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	• Most schools and settings to achieve 'The Promise' award by July 2026.	**The Promise Award** • 41% of settings have achieved The Promise award, 10 setting have completed, 2 are nearing completion and 12 are being supported to begin the Promise Award. This work is facilitated by a member of the central education team who monitors and tracks progress, reports to the promise board throughout the year. • The Promise subgroup of the Children's Service Strategic Group is led by the Head of Social Work and the reporting for this is in progress. A review of progress is scheduled for 2026-27.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion

1.2 Relationships, Attendance and Transitions	
Outcome: 1.2.1 Overall attendance levels in Orkney reach at least 95% in Primary and 93% in Secondary. Moved from 1.1.3 as sits better within this outcome. 1.1.3 Improved attendance levels for identified cohorts, reduced numbers of part-time timetables, reduction in exclusions	Measures: 1.2.1 Fortnightly attendance data. 1.1.3 Attendance levels, numbers of pupils on part timetables, rates of exclusions.
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)	Evaluation	Lead
1.2.1	• Create Operational Guidance for SEEMiS codes for schools. • Refresh OIC Attendance policy. • Create OIC Attendance Strategy.	• Draft operational guidance for SEEMiS (National Information Management System) was created and is beginning to be used in schools. This has not yet had a significant impact on our attendance figures and further work is required to support the consistent use of this guidance throughout all our schools. This guidance also	

	• Face to face day – Focus Attendance and input from Education Scotland. • Communication to wider Orkney Community. • Monitor trends in attendance regularly. • Schools create own actions to improve attendance.	needs further review following feedback from schools before being finalised and will be included as an appendix to the updated attendance policy. • The draft attendance policy and strategy have been combined and is nearly ready for further consultation with parents and schools. Following this consultation, it will be ready for committee in November 2026. • Schools have individually reviewed their approaches to tracking and monitoring attendance, which has supported individual pupils to improve their attendance. Further work is needed. • Our stretch aim for overall attendance for primary and secondary schools was 95%. In June 2026, primary school attendance was 94.3% which was below the stretch aim by 0.7pp but was an improvement of 0.1pp on last year. Secondary school attendance was 88.6% which was below the stretch aim by 6.4pp and below last year's figure by 0.2pp. In moving ahead, different stretch aims will be set for the different sectors. • Further work across the wider Orkney community is required to ensure that parents are aware of the importance of attending school and its impact on outcomes for children and young people. Schools and local authority officers will continue to undertake regular analysis of the attendance data and review this both locally and in comparison, with national data.	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.	• The Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary) is supporting strategic planning for Kirkwall Grammar School (KGS) and Stromness Academy (SA) by bringing together cluster primary headteachers and cross-sector teaching staff to agree shared priorities and plan collaborative work. Initial discussions are focusing on relevant aspects of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, developing a shared understanding of standards and expectations across the Broad General Education, and strengthening curriculum planning and transition arrangements. This collaborative approach will help build greater consistency across sectors and support a more coherent learning experience for children and young people. Secondary teachers will meet at the February In-Service to re-establish their subject specific moderation and benchmarking work across the BGE and the senior phase. • A working group has been established to improve processes and develop a policy in relation to transition for S4 young people moving from the Junior High Schools to KGS. • A further working group will be established to develop a policy for the transition from P7 to S1 to ensure pupils are supported and information sharing is strengthened.	SM P&S

		Service Managers for Primary and Secondary are leading this work jointly to ensure full alignment across sectors.	

1.3 Poverty and Equity			
Outcome: 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.		**Measures:** 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)	**Evaluation**	**Lead**
1.3.1	• Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) continues to focus on attainment and equity. • Revise Raising Attainment Strategy and present to Education Communities and Leisure committee March 2026. • Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) Lead, QIO, Service Manager (secondary and tertiary) and Attainment Advisor continue to analyse and support Broad General Education (BGE) and Senior Phase attainment and attendance. • Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) co-ordinator to monitor and track CECYP attainment and attendance. • Seek funding for the continuance of the CECYP co-ordinator role.	• There was a vacancy in the Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) post from the beginning of November 2025 until the end of January 2026. This has impacted on the ability to complete actions as identified. • An updated Raising Attainment Strategy was created and presented to committee in March 2026, and this forms the key priorities for the work of the QIO. There remains a focus on raising attainment across the authority. Attainment meetings with secondary schools are more regular, resulting in better engagement from middle and senior leaders which is leading to more robust data. • The work of the Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) coordinator has been focused for much of the year in supporting young people who require through care and after care as part of the social work team. This has provided much needed support to young people during their transition from education in adulthood. It did limit what she was able to do in terms of working directly with schools during this time. In April 2026, the CECYP coordinator returned to work full time within the education service. She is now beginning to focus again on the tracking and monitoring of outcomes for CECYP and is beginning to provide support to identified individuals and families in schools.	Scottish Attainment Challenge lead – Service Manager Primary and Quality Improvement officer

	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Evaluation	Lead
1.3.2	• Establish baseline data of uptake of Free School Meals (FSM) and clothing grant. Analysis of data from 2024/2025 against 2023/2024 data.	• This action did not take place due to changes in staffing in this post.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
	• Publicise access to FSM and Clothing Grant over the year.	• The Quality Improvement Officer worked with the Orkney Islands Council Communications team and schools to ensure that regular publication of Free School Meals and Clothing grant occurred during the year. Update for FSM and Clothing grant increases during of the year.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
	• QIO attendance at the Cost-of-Living Taskforce.	• The QIO attended the Cost-of-Living Taskforce network meetings and presented updated, local information to Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRTs) related to cost of living, linking in 'The Cost of the School Day'. A survey of schools engaging with the Cost of the Day Toolkit will be sent to schools during session 2026/27.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
	• Seek external funding and implement Participation Fund and free school meals during school holidays.	• A successful application to the Scottish Government, Islands Cost of Living Crisis Fund, ensured funding for the 3rd year of schools having a Participation Fund (funding provided through the Scottish Government cost-of-Living Crisis Fund and given to each school to support families with financial challenge). In addition, a separate application to the fund ensured that those in receipt of Free School Meals had access to some financial support during holiday periods. • The participation fund is given directly to schools on a pro rata basis to enable them to mitigate the impact of poverty for families. Evaluation of the Participation fund demonstrated that a significant number of families had been supported in a variety of ways and it had allowed Headteachers to provide support that they normally would not be able to help with such as, taxi's to after school events, purchase of clothes and shoes and subsidising trips and expenses linked to school trips. Further evaluation will occur in school session 2026/2027.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor

		• Free Schools Meals support in the school holidays has been welcomed by families and can mean the difference to not requiring accessing the foodbank during this time. • Submission to the Islands Cost of Living Crisis fund for session 2026 /2027 has occurred. Holiday FSM provision money has been allocated. There will be no funding for participation funds this year.	
	• QIO to attend national Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) events – both online and in-person.	• In September 2026, the Director of Education, Communities and Housing and the Quality Improvement Officer (Attainment and Achievement) attended a national event reflecting on the last ten years of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and outlined what they believed should be considered for the future Scottish Attainment Challenge improvement agenda. • The QIO attended the face-to-face Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) Network meeting where members were given an opportunity to look back over the last 10 years of SAC. This reflection showed the journey Education Scotland has been on and highlighted the need to this to remain a priority. Raising attainment and narrowing the equity and poverty gap will Therefore, will remain part of this plan in the coming years. through equity planning and closely monitoring of the poverty related attainment gaps.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
	• Lead sharing and Networking event PEF and Participation – “Taking Action on Child Poverty in Orkney” – September 2025.	• 'Taking Action on Child Poverty in Orkney’ took place in September 2025. This event included all schools and a range of agencies and partners within the Third Sector. The event was well attended, and it was reported that it was seen as a good sharing opportunity between schools and wider services. Several new links between schools and agencies were created during that afternoon.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
	• Survey of schools’ engagement with Cost of the Day Toolkit.	• Did not occur. Previous QIO has attended parent council meetings when requested to support Parent Councils to become familiar with the cost of the school day toolkit.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland

			Attainment Advisor
	• 2026/2027 Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) plans to include professional learning linked to Poverty and Equity.	• PEF plans were submitted. They did not focus on professional learning linked to Poverty and Equity. The change of staffing impacted on the ability to deliver additional professional development.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
	• Trial and evaluate Bright Start Breakfast Provision in 5 schools.	• Bright Start Breakfasts is a Scottish Government funded initiative that provides financial support for breakfast clubs, helping children access a healthy start to the school day while supporting families with before-school childcare. The grant provides the full cost of the breakfasts including additional staff in the kitchen and has covered the cost of additional equipment such as freezers and toasters. The pilot was created with rural and remote islands which had over 25% pupils who are in receipt of FSM. 6 schools identify were (Stronsay Junior High School, Sanday Junior High School, Eday Community School, Rousay Community School, Papa Westray Community School, North Ronaldsay Community School). The terms of the grant funding required flexibility in deployment as it is not possible to run before school childcare in rural and remote locations due to the timing of transport and availability of staff. • All schools stated that the feedback from parents, pupils and staff are entirely positive. One school's feedback was "the provision for all has meant that there is no judgement and no need for parents to apply." Another school said that "the breakfast provision is so positive for the children and a great help to families." • 5 schools are in the funding application for next year (all bar North Ronaldsay). A further extension to other rural schools is expected over the course of session 2026/2027.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor

	• Publicise 2-year-old provision through a comms campaign.	• Individual settings highlighted the two-year-old provision to parents who might be eligible on islands. Further work will take place on the mainland during 2026-7 once the staffing shortages have stabilised	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor

2 Learning and Achievement

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">2.1 Communication, Language and Literacy</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">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%</td><td colspan="2">Measures/KPI:
2.1.1
• BGE toolkits and schools tracking data.
• Regular local tracking and analysis of data.
• Annual review of national attainment data.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">2.1.2 Develop the early years' profession's understanding and skills in relation to communication, language and literacy</td><td colspan="2">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.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Action Year 1 (25-26)</td><td>Evaluation</td><td>Lead</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.1.1</td><td>• 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.</td><td>• This was not actioned.
• Staffing changes both within Orkney Islands Council and within Education Scotland meant that this could not progress. This priority will not continue into subsequent years. In addition, due to the high attainment levels of our children it is not possible for Orkney to participate in the National Writing Programme. We will continue to request involvement should this be rerun again.</td><td>Service Manager Primary</td></tr>
</table>

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. • 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.	• The 4-day course was written and delivered; some sessions were rescheduled due to staff being required to support nurseries due to staffing shortages. • Practitioner evaluation showed that all 11 practitioners attending have a better understanding of early language and literacy development post training, including the physical development of writing and the development of phonological awareness. • All practitioners brought developments and changes back to each session of the course, including poetry they had written with young children and experiences that they had planned. • Changes have been observed in settings, for example, more intentional development of book corners. • The language and literacy guidance book is currently being updated but this piece of work is not complete. • The promotion of singing has been included in both the language and literacy course and the early years course. • Bookbug provided singing input for practitioners at the October Inservice Days, and practitioner evaluation indicated that most felt more confident about using songs in nursery. • Speech therapy was able to provide two sessions of input at the in-service, less than initially planned for due to staffing difficulties in their service. • The Communication Teacher provided support for practitioners to implement visual approaches in their settings. Most settings have begun implementing approaches in their settings.	Service Manager Early Learning and Childcare

2.2 High-Quality Learning and Teaching			
Outcome: 2.2.1 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 HT trios' observations Schools QA evidence CT Peer monitoring feedback HMIE inspection feedback	
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	**Evaluation**	**Lead**
2.2.1	Pace and Challenge • Revisit Learning Intentions and co-creation of Success Criteria. • Revisit effective questioning.		All Service Managers Quality Improvement Officer
2.2.2	Validated Self-Evaluation • Support HT Validated Self-evaluation. • Amend trio groups. • Provide structure and framework for visits. • Create feedback template – forms.	• As of June 2026, 75% (12 schools) primary schools are reporting that Quality Indicator, 2.3, Learning, Teaching and Assessment is good or better, with 12% (2 schools) reporting very good. This is showing an encouraging picture in the primary schools. • Within the secondary schools, Stromness Academy is reporting levels of "satisfactory" (as a result of continued and focused work post inspection). Kirkwall Grammar School is stating "satisfactory" for this Quality Indicator. Within the Junior High schools, Stronsay and Westray are reporting "satisfactory" and Sanday is reporting "good" in the self-evaluation section of the Standards and Quality Report. • In session 2024/25, Headteacher Trios were established to support schools moderate their evaluations of Quality Indicator 2.3; Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Headteachers visited each other's schools and carried out quality assurance visits. They were supported by materials developed by the central team. This session, Headteacher Trio groups were amended to factor in sector specific work that was due to take place this session. Clear structure was provided to the trio groups as were feedback forms. • Not all schools managed to complete their trios this session due to staffing and travel constraints. Schools remain committed to this process and have seen the value in working across schools.	

		• HTs have used this process to reflect on what they have seen, and this has helped build in confidence in their own professional judgement of the Quality Indicators within their own schools. • Next session, HTs will be invited to join local authority reviews rather than continuing with the trios in the same format. Some trios are opting to continue the process.	
2.2.3	Professional learning • Signpost resources to support schools with professional learning.	• All weekly staff bulletins provide links to upcoming professional learning, particularly from Education Scotland. The service to date has not established a central mechanism for reporting attendance at national courses, schools will hold this information. This is an area of development.	All Service Managers Quality Improvement Officer

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)	Evaluation	**Lead**
2.31	• ELC. Audit tracking data from 25-26 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	• Heads of establishment sessions and lead cluster settings have been used to explore tracking in the context of personal planning and planning to meet children's learning and care needs. Individual work has taken place in larger settings to review tracking approaches and the information captured. The largest settings are making better use of the process, understanding how they can use this data to inform planned learning. Several tracking conversations have been sampled in nursery settings. Discussions have been more focussed on learning and there is greater confidence in practitioner judgement and the information capture in tracking formats. Schools are more confident to identify children who are exceeding the level, but further work needs to be done in this area.	All

	and young people have exceeded a level.	• Officers have continued to support staff and senior leaders in schools with approaches to tracking and monitoring attainment. The numbers of children can make a difference to our overall data. • The primary attainment data is cohort specific and as such we are now seeing this reflected in the attainment returns. In Dec 2025, primary attainment across the board was within the top 9 local authorities and third in 13 organisers.	
	• Introduction of a BGE tracker in Junior High Schools. • Supporting Senior Secondary schools to create a system to track BGE data. • Analysis of the final stretch aims in June 2026.	• The (Broad General Education) BGE tracker for JHS was successfully implemented this session and this provided a seamless tracking tool for staff to monitor children's attainment from early through to 4th level. • The development of more effective tracking for BGE in the two senior secondary schools is still a work in progress. Regular meetings have been held with the two senior secondary schools with the Education Scotland Attainment Adviser and officers. A central system to track BGE is not yet in place.	All
	• Support UHI Orkney to implement tracking and monitoring and post-qualification reviews for Senior Phase courses	• The Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary) is working with IT and UHI Orkney to ensure that there is consistency of tracking and monitoring across the senior phase. This is at an early stage of development and as yet, it is too early to identify impact.	All
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.	• An audit of assessment calendars and WTAs did not take place due to staffing changes. Schools have begun to make connections to undertake moderation with other partner schools.	All
	• Officers to continue to link with other LAs in moderating learning and developing approaches.	• Every Service Manager and the QIO are in a national 'Quad' with 4 other Local Authorities. These Quads provide an opportunity to explore a range of issues and share practice out with the LA. It is too early, yet, to identify any impact.	All
	• Provide training on analysis of data from standardised assessments • Support schools to make more effective use of assessment feedback e.g. SOFAs/SNAs	• National Standardised Assessment Training was arranged for Orkney over the course of 2025/ 2026. Class teachers and school leaderships levels were a focus. These sessions were well attended. The staff were positive about how they could better use the assessment data from within the assessments more effectively. • This training will be repeated in 2026/27 and will also include training on the use of Insight data for secondary staff.	All

2. 4 Curriculum Improvement Cycle - Curriculum Refresh			
Outcome: 2.4.1 To ensure that all schools plan and use the new curriculum framework for full implementation in session 2029/30.		**Measures/KPI:** • All schools will have curriculum development within their school improvement plans annually from 2026/27.	
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Evaluation	**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.	• There has been a regular feature in Heads of Establishment meetings on the development of the curriculum. Staff from Education Scotland have presented timelines and updates of the development via Teams and senior staff have had the opportunity to ask questions. • Although some staff from Orkney have attended national curriculum improvement groups, it has not been possible to have information shared at that point. This will have to feature strongly in the next 2 years of the service plan and in school plans.	All

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 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)	Evaluation	**Lead**
3.1.1	All staff undergo refreshed Child Protection Training	• August 2025, all setting and school-based staff undertook a three-hour child protection training session either based in their own setting or school (KGS) or online via streaming to all the other schools. Headteachers followed up training with those staff that have not undertaken the training. • An enhanced multiagency programme of Child Protection is now in place staff have been attending the training to update their knowledge. Participant records show that Specific (training) ,11 attendees, General (training), 1 attendee, Intensive (Training – normally Senior Leaders in schools) ,6 attendees. • 2026-2027 Child Protection and Safeguarding school slide deck and OPPC Child Protection resource pack produced in collaboration with Orkney Public Protection Committee (OPPC) and Public Protection Learning and Development Officer for Inservice training in August 2026.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	All nurseries and schools visit and review emergency procedures including (where applicable) evacuation, invacuation and lock-down.	• Further support for training by nursery and schools and school staff is required to ensure that these actions are undertaken and the service meets compliance requirements.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	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.	• Establishments have reviewed their Business Continuity Plans and all updated plans will be complete by June 2027. 50% have already been submitted.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	All staff (cohort 1) undertake PREVENT Awareness Training.	• Almost all staff in Stronsay, Westray, St Andrews and Stromness Academy have completed online Prevent Duty training. • Training programme planned for Aug 2027	Service Manager Support for

			Learning and Inclusion
	Adverse Event Prevention, Early intervention and Reporting process is updated to achieve consistency and compliance with Councils Health and Safety policies.	• New Adverse Event process is due to be introduced Session 2026/2027	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
	Staff complete Mandatory Training as appropriate.	• Service Managers and nursery or school leaders continue to monitor levels of mandatory training and act as required.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
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	
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	Evaluation	**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.	• A variety of KPIS are gathered by officers. Robust analysis of the data is required. A system to centrally gather data needs to be enacted and monthly data analysis to occur.	All
	Revisit Service Manager meeting structure and ensure that data forms a key part of the regular meetings for discussion and action by officers.	• Service Manager meeting structure has been reviewed, and a new structure is being introduced from August.	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	• Alternative to the BGE tracking toolkit via spreadsheet are well underway with the prospect of a new alternative being in place in Aug 2026. Term 1 of 2026/27 will be a trial for the new system prior to the first data collation in Nov 2026.	Service Manager Primary and Secondary and Quality Improvement Officer

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)	Evaluation	**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.	• A separate channel in the School Secure Team page has been created to allow for easy and direct access to policies. This channel needs to be maintained to ensure all policies are added and updated as relevant. • All policies listed at 3.3.1, apart from attendance, have been updated and presented to committee during session 2025/26. The updated attendance policy is scheduled for committee in November 2026. • Work is required to ensure that all policies have been fully engaged with by all learning establishments. • Further work is required on the policy schedule to ensure that this is kept current and relevant policies are created or updated. A policy overview is required. • Future development work includes policy alignment and dovetailing with the service plans and priorities in partner agencies. This will include agreeing practice guidance and developing professional learning events to progress and improve multiagency working. This in turn, will impact and improve experiences and outcomes of service users.	All

	Identification of next policy and guidance documents required along with those that require review and establish a calendar of policy review and refresh.		

3.4 Quality Improvement Framework			
Outcome: **3.4.1** Local authority quality framework will underpin all self-evaluation activity.		**Measures/KPI:** 3.4.1 Quality Assurance Calendar Programme of activities	
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	**Evaluation**	**Lead**
3.4.1	Refresh annual quality assurance calendar considering Heads of Establishment feedback (Aug 2025)	• The Quality Assurance (QA) calendar for learning establishments was updated and refreshed. Establishments report that this calendar helps to support them to plan the activities which need to be undertaken over the year. Having the dates ahead of time allows establishments to keep to deadlines. Keeping to deadlines is improving. Further refinement will take place during the summer of 2026.	All
	Diarised Service Manager meetings to support self-evaluation and intelligence gathering.	• Service Manager meetings how have a focus on either strategic or operational actions. This is at an early stage of development and will be reviewed regularly.	
	Continuing professional development offer to Heads of Establishment – School Improvement through Self-evaluation. (Sep 25 – May 26)	• The School Improvement through Self-Evaluation sessions – which were to help with school self-evaluation and share best practise were planned and delivered during 2025/2026 session. Although, feedback from participants was positive, attendance to these sessions dropped as the year went on. These sessions need to be reviewed to ensure that they meet the needs of schools.	
	Explore further use of the Northern Alliance self-evaluation toolkit to support schools in self-evaluation	• Limited use was made of the Northern Alliance toolkit. This toolkit could support work of Self-evaluation.	
	Continue to develop self-evaluation with national quad families with Service Managers.	• The Quad families have just begun to meet in 2025/26, and further meetings are scheduled for the forthcoming year. Sharing practice across Local Authorities (LA's) in Scotland on key areas, e.g. quality assurance and professional learning is a key driver for these Quads.	

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)	Evaluation	**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.	• Group supervision has been trialled with the early years team. All the team found benefits in relation to reflecting on challenging situations and case work, enabling alternative perspectives to be explored. • Supervision training and cohort work has not yet started due to staffing challenges in nursery settings and the need for cover by the early years team. • The early years service will develop guidance to support the development of supervision approaches in settings.	Service Manager Early Learning and Childcare

Looking forward Plan 2026 - 2028

1 Inclusion and Wellbeing

1.1 Inclusion				
Outcome1.1.1 Children's needs are effectively and robustly tracked and monitored to ensure that the outcomes for identified children and young people are appropriate and lead to improvement.			Measures: 1.1.1 Attainment levels of identified children and young people e.g. 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 at the right time.			1.1.2 Parental feedback	
1.1.3 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 9 (25-26)	Action Year 2 (26-27)	Action Year 3 (27-28)	
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.	Service Manager Early Learning and Childcare

1.1.3	Inclusive Schools • Developing Inclusive Schools - Inservice Day(s) Oct 2025. • Suicide Prevention – SOS App delivered to school staff (Oct in-service). • 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. • 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. • Most schools and settings to achieve 'The Promise' award by July 2026.	• Schools are familiar and are referring to the Inclusion, wellbeing and equalities framework (Education Scotland). • Support the rollout of the Education Scotland Professional learning programme for support for learning assistants. • Continue to evolve a process for the equity-based deployment of SFLA. Which ensures clear time scales and criteria for deployment. • Ongoing review of the structure and deployment of the central Support for Learning and Inclusion team. • Creation of a plan for Alternative Education Pathways for children and young people who are not accessing full-time education or who find the school environment challenging and are at risk of low attendance or exclusion. Identify strengths and areas to be developed and gaps in the service. Full engagement to occur with schools and settings and stakeholders. • Collaborative training with the multiagency team which will include engaging with the Brighter Futures programme, led by Social Work (a programme to ensure shared language and understanding of the assessments and threshold when making a referral to social work.)	• Schools regularly engage 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. • Continue to embed multiagency professional learning opportunities. • Continue to implement LGBT Equalities Strategy.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion

		• Work to agree multiagency help framework to ensure better co-ordination of support to families. • Implementation of Staged Intervention Guidance and upload ASN levels to SEEMiS in term 1. Data drawdown to inform practice and ensure a common dataset for Scottish Government published annual school education and census statistics in December. • Conduct term 2 /3 moderation and evaluation activities throughout the session with establishments to ensure better consistency of understanding of the levels of staged intervention, and to ensure that SEEMIS data aligns across the local authority. • All schools ensure statutory requirements embedded for UNCRC. • Ensure that all schools and settings to achieve 'The Promise' award by July 2027. • Begin to implement LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation Plan– raising awareness with parents and carers.		

1.2 Relationships, Attendance and Transitions			
Outcome: 1.2.1 Overall attendance levels in Orkney reach at least 95% in Primary and 93% in Secondary.			Measures: 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
1.2.3	Improved attendance levels for identified cohorts, reduced numbers of part-time timetables, reduction in exclusions		1.2.3 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**
1.2.1	• 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.	• Finalise attendance policy and present to committee in Nov 2026. • Communication to wider Orkney Community. • Schools to implement updated OIC Attendance Policy. • Attendance stretch aims for 2026/27 to be reviewed. • Service and schools to continue to monitor trends in attendance with action taken where required. • Share practice across schools of what is working well and having a positive impact.	• Review attendance levels and update actions accordingly. • Schools to embed updated OIC Attendance Policy.	All service managers and Quality Improvement Officer
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 to curricular transitions.	• Review and continue as required.	Service manager Primary and Secondary

1.2.3	Actions as section 1.1.	Gather accurate data regularly in relation to the following cohorts of children and young people: • Children and young people on part-time timetables. • Children and young people not attending school. • Children and young people with low attendance. • Children and young people eligible for FSM. • Children and young people who have experienced care. • Statistics relating to exclusions and incidents leading to exclusions. • Monitor trends from data regularly. • Use the findings from the data gathered to prioritise actions and interventions as required.	Continue to use data to support priorities for schools and the service.	

1.3 Poverty and Equity				
Outcome: 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.		**Measures:** 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	• Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) continues to focus on attainment and equity. • Revise Raising Attainment Strategy and present to Education Communities and Housing committee March 2026. • Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) Lead, QIO, Service Manager (secondary and tertiary) and Attainment Advisor continue to analyse and support BGE and Senior Phase attainment and attendance. • Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) co-ordinator to monitor and track CECYP attainment and attendance. • Seek funding for the continuance of the CECYP co-ordinator role.	• Funding not provided beyond March 2027 – QIO position to be deleted – October 2026 • Continue to analyse and support BGE and Senior Phase attainment and attendance. • Attendance actions as priority above:1.2.3.	• Service Managers continue to analyse and support BGE and Senior Phase attainment and attendance.	Scottish attainment challenge lead and Quality Improvement officer

1.3.2	• Establish baseline data of uptake of Free School meals (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 Pupil Equity Fund (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. • Identify officer to attend 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. • Schools 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 considering pilot findings. – Scottish Government mandate for Breakfast Clubs – ongoing work to secure fully funded grant.	• 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.	Quality Improvement Officer and Education Scotland Attainment Advisor

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.	• No further actions in relation to the national writing programme – removed. • Continued engagement with Sounds Write and Parallel assessments. • Planned cross sector moderation of writing with the BGE. • Identifying and sharing good practice across schools. • Evaluate effectiveness of approaches and amend/adapt as required.		Service Manager Primary and Quality Improvement Officer

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. • 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.	• Review and evaluate language and literacy courses, 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.	Service manager Early Learning and Childcare and ELC team

2.2 High-Quality Learning and Teaching				
Outcome: 2.2.1/ 2.2.2/ 2.2.4 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 • October 2026 in-service input from Shirley Clarke to all teachers focusing on: • Learning Intentions (What are we learning today?) and co-creation of Success Criteria. (The specific things learners should be able to demonstrate they have achieved the learning intention.) • Effective questioning techniques. • Create learning teams involving 28 teachers who are going to develop their skills in formative assessment (finding out what learners understand while they are still learning so teaching and learning can be adjusted) and share their practice within their schools and clusters. • KGS and Junior High Schools will work with Osiris on quality of learning and teaching as well as pace and challenge in learning. Osiris Educational is a professional learning and school improvement organisation that works with schools across the UK and internationally to enhance teaching, learning and leadership	• Pace and Challenge Learning Intentions and co-creation of Success Criteria. • Effective questioning. • Development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (the ability to go beyond remembering facts using knowledge to analyse, evaluate, solve problems, make connections and create new ideas). • October Inservice day 2027 – sharing of learning from Shirely Clarke • Embed learning from Osiris, sharing learning with other teachers.	All

		through evidence-based training and development programmes.		
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 • Involve senior leaders in LA arranged quality assurance activity.	Validated Self-Evaluation • Involve senior leaders in LA arranged quality assurance activity.	
2.2.3	Professional learning • Signpost resources to support schools with professional learning.	Professional learning • Provide professional learning on key areas identified in the Service plan. • Signpost resources to support schools with professional learning. • Highlight areas of good practice within Orkney. • Create a practitioner showcase from the Learning Teams of high-quality learning and teaching.	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. • Learning team staff to deliver 2027/28 Oct in-service.	

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**
2.3.1	• 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. • 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.	• Review tracking in ELC to monitor effectiveness of intervention. Redeliver training as needed. • Implement new primary BGE tracking tool. • 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. • Use new BGE tracker in Junior High Schools. • Develop and implement Senior Secondary schools' system to track BGE data. • Develop effective tracking systems across Senior Secondary schools.	• Continue to review and set attainment priorities based on data. • Embed primary BGE tracking tool and extend to S1-S3 in JH Schools.	Service Managers Primary and Secondary Quality Improvement Officer

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 e.g. SOFAs/SNAs.	• Provide professional learning on moderation and approaches to assessment. • Create opportunities for cross school moderation through in-service days – Feb 2027 (Secondary) • 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: 2.4.1 To ensure that all schools plan and use the new curriculum framework for full implementation in session 2029/30.			**Measures/KPI:** 2.4.1 All schools will have curriculum development within their school improvement plans annually from 2026/27.	
2.4.2 For Secondary and Junior High Schools sheets to review BGE and Senior Phase Curriculum Structure.			**2.4.2 All Secondary and Junior High Schools and UHI Orkney have reviewed Curriculum offer.**	
	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.	• All senior leaders at LA and schools to familiarise themselves with the draft curriculum technical framework and changes to curriculum areas when they are published. • Face to face days with an ongoing focus on curriculum developments. • Additional Inservice days for teaching staff / practitioners. • School improvement plans identify actions for familiarisation of curriculum changes.	• Beginning to adopt changes to curriculum. • Face to face days with a focus on curriculum. • Inservice provision for teaching staff / practitioners. • School improvement plans identify actions for implementation.	All
2.4.2		• Develop Strategic Planning to consider Secondary Curriculum offer and structure of the school week • Begin Consultation with all stakeholders. • Create Implementation Action Plan.	• Begin to adopt curriculum changes. • Enact action plan – considering the RCCT impact on the curriculum.	All

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 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 nurseries and schools visit and review emergency procedures including (where applicable) evacuation, invacuation and lock-down. • 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. • Adverse Event Prevention, Early intervention and Reporting process is updated to achieve consistency and compliance with Councils Health and Safety policies.	• All staff undergo refreshed Child Protection Training- Child Protection Slides – Aug 2026. • Review business continuity plans work with Safety and resilience to provide a consistent approach, identify training needs. • All nurseries and schools complete annual audit of Health, Safety and Safeguarding, introducing action steps as appropriate. • Review expectations re PREVENT training for schools and settings. Plan for any expected training this year. • All Senior leaders to continue to monitor Mandatory Training levels.	• All staff undergo Child Protection Training online and in person Inservice day Aug 2027 • Continue to embed business continuity plans in all learning establishments. • All nurseries and schools complete annual audit of Health, Safety and Safeguarding, introducing action steps as appropriate. • All staff (cohort 3) undertake PREVENT Awareness Training. • All Senior leader to continue to monitor Mandatory Training levels.	Service Manager Support for learning and inclusion

	• 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.	
	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.	• Continue to revisit KPIs and ensure that the data ensuring review and action taken on the analysis of the data. • Continue to review service manager meeting structure to ensure it delivers continued focus for appropriate improvement and action.	• 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 which includes BGE and Senior Phase.	• 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.	Service Manager Primary and Secondary

3.3 Policy Refresh and Development

Outcome:	**Measures/KPI:**
3.3.1 Ensure that there are robust policies in place within a regular programme of review and refresh.	3.3.1 Log of policies
NEW OUTCOME 2026/2027 3.3.2 Orkney will have a single-entry pathway for the assessment of neurodevelopmental conditions in children and young people.	- A single, accountable Neurodevelopmental Pathway for children and young people will be in place. - Fragmentation, duplication and inconsistent referral routes will be reduced. - Clinical safety, medication oversight and risk escalation will be improved. - Waiting list will begin to reduce with reduced waiting times. - Post-diagnostic support will improve. - Parents will report greater confidence and better experiences - Workforce will be in place to achieve the above measures.

	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.	• 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. Appropriate additional training where required. • Attendance – KL. • Flexi-schooling/home education etc – PM. • Placing request - WSB • Staged Intervention Guidance– SW. • Anti-bullying Policy refreshed – MM.	• 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

	• 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.	• Education Digital learning strategy – PM. • ASL strategy – allocations and needs - SW/ KL/ PM/ CD – Lead SW • Volunteer policy • School fund guidance –WB. • LGBT inclusive education implementation plan – WB. • Primary Staffing policy – MM. • ELC policy refresh -CD. • Operational guidance for new Strynd -CD.		
3.3.2		**NEW OUTCOME 2026/2027** • Attendance at the Neuro Developmental Pathway development meetings • Collaborate with partners from Health and Social Work to establish the single-entry pathway. • Work together to reduce waiting times and increase the pace at which assessments are undertaken in Orkney.	• Piloting of the single-entry assessment pathway for Neurodevelopmental conditions.	Service Manager, Support for Learning and Inclusion and Educational Psychologist

3.4 Quality Improvement Framework				
Outcome: **3.4.1** Local authority quality framework will underpin all self-evaluation activity.			**Measures/KPI:** 3.4.1 Quality Assurance Calendar. Programme of activities.	
	Action Year 1 (25-26)	**Action Year 2 (26-27)**	**Action Year 3 (27-28)**	**Lead**

3.4.1	• Refresh annual quality assurance calendar considering 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.	• Develop a local authority quality assurance framework which details expectations in relation to officer engagement and can help prioritise officer engagement with establishments. • Continue to develop self-evaluation with national quad families with Service Managers.	• Implement the quality assurance framework use the framework to prioritise officer engagement with establishments.	Head of Service, All Service Managers Quality Improvement Officer Achievement and Attainment

3.5 Systemic Supervision – Early Learning and Childcare				
Outcome: 3.5.1 Implement systemic supervision in nursery settings and some primary settings (Supervision is a requirement of the Care Inspectorate). .			**Measures/KPI:** 3.5.1 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**
3.5.1	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	Service Manager Early Learning and Childcare

Appendix 1: Risk Register

Risk Title: Financial Pressures.

Likelihood.	5	**Impact**.	4.	**RAG.**	Amber.	**Current Risk Score.**	20	**Target Risk Score.**	16.

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. Reduction of external SAC funding will lead to deletion of key posts: QIO and CECYP co-ordinator.	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/carer dissatisfaction. Increase in difficulty with recruitment and retention. Loss in focus on attainment and CECYP. Increased pressure on school senior leaders and loss of support.	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. Review of service to consider the functions and roles and capacity to deliver outcomes with reduced central staff.

Risk Title: Recruitment Challenges.

Likelihood.	5.	**Impact**.	4.	**RAG.**	Amber.	**Current Risk Score.**	20.	**Target Risk Score.**	9.

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. Scottish Government policy of Non-Class Contact time puts pressure on the system requiring more staff to cover classes. Location of some vacancies and part-time contracts.	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. Increase in the recruitment challenge.	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 e.g. job families. Continue to use appropriate alternatives including the use of agency staff. Ensure succession planning for key posts is in place.

Risk Title: Unmet Additional Support Needs.

Likelihood.	5	**Impact**.	5	**RAG.**	Red	**Current Risk Score.**	25	**Target Risk Score.**	12 (3x4)

Vulnerability.	**Trigger.**	**Consequences.**	**Mitigating Actions.**
Data from the last 6 years indicates significant growth in the number of children and young people in Orkney with additional support needs. In 2017 31% of our children and young people were considered to have additional support needs. In 2022 the number was 41%. This includes 50.5% of young people in secondary. In 2026, Nationally 36.9% of Primary children and 48.8% of secondary children and young people had an additional support need (ASN) In 2026 Orkney has reported 37% of Primary children and 60% of Secondary children and young people having identified Additional Support needs.	Increased demand for additional support combined with an increase in the indicators of unmet need.	Due to the increasing level of unmet need, the Education service risks failing to meet their statutory duty in meeting the needs of all children and young people. ASN levels are in Secondary are higher Orkney which aligns with the national trend. This puts a strain on the educational provision and support for all children and young people. Challenges are arising highlighting this risk which may lead to tribunal proceedings. The growing need combined with the lack of support staff puts increasing pressure on existing staff structures which makes recruitment and retention difficult and adds to our high rates of sickness absence. The number of temporary positions makes the positions unattractive for retention of the workforce.	Creating a cohesive, consistent staged intervention framework to ensure levels of additional support needs are consistently assessed across learning establishments. Creating early intervention pathways to ensure support is in place for children, young people and their families at the earliest possible stage. Reviewing Additional Support for learning provision including structures to support children and young people outside of school. Work with colleagues in CLD&E to use Whole Family Welfare Funding to create additional model of family support based around a youth work model to help put in place support at the earliest possible stage for children, young people and families. Investing in the current workforce through training and professional learning to increase existing capacity.

Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
There are growing number of support staff in schools has not increased in line with growth need. Due to rising costs in other areas and changes in funding in others the baseline funding for support staff in school is no longer sufficient to maintain the current level of staffing. Demand for service is out with capacity to deliver. Baseline costs for support staffing are no longer sufficient to maintain the current level of staffing. Due to the above circumstances, we have a growing level of unmet need across our schools and nurseries which poses significant risk to the local authority.		A lack of capacity for early intervention means problems become more complex before they are addressed. This requires more resource and a greater cost as a result. Without support at an early stage, long term outcomes for young people in our community become poorer. Unmet needs in the classroom place more pressure on teaching staff and the ability to make improvements in overall attainment and progress for all children and young people suffers as a result. Social, emotional and behavioural needs are increasing rapidly and we are seeing a rise in serious incidents, including incidents of violent behaviour in schools.	Centralising the resource to enable dynamic and targeted staffing. Ensure that all Support for Learning Posts are permanent and that staff entitled to permanency are provided with and reducing the number of temporary short-term contracts. Using, Support for Learning External Review, complaints and concerns as learning points to create an action plan which will result in reviewing processes and procedures. Creating greater clarity and consistency of approach across the local authority. Ensuring all Headteachers and establishment managers have an awareness of the legislative context which we are working. Regular updates and training to occur. 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.

Vulnerability.	Trigger.	Consequences.	Mitigating Actions.
			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. Ensure all Headteacher and Establishment managers have an awareness of the legislative context which we are working in. Regular opportunities and training to occur. 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.

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. Working with ADES to understand the national context of the move to another Management Information system. Engaging with all the key developers to understand the new produce and their ability to meet our requirements.

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

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, including training 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 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).	Budget overspends.	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. Ensure Elected Members and the Corporate Leadership Team are well briefed prior to national meetings.

Vulnerability.	**Trigger.**	**Consequences.**	**Mitigating Actions.**
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, children's needs and safe staffing, 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.
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.
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).
SCERTS	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.
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.

Appendix 2

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.	Annual review of Education and Three-year Strategic Plan linked to the National Improvement Framework.
Responsible Service and Directorate.	Education, Communities and Housing.
Date of assessment.	5 October 2026.
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?	This report and plan is built on previous plans and intends to ensure equity and excellence within education. This plan is intended to support establishments to deliver high-quality learning ensuring better access for all to education. The plan identifies systems which require monitoring and improvement. As a result of this plan already high levels of attainment will be maintained, and in areas where improvement is required incremental improvements will be tracked. In particular, the equity gap will continue to narrow.
Is the proposal or change strategically important?	**Yes**
State who is or may be affected by this proposal or change, and how?	All learners and staff working within Early Learning and Childcare, Primary and Secondary.

How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this proposal or change?	Heads of Establishment have been involved in the delivery of the plan to date. Parents (via Parent Council Chairs) 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.	It has been identified by Scottish Government that there is an equity gap for learners because of socio-economic disadvantage. As a result, the government established the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) which supports local authorities through a Strategic Equity Fund. In the case of Orkney this is spent on a Quality Improvement Officer and Care Experience Children and Young People's co-ordinator. This funding may end in Sep 2026. The work of these roles has enabled a forensic approach to data to be applied and supported establishments in their work to ensure that measured outcomes are identified which led to improved attainment for those within the equity gap. Pupil Equity Funding is provided to almost all schools to help provide additional support to those at risk of the equity and attainment gap, the money has been used in a variety of ways in schools, which may include training for staff to ensure high quality learning and teaching or to pay for staff to work with children and families. Evidence from Orkney's Raising Attainment Strategy (2026-2029) indicates that the attainment gap for children and young people affected by disadvantage has narrowed slightly across most measurable areas, although inequalities in attainment remain and continued targeted support is required. Insight data from 2024/2025 exam diet show an increase in the attainment gap for National 5s and Highers. The following Scottish Government publications have been used, Orkney have added information shared by the Education Scotland Attainment Advisor. • Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2024/25 - gov.scot • Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) Evaluation Summative report, 2026 - gov.scot • Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations - Data Sources and Methodology 2026 - gov.scot

	• Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 8: 2026 edition - gov.scot • Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation: case study research 2025 - gov.scot • Attainment of school leavers by SCQF level and stage of leaving - gov.scot • Attainment Scotland Fund Evaluation: School Survey Report, 2025 - gov.scot
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. pupil_equity_funding_report_2025_.pdf – Report which summarises best practice. Papdale Primary Schools use of Pupil Equity funding is mentioned and the impact of having a Pupil Engagement Team. Evidence and Insights on the Poverty-Related Attainment Gap Scottish Government Bringing Hope, Building Futures: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2026-2031- annex 10: Islands Communities Impact assessment (ICIA)

https://www.gov.scot/publications/bringing-hope-building-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2026-2031-annex-10-islands-communities-impact-assessment-icia/pages/2/

Specific Orkney Child Poverty Statistics:

Children living in relative poverty households before housing costs in Orkney (most recent DWP figures)

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Orkney Islands	11.1%	9.1%	11.0%
Scotland Average	14.8	12.1%	12.3%

Children living in relative poverty households after housing costs in Orkney (most recent DWP figures)

	2023-24	2024-25
Orkney Islands	10.7%	12.2%
Scotland Average	15.2%	14.8%

Please note that the Scottish Government record these statistics differently due to multiple reasons, the above data table raw DWP data which used to track trends in Orkney vs Scotland.

The rural premium:

https://www.gov.scot/publications/the-cost-of-remoteness-reflecting-higher-living-costs-in-remote-rural-scotland-when-measuring-fuel-poverty/

https://www.povertyalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CPG-on-Poverty-Rural-Report-May-24-_DE_design.pdf

The cost of living for rural Scots is significantly higher than urban Scots and should be taken into account when talking about poverty and child poverty.

Table ES1: 2022 remote rural Scotland minimum budget uplifts

	Mainland	Island
Family with children, rounded uplift (based on couple with two children)	15%	14%
Working-age rounded uplift (based on average of single and couple)	27%	32%
Pensioner rounded uplift (based on average of single and couple)	22%	25%

Gross disposable household income per head, (average income per person(£) after taxes and direct benefits)

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Orkney Islands	£19,889	£22,767	£25,234
Scotland Average	£21,082	£22,662	£24,283

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: The plan is intended to narrow the equity and attainment gap. There is some evidence particularly within Primary schools that the work is having a positive impact. This is particularly evidenced against children who are care experienced.
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. Gender gaps where they exist are identified and action taken. In particular we are aware of gender difference within attendance, focused work to implement the policy will begin to tackle these challenges.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	Yes. Implementation of the LGBT Inclusive Education plan provides embedded learning opportunities linked to the appropriate context, age and stage for learners.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	Yes. The plan includes a focus on staged intervention of support for children and young people which will improve outcomes for all ensuring the right support is provided at the right time.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	Not applicable.
6. Age: people of different ages.	Yes. The plan is a service plan which covers early learning and childcare up to the end of senior phase at secondary school.
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. 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 and developing alternative education pathways.

9. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	Not applicable.
10. Caring responsibilities	Yes. Through the narrowing of the equity gap greater emphasis has been placed on schools to identify children and young people who have caring responsibilities. This work helps to ensure that they are not disadvantaged and have equity of support where needed.
11. Socio-economic disadvantage.	Yes - positive. The nature of the funding of Pupil Equity Funding (Schools), the Strategic Equity fund (Local Authority Funding) must all focus on narrowing the equity attainment gap. This is a key driver of the work of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Establishments are to positively support those who may be at risk of socio-economic disadvantage. The key focus of the Quality Improvement Officer work is to challenge inequity. Awareness raising of the financial challenges faced by schools is ensuring that outcomes for families are improved. Whilst the post of Quality Improvement Officer will end the work is required to continue with the creation of Equity Plans for schools to complete and continued focus across the local authority on social and economic disadvantage will continue.
12. Care experienced	Yes – the Promise (national commitment made in 2020 which sets out a pledge to Care Experienced Children and Young People) which states that help, and support must be there for children and families whenever they need it. This service plan creates targets for closing the attainment gap between Care experienced children / young people and their peers. There has been good progress to positively narrow this gap.

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?	No
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

5. Sign and Date

Signature:	[redacted]
Name:	Wendy Bowen
Date:	5 October 2026