



Session 2023-2024 STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT



HELMSDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL



In Helmsdale Primary school we are growing to be-
kind, respectful, resilient, motivated, curious, and creative.

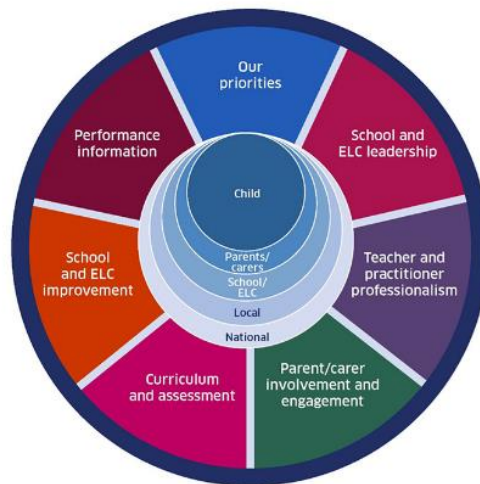
Introduction: Local and National Context

This Standards and Quality Report is influenced by both Highland and national priorities. These can be summarised as follows:

Highland Priorities



National Improvement Framework Priorities



Entitlement, Excellence & Equity:

We will raise attainment and achievement for all, especially for children and young people from disadvantaged circumstances, including rural deprivation. We will focus relentlessly on improving standards and the quality of learning and teaching, to ensure that entitlement, equity and excellence are delivered across the system.

Empowerment & Leadership:

We will develop leadership skills at all levels of the system, for now and the future, building a culture of empowerment and professional capital.

Relationships:

We will maximise health and wellbeing for all children and young people, to give them the best possible start in life. We will ensure every child and young person feels part of the community they live in.

Opportunity:

We will maximise opportunities for our children and young people, and for the wider Highland community and its visitors, through the provision of high-quality services.

The key priorities outlined in the National Improvement Framework are:

- 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.

Self-evaluation

To support self-evaluation, quality indicators from the national evaluative framework How Good Is Our School?4 are referenced.

Links to these sources (and others referenced) can be found here:

- [National Improvement Framework Improvement Plan](#)
- [HGIOS? 4](#) and [HGIOELC](#)
- [Health and Social Care Standards](#)
- [National Gaelic Language Plan](#)

In this report the following words are used to describe the numbers and proportions used:

All	Almost all	Most	Majority	Less than half	Few
100%	Over 90%	75% - 90%	50% - 74%	15% - 49%	Up to 15%



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We are pleased to present our Standards and Quality Report for Session 2023-24. This report forms part of our quality improvement framework and provides important information regarding our school's progress to date and our next steps in school improvement.

Self-Evaluation for Self-Improvement is at the heart of our practice. We continue to develop our practice in making robust use of evidence as a basis for judgements regarding the impact of our work on our learners. All staff understand that self-evaluation is an integral aspect of our approach to continuous improvement through addressing the 3 key questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

Throughout the year we continuously evaluate what we do and how it makes a difference to our learners. We want to know what is working well for our school community and what needs further improvement. We inform decision making and actions through a continuous process of looking inwards, outwards and forwards.

Looking inwards - starts with those working with our children and young people

We focus on the impact on outcomes for learners. Our self-evaluation processes triangulate information, data, people's views and observation of practice to measure impact and inform planning for improvement.

Looking outwards - learning from others

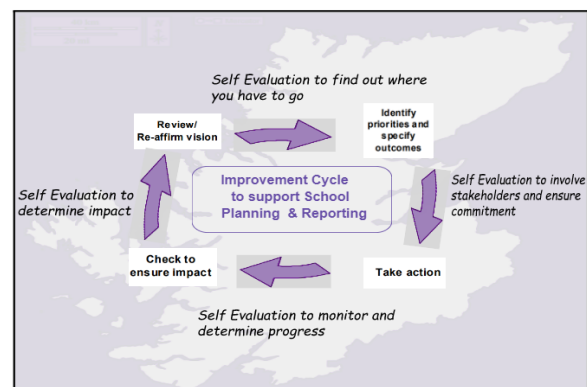
Looking to others for new ideas that challenge our practice and support continuous improvement allows us to learn from what works and what doesn't. This includes practice in other schools, learning communities and learning from educational research.

Looking forwards - creating a vision and planning for implementation

Through leadership at all levels, we anticipate challenges and explore creative solutions. This helps us to create an aspirational vision for our school which shapes our actions and provides a focus for improvement.

Our children and young people are actively consulted and involved in this process. We also give staff, parents/carers, and other partners the opportunity to participate in discussions and activities to shape our improvement journey.

When we develop our improvement plan, we use key questions at scheduled review times throughout the session to know how well we are progressing towards achieving these positive outcomes and changes.



Together we are working hard to ensure the Highlands is the best place for children and young people to grow up safely, learn, develop and achieve.

With positive experiences, our children and young people will always see the Highlands as home.

Shelly Taylor
Head Teacher
Helmsdale Primary School



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School Profile

The following information can be found on [Parentzone Scotland](#). It is important to remember that statistical data alone is not a measure of how well we are doing. All schools are unique. To understand how well we are doing it is important for us to look at a range of different data sources.

Attendance
92%

Average Class Size
15.3

Meeting PE Target
Target Met

Pupil Numbers (inc nursery)
46 (+10 nursery)

Teacher Numbers
4

Pupil Teacher Ratio
13

2023/24 Proportions of pupils achieving Curriculum for Excellence Levels

(P1- 3 learners, P4- 3 learners, P7-5 learners; 11 learners overall- combined):

Reading

Writing

**Listening and
talking**

Numeracy

Most

Majority

Majority

Majority

Helmsdale Primary school is in the East coast village of Helmsdale in Sutherland, serving the local community of Helmsdale and Strath of Kildonan. The recently appointed headteacher has overall leadership responsibility, for the management and running of the school and ELC setting and is also class committed 3 days-a-week. At Helmsdale Primary school we value the pivotal role of parents and families take pride in being an integral part of the community and have good working relations with many key stakeholders.

As the school roll comprises a relatively small number of children, attainment and progress will be expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than specific year groups or Curriculum for Excellence levels. This is to ensure the identity of individuals is not disclosed.

A significant number of learners in the school are classed as having ASN as per the Highland Council staged approach. We have a visiting Additional Support Needs Teacher (ASNT) for 1.5 day per week. Children with additional support needs are supported mainly within the mainstream classes. Staff consult with ASNT and other agencies such as- Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist to ensure strategies are in place and needs are met to the best of our provision and ability.

Helmsdale Primary School sits within an area of deprivation as per the SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) index. We have an increasing number of families on low income, which is demonstrated by the amount of PEF (Pupil Equity Funding) for our small school.

Overall, attainment across the school in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. Children achieve appropriate CfE levels in literacy and numeracy and, across the school, a few children are exceeding nationally expected levels. Almost all children who face barriers to learning are making good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Overall children are making the following progress:

Reading

Writing

**Listening and
talking**

Numeracy

Good progress

Satisfactory progress

Satisfactory progress

Good progress

We have had no exclusions this year.



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'It Takes A Village To Raise A Child'

HPS Vision-

- Our Vision is to work in partnership with pupils, parents, and the wider community.
- Our Vision is to create an inclusive and welcoming environment where learning is exciting, challenging, and relevant and everyone is valued and encouraged to achieve their potential.

HPS Values-

'Growing'....

- 🌿 To be kind
- 🌿 To be respectful
- 🌿 To be resilient
- 🌿 To be motivated to achieve our potential
- 🌿 To be curious
- 🌿 To be creative



HPS AIMS

- ❖ To provide a safe, happy, and caring environment for learning.
- ❖ To provide stimulating and challenging teaching and learning experiences both within and out with the classroom.
- ❖ To foster effective partnerships between pupils, staff, parents, outside agencies, and the wider community, working together to create a cohesive learning environment.
- ❖ To encourage pupil achievement and attainment by developing skills and positive attitudes, encouraging successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.
- ❖ To deliver a broad balanced and differentiated curriculum encouraging children to progress at their own pace with appropriate support promoting and encouraging appropriate level of independence and learning skills for the future.
- ❖ To work closely with the schools in the Golspie ASG fostering links with colleagues, monitoring standards, and developing effective transitions.



Review of progress for 2023-2024 session

These projects are linked to the vision and priorities for Scottish Education based on delivering excellence and equity. Parent/Carer information is available [here](#).

School Priority:

Raising attainment in Literacy

Purpose:

Developed in response to dips in attainment in Writing following on from the recovery period- overall attainment in literacy is impacted due to standards of writing not being where they should/could be. Attainment in literacy was noted as an area for improvement by HMle.

Progress:

- All teaching staff engaged in focused professional development sessions; with Highland Council Literacy officer (whole class collaborative writing sessions) and with professional development literacy consultant (twilight sessions).
- Teaching staff were part of an ASG wide writing moderation event.
- As a school we have purchased PM writing resources- to roll out use, across all classes, next session.
- Staff now consistently make use of Highland Literacy progression frameworks to inform planning and assessment.

Impact:

- Teaching staff are more confident in using progressions and benchmarks to inform their professional judgement in achievement of a level.
- Collegiate working is evident across the school and the ASG.
- Tracking of progress is now more robust- termly attainment meetings.
- Learners across all stages experienced increased opportunities for writing for enjoyment and writing for a purpose.
- A significant number of learners had their work published in 'Young Writers'.
- A greater focus was placed on handwriting and in P4-7 an emphasis on spelling, grammar, and punctuation- which led to improved presentation.
- Teachers feel more confident to take forward further writing improvements.
- Approaches to writing lessons are now more coherent across all stages.
- Development needs identified and training outlined for next session.

Satisfactory Improvement has been made in this area.

Next steps:

- Continuation of Stephen Grahame writing training- 4 sessions to complete the block (recount, procedure, response, discussion)
- 'Literacy for All' training for all staff- ways to support learners with persistent literacy difficulties.
- Development of listening skills across the school community to be a priority.
- Change of teaching stages, for experienced staff.



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Development of Curriculum Rationale

Purpose:

The Helmsdale Primary Curriculum Rationale was outdated and did not represent all the unique learning opportunities and community engagement; built in throughout the session.

Progress:

- All teaching staff now following the 3-year cycle of suggested interdisciplinary learning contexts.
- Very supportive parent forum and well attended Parent Council meets.
- Success for all- wider achievements is now recognised more by school and ELC.
- Attempts to further embed use of technology have been hampered due to connectivity issues and inability to carry out whole class use of devices.
- Awareness and understanding of rights have grown- rights are now embedded and understood from ELC-P7.

Impact:

- More robust planning systems in place- clearer coverage of experiences and outcomes, over time. Clearer outline of learning coverage means gaps in learning are much less likely.
- We now have a shared vision and understanding with families and key stakeholders- on what it is we aim to achieve for our youngsters. Our values have now been embedded across the whole school community- they are better understood by all stakeholders.
- Greater emphasis on developing skills for learning, life and work.
- Links within the community and with partner agencies have continued to grow- school is firmly at the heart of the village.
- Staff and pupils have a shared understanding of expectations of behaviour.
- House systems have been reviewed and moving forward points learners are to be awarded throughout the session.

Good Progress has been made in this area.

Next steps:

- Finalise Curriculum Rationale Slideshow- to be uploaded to school website and shared with all stakeholders at beginning of 24-25 session.
- Continue to strengthen links within the community and involvement with local groups.
- Continue to invite guest speakers- DYW assemblies.
- Further embed rights-based approach with support staff- roll out use of playground charter.
- Increase opportunities for digital learning across all stages- developing skills for the future.
- Create mascots for HPS houses and roll out system to recognise achievements in other areas- throughout the whole year- view to align with ClassDojo points system.



Increasing play-based learning opportunities

Purpose:

Following HMIe feedback it was noted that children in P1-3 should have increased opportunities for active learning and learning through play to further meet the needs of all learners.

Progress:

- Staff are now more acquainted with key early years policies and documentation and how to transfer in to use in P1-3.
- Visits to other settings took place, however, due to supply cover issues- this was fairly minimal.
- Development of outdoor spaces in various areas of the school playground have been ongoing throughout the academic year-
- Collaborative working across the ASG was well received and will continue.
- Staff and learners more involved in discussion surrounding changes.
- Links have been made through ELC and Toddler group- working in partnership with other community groups has strengthened.
- ELC- variation to conditions of registration in place, to be eligible to take 2-year-olds next session.

Impact:

- Teacher confidence in implementing active learning approaches improved.
- Organisation and layout of the P1-3 classroom has been reviewed and improvements have been made to make best use of the space.
- There has been good progress with operational projects- nursery garden improvements to security and resourcing; completion of painted playground games area on the footprint of the old Junior Secondary building + creation of loose parts/ role play area in school polycrub.
- Learners in P1-3 are more motivated to learn- evident through classroom visits and through Shanarri surveys.
- Staff working across Early, and First level have visited other settings and taken away some ideas for good practice.
- Staff had positive experiences meeting and collaborating with colleagues in other schools and ELC settings- an opportunity often missed in a small rural setting.
- WTA more accurately reflected the time allocated to school improvement projects- professional reading.

Satisfactory Improvement has been made in this area.

Next steps:

- Change in composites and teaching complement-continue with volunteer drive to aid classroom support across the 2 multi-composites.
- Further develop use of technology- use of Digital buddies (P6/7 to assist infants).
- Continuation of Junior Leader sessions- more opportunities for lunchtime experiences.
- Training through 'Learning through Landscapes' grant for nursery and teaching staff- play + experiential activities to do with outdoor learning in the Early years (*den building and loose parts play in-service training session*).



Progress and impact of Pupil Equity Fund

At Helmsdale Primary school almost all our PEF funding has been spent, invaluable on employing a 'young person's practitioner'- support worker through 'Action for Children'.

We had a period of long-term absence throughout the course of term 2- as a school we felt the major impact the loss of support time had on individuals and focus groups, as the time was not reinstated.

Fortunately, throughout term 3 and 4 we had a very consistent reinstatement to the support given.

- ✓ Almost all children have gained confidence and thrived from the small group focused work to develop literacy and numeracy skills.
- ✓ Most learners across all stages have made a marked improvement in their reading skills through use of games, increased opportunities to read aloud and through use of sound screening checks.
- ✓ The majority of learners have made improvements in achieving writing benchmarks.
- ✓ Most children in receipt of support, working at First level and up made marked improvements in their facility for number and times tables recall.

The Action for Children support worker is crucial to HPS- to give our learners the tools they need, and the little boost required to become more successful in their learning.

Wider achievements

Helmsdale Primary school recognises success both within and out with the school- at assemblies and through class displays and parent pages/ Class Dojo profiles.

Fortnightly assemblies are held and there is a learner from each stage nominated to receive 'Head teacher awards'- which celebrate wider successes, not just academic achievements. Wider achievements out with school time are recognised- such as participation in sporting activities, helping at home, learning a new skill or being part of a group.



Learners have benefitted from blocks of swimming tuition this session- funded partly through the Parent Council. Learners have represented the school in many sporting competitions over the course of the year, swimming, badminton, cross country, dancing, basketball, and football.



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We have an ongoing focus on implementing and fully embedding the UNCRC, we are Bronze: 'Rights committed' and are aiming to achieve silver, soon. Children's understanding on Rights is continuing to grow, as is the confidence in staff in rolling out the delivery of teaching our learners.



This session we commenced Friday groups- we have an Eco group 'Earth Protection Team', JRSO group 'Safety Superheroes' and RRS steering group, 'Rights Warriors'- the children came up with the names and have mascots for each. 'Ernie Earth', 'Sid Safety Squirrel' and 'Ricky Rights rhino'.

Families have been more actively involved this session and as a school we have been heavily involved in many village-wide projects; including the fruition of the very exciting new 'play Space', celebrating the fact Helmsdale is home to first native Scot in space.



We received money from the local Masonic lodge towards transport costs to attend the Eden Court pantomime trip at the end of term 2- an important theatre experience, a valuable experience, which many would otherwise miss out on.

Links with the local museum and art gallery have intensified over the course of the year- with plans in place to develop this further, in collaboration with our committee groups, next session.

We have had local health professionals along to share some valuable lifesaving skills and have further plans in place to develop the young workforce and invite people from other agencies in.



We look forward to being able to provide more opportunities for our young people- we firmly believe our rural location should not inhibit the experiences available to our learners.



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Comments from learners, families, stakeholders and staff

Nursery Learners:



"We like our tipi in nursery"
"My dad let us go to see the fire engine!"
"I liked Messy Nessy for our trip".
"Playing outside is good, I like the big roller."
"I like walks outside."
"I can do good writing".
"Playing with the Duplo is good"
"We go visit the ladies in the hub."



Primary 1-3 Learners:



"After school football club is good!"
"I'm looking forward to the train trip".
"It'll be good in P4 when we get P.E at the Muga."
"I'm a bit sad to not be moving rooms."
"I'd like to do science and chemical reactions."
"Dress up days are fun".
"I like the groups on Fridays".
"Lego club on Tuesdays is good for us".



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Primary 4/5 Learners:



"The new playground games are cool- it's good to get out for soft start".

"I've liked having 2 teachers this year".

"The workshop at Timespan making rigs from recycled plastic was good fun- it was like, 2 days out of class!"

"Card making with Kelly was fun."

"Some of the maths is tricky but it gets my brain working".

"The science show with Generation science was fun".

"I'd like to do more technology stuff."

"The joint Newton Rooms trip was cool- we got to dissect things and it was super interesting!"

"I like crochet club- hopefully we will keep doing it."



Primary 6/7 Learners:

"Organising the Easter disco was good."

"I liked clay modelling and art with pastels was calming."

Our class was small this year- it was good for me to concentrate as it was quieter than last year".

"Bunillidh winning Sports was epic- first in 4 years!!"

"It was good when the local doctors came to do First Aid and CPR- we had a paramedic student, too".

"I enjoyed doing the mini football tournament."

"Making coasters with L's Mum was fun."

"Doing drama with the high school teacher was cool."



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Families

ELC parent *“Great improvements in my child’s development. I think the mind maps are great and very useful. We are very happy with the service provided in the nursery- the staff are great with the kids. Great job all round.”*

School parent *“It is great that there are now so many more after school clubs than there had been previously, and the school is more involved with other groups than ever before.”*

School parent *Thank you for the update on the children’s progress, my husband and I are really pleased with their progress, and it is good to know they are doing well. Thanks to you all for teaching them and making sure learning is fun with all the activities you put on.*

Stakeholders

Parent Council *“The Parent Council congratulate HPS for all achieved this year- highlights including an excellent Christmas show, complete with aliens; a fun Burns night; various visitors bringing learning opportunities to the children; Timespan workshop with very talented Sue Jane Taylor; defibrillator training thanks to local medics; volunteer led coaching in running, football, basketball and country dancing; collaborating on poppy-making with the Church of Scotland to commemorate and remember the lessons of past conflicts; the creative development of the rear playground with new games area; and most recently a fun-filled Sports day, and various school end of year trips.*

The nursery had a great year with a very positive follow up in September from the Care Inspectorate; more recently plans have developed, and funding has been secured to revamp the garden area. All these activities and achievements have enriched the children’s learning experience, and all happen thanks to the dedicated efforts of all the HPS team.

Changes to staffing lie ahead into the next school year and we pay thanks to all who have played a part throughout this academic year.



HLH Librarian *“It’s always a pleasure to go to the school and deliver story time sessions, the participation from the children never disappoints.*

We love our library visits from the primary school, the children are very respectful of the other customers, and they have a lot of fun picking their books. We are lucky to have such a good relationship with our local school.”

Station House Director *“The staff and children of Helmsdale Primary School have been enthusiastic contributors to the adoption of Helmsdale railway station. They have helped with planting and caring for the station planters so contributing to making the station a pleasant – and in season, colourful – place to wait for a train. The station operates as a community interest company and as such has worked with the school on several projects. This includes sponsoring school art competitions which in turn means the station waiting room is often decorated with winning competition entries displayed in the poster cases. Again, it has been a pleasure to work with the staff and children on these occasions.”*



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Staff

Staff member 1- *“I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here, in Helmsdale Primary, it is an extremely supportive and caring environment, and I will miss being a part of it.”*

Staff member 2- *“We are a fantastic wee team- we have our challenges but through it all we support each other and see the light in every situation. Our kids are a credit and overall, very inclusive to all.”*

Staff member 3- *“It’s a delight to work here for part of the week- the headteacher makes the success and progress of her staff and pupils as important as their joint health & wellbeing.”*



Capacity for continuous improvement

Using indicators from ‘How Good is our School 4’ together with learner, parent, carer, partner, and community feedback we believe we have made the following progress this session:

	ELC	PRIMARY
QI 1.3 Leadership of change	Good	Good
QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	Good	Satisfactory
QI 3.1 Wellbeing, equality and inclusion	Good	Good
QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement/Securing children’s progress	Good	Satisfactory

Our overall evaluation of our capacity for continuous improvement is:

We are confident in our capacity for continuous improvement.



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Key priorities for improvement planning






- We will continue to focus on raising attainment in literacy for ALL- with a particular focus on writing and development of listening skills.
- We will have a key focus on developing the use of technology and investigate ways to implement more digital learning.

Planning ahead



Helmsdale Primary School: 'Stakeholder Friendly' School Improvement Plan 2024-2025

Each year school staff must identify areas to focus on within the school, these are linked to Quality Indicators (QI's) & gives us areas to improve on throughout the year. (QIs are set out in 'How Good is Our School?' 4th Edition which is created by Education Scotland & used for self-evaluation of the school and for inspections.)

<p>Focus 1:</p> <p><i>Attainment in Literacy (predominantly writing)</i></p> <p>Why?</p> <p>The need to raise standards in writing, remains- this is impacting achievement of a level in literacy, overall. There is a requirement to improve listening skills across the school community.</p>	<p>Focus 2:</p> <p><i>Developing use of technology across the school</i></p> <p>Why?</p> <p>We need to provide our children with the skills required for the future. Learners have voiced their desire to have more STEM based learning opportunities- we will focus on technology this year.</p>	<p>Ongoing developments</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>To further develop existing improvement initiatives...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching staff will complete 'Literacy for All' training- gaining insight into how to support learners with dyslexia/other persistent literacy difficulties.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEF support time will predominantly focus on interventions with individuals and small groups, to improve attainment in literacy. Teaching staff will complete training sessions- focusing on the remaining areas of writing with, Stephen Graham, Professional Development Literacy Consultant (5 x twilights last session, 4 to complete this academic year). Staff will roll out the use of the recently purchased new PM resources, to capture progress more effectively-  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across all stage there will be a greater focus on handwriting, spelling, grammar, and punctuation- ensuring there is increased time built into every class timetable for <i>explicit</i> teaching time. Staff in Early years will attend training through 'Learning through Landscapes' on implementing literacy outdoors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff will complete training led by a Highland Council Collaborative officer- previous Digital Technology Lead; with a view to further embedding the use of technology across the curriculum. Families will be provided with online safety tips and a workshop for parents will be offered. We will register and gain accreditation through the 'Digital schools: Scotland' award.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners in upper Primary will support the roll out of use of devices in Early years through participation in a 'digital buddies' scheme. We will make use of partner agencies- Newton Rooms/ UHI and strive to get support from specialists to provide experiences for learners at all stages. We will continue to strengthen links with our local museum and gallery, 'Timespan'- and make use of their digital resources and curator expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue our Rights Respecting Schools Journey- with the intention of achieving silver RRSA accreditation soon.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helmsdale Primary staff will endeavour to provide further opportunities for active & experiential learning and continue to work closely with community groups. Helmsdale Primary staff in Primary and ELC, will continue to work collaboratively across the ASG- engaging in professional dialogue and moderation activities- an invaluable experience, for all working within a small school.

Full details of the school's 2024/25 improvement priorities and actions are detailed on the family friendly school improvement plan, which can be accessed on our website [HPS school improvement focus](https://www.helmsdaleprimary.org.uk/school-improvement-focus) or, by contacting Mrs Taylor- shelly.taylor@highland.gov.uk or telephoning the school office- 01431 821 244 to request a copy of the extensive version.



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