

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Adult and Children's Services Committee

22 May 2013

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ACS/51/13

Curriculum for Excellence – The Highland Literacy Strategy

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

SUMMARY

To equip Highland's young people for life in the 21st century, our provision must enable all to acquire the talking, listening, reading and writing skills needed to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. In so doing, provision must take account of a wider '21st century' definition of literacy. It must be available from pre-birth to adulthood. It must identify and support all learners – but particularly those at risk. It must embrace information technology in all its forms.

The Literacy Strategy is structured to align with the Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing strategies. It is supported by a comprehensive package of resources, many developed in Highland. In partnership with parents, practitioners will use these resources to meet individual learner needs and develop excellence in their own schools, within associated school groups and across their communities.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The main aim of the Literacy Strategy is to ensure that every young person in Highland achieves his or her potential in literacy. All leaving mainstream education with the potential to be literate should be so; all whose needs significantly affect their literacy skills, should know how to access support beyond school.
- 1.2 The Strategy takes full account of the wider definition of literacy for the 21st century offered in Curriculum for Excellence. CfE defines literacy as: *the set of skills which allows individuals to engage fully in society and in learning, through the different forms of language, and the range of texts, which society values and finds useful.*
- 1.3 In defining literacy for the 21st century, then, the Strategy must consider the changing forms of language which Highland's children and young people will experience and use. It must take account of factors such as the speed with which information is shared, the ways it is shared, and the ubiquity of audio-visual texts. In consequence, traditional core skills of reading and writing will continue to be essential, but our learning and teaching must take account of new and emerging types of texts and how technology helps to produce these texts. In addition, Talking and Listening must be afforded much greater priority.
- 1.4 The Literacy Strategy adopts the same format as the Highland Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing strategies. This format is based on HMle's *Journey to Excellence* which highlights five 'essential elements' required for schools to be high achieving. These elements are vision and leadership, learning and teaching, culture and ethos, people, and partnerships. Using these five elements, the Literacy Strategy provides a framework against which schools are encouraged to evaluate their current practice and plan for improvement. Its publication completes

the suite of Highland Strategies covering the core curricular areas of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Well-being.

- 1.5 The development of the Strategy and its support resources has been largely the work of two Literacy Groups. Their work may be accessed on a blog using the following link:

<http://highlandliteracy.com>

The appointment of a Literacy Development officer on a secondment of nine months from August 2013 will further increase development capacity.

2. Key Features of Literacy Strategy Support

- 2.1 Literacy Strategy support will build on the significant success of the Highland Literacy Project within the local authority and beyond. During the last ten years, HLP has provided valuable practical support for teachers of literacy in all establishments. Its success has been recognised at national level. HLP's legacy of materials and guidance now require refreshing and updating to take full account of Curriculum for Excellence's definition of literacy and this is being undertaken as a priority.
- 2.2 Staff training in developing literacy skills across the curriculum will be a key feature. In this training, the role of technology and the opportunities it provides to transform achievement will be a significant element. The Highland Literacy Toolkit will lie at the heart of such continuous professional development. The Toolkit is a power-point resource being written by Highland practitioners. Each power-point provides an internet-linked stimulus for group discussion of a key area of literacy. This professional discussion then leads to action in schools to improve provision. Further internet links are provided for teachers to conduct independent additional action research and enquiry.
- 2.3 Identifying and supporting young people at risk and those displaying particular aptitude will be key priorities. Staff will track and monitor attainment continuously, but particularly at P3, 5, 7 and in S2. Senior Management Teams and teachers will analyse information from computerised testing and teacher-led assessments. They will identify young people whose skills are not progressing in line with potential and/or expectations for age and stage and those whose skills are particularly advanced. Such young people will be provided, in partnership with the Library Service, with specialised additional programmes, many computer and internet-based.
- 2.4 Evidence-based support for learners and families from pre-birth onwards will be a key feature. Families will continue to be offered training and resources to read to children in the womb and beyond. A new resource has been developed by the Educational Psychology Service to promote family reading at Pre-school and early Primary stages. This has been successfully evaluated, with significant impact on reading attainment seen some years later. It will be rolled out across Highland, beginning in February 2014.
- 2.5 Exploiting technology and the skills of media professionals to motivate learners and provide 'real' contexts for curricular work will be a key feature. As a pilot project, seven of Highland's associated schools groups are developing 'Literacy Hubs'. These are centres for the production and on-line broadcasting of multi-

media texts, produced by young people, often using their own technology and drawn from their work across the curriculum. Hubs are run by teams of young people and staff from Primary and Secondary. These teams will select texts from all areas of the curriculum and edit them for presentation on-line. Hub teams receive technical and journalist training from the National Union of Journalists, Radio Moray Firth and other media sources. The NUJ also provides basic journalist training to a Year Group in each Secondary School. This sector-leading project has drawn interest and funding from the Scottish Government.

- 2.6 Ensuring effective transition from mainstream education to post school destinations will be a key feature. At strategic and local levels, officers and school staff will work with health and adult learning services to ensure that the needs of those vulnerable in terms of Literacy are met. Before leaving mainstream, young people will have experienced timely and proportional transition planning relevant to their anticipated needs. This will be achieved using various tools and processes including the “My Transitions Guide” and, for more complex situations, the “Transitions Bridge”. The More Choices More Chances Strategy Group is working to ensure that all post school providers are aware of the needs of young people with literacy difficulties and can offer appropriate support.
- 2.7 There are no Resource implications beyond those already committed to Curriculum for Excellence implementation.
- 2.8 The development of a comprehensive Literacy Strategy is intended to ensure that all children and young people maximise their literacy potential and in so doing takes us a further step forward in the Equalities agenda.
- 2.9 There are no Climate Change or Legal implications.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Members are requested to note and comment on the Highland Literacy Strategy

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Date: 13 May 2013
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