HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **People**

Date: **19 October 2017**

Report Title: **Closing the Attainment Gap**

Report By: **Director of Care and Learning**

1.   **Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1   This report sets out the following for Members:

- An update on the progress of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Schools

- An initial update on the use of Pupil Equity Funding

2.   **Recommendations**

2.1   Members are asked to:

Note and scrutinise the progress in the use of additional resources provided by the Scottish Government through Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding and the Pupil Equity Fund.

3.   Introduction

3.1   The Scottish Government set out four priorities in the National Improvement
          Framework (NIF) everyone in Scottish education should be working towards:
          • Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
          • Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
          • Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing;
          • Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver
            destinations for all young people.

3.2   This paper focuses on providing Members with an update on the second priority –
          **Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged
          children.**

3.3   Highland Council is fully supportive of the commitment of Government to close the
          poverty-related attainment gap between children and young people from the least
          and most disadvantaged communities. Ministers have been clear that they seek to
          make demonstrable progress in closing the gap during the lifetime of this
          Parliament, and to substantially eliminate it in the next decade.

3.4   The paper presented to Education, Children and Adult Services Committee in
          January 2017 set out the picture for the nine schools involved in the **Scottish
          Attainment Challenge** project.

4.   Background

4.1   In Highland, 1537 Primary and 1006 Secondary School children live in the most
          deprived data zones. Approximately 55% of these pupils attend the five Primary
          and four Secondary Schools supported directly by the Scottish Attainment
          Challenge (SAC) funding.

4.2   The Scottish Attainment Challenge schools programme is now in Year 3 (Year 2
          for Secondary Schools), and the 9 Highland schools are fully underway with
          implementation of their plans to close the poverty related attainment gap.

4.3   The five Primary Schools are: Bishop Eden Primary (Inverness), Coulhill Primary
          (Alness), Merkinch Primary (Inverness), Milton Primary (Milton) and Newton Park
          Primary (Wick).

4.4   The four Secondary Schools are all associated with the Primaries mentioned
          above: Alness Academy, Invergordon Academy, Inverness High School and Wick
          High School.

4.5   There are 1646 pupils being targeted for extra interventions in these schools.

4.6   The SAC funding is allocated to the schools, on the basis of specific proposals that
          have had to be submitted to Government each year.

4.7   These proposals are developed from the Improvement Plans of each of these
          schools for closing the attainment gap. They are reviewed and ultimately approved
          by a national panel consisting of representatives from both Scottish Government
          and Education Scotland and the Programme's Academic Advisor.

4.8   In the current year, the funding is:

- Bishop Eden Primary – £56,629.00;
- Merkinch Primary– £80,440.00;
- Milton Primary – £43,408.00;
- Newton Park Primary (now South school has closed) - £58,646.00;
- Invergordon Academy – £122,903.00;
- Wick High School – £128,717.00
- Alness Academy – £107,613.00
- Inverness High – £143,333.00

(Coulhill Primary School did not bid for additional funding in addition to the PEF allocation)

5. Progress update - Scottish Attainment Challenge Schools

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 Highland shares the features of many other rural authorities, in having a significant attainment gap between the highest and poorest performing pupils. The attainment challenge funding is provided to help close the gap in those schools with the highest levels of multiple deprivation, as measured by the Scottish Index, but this does not address rural deprivation or the nature of inequalities experienced in many of our communities.

5.1.2 There is large amount of quantitative and qualitative data around measuring the impact of these interventions, and there are already positive signs arising out of the available data, with reports now starting to demonstrate impact on an individual school basis. This includes:
- Increased awareness of effectively using data to inform and measure improvement. School reports show a clearer understanding of tracking and monitoring attainment, as well as using different types of data in different contexts – skills, behaviour and wellbeing indicators.
- A clearer picture of where children are in their learning, where targeted support is required, and which areas need to be a focus for individuals, groups or a whole class.
- Improving attendance figures.
- Improving links with parents and families through appointment of Family Link workers.
- Improving professional capacity to deliver effective interventions in literacy and numeracy and the wider curriculum, through a focus on learning and teaching as well as specific curriculum CPD, with positive feedback on progress.

5.2 Health and Wellbeing/Families and Communities

5.2.1 Family Link Workers have continued their work in the four Inverness Primary Schools. Their focus has been on building relationships with identified groups of children, strengthening home/school links, visiting homes and liaising with parents to improving attendance, supporting targeted pupils in school and running after school clubs.

5.2.2 From reviewing school analysis and reports, it is clear that these workers are making a positive difference to attendance, engagement, attitude and ultimately learning in each of these schools. Comparative attendance and engagement figures will be available in March but short term outcomes confirm that there is enhanced parental engagement involving these workers.

5.3   **Nurture**

5.3.1   The Positive Relationships Co-ordinator was appointed in January 2017 and initially worked with schools to establish and develop a nurturing approach. This has led to a raised awareness and understanding for all staff of the importance of social and emotional learning, and the development of a nurturing approach.

5.3.2   Ongoing progress has been affected by staffing challenges in some schools and each is at varying early stages of 'nurture readiness. It has been agreed that a more effective impact from this intervention would be for each school to take ownership and develop a nurturing approach from within, led by a member of their SMT. Key staff with a specific remit for developing a nurturing approach will lead and take this initiative forward, with continued support from the Educational Psychology Service.

5.4   **Literacy**

5.4.1   The Literacy Development Officer is continuing to build on the work started in December 2016. All pupils have been assessed using benchmark assessments and a programme of interventions identified to improve tools for reading and reading for understanding.

5.4.2   Development sessions for teachers and PSAs are in the process of being delivered. Ground work (baseline assessment, reorganisation of resources, creation of a robust cohesive reading programme) is established in all schools; and interventions have been identified. There have been short and medium term outcomes of increased practitioner awareness, and raised understanding and use of comprehension and emerging literacy strategies.

5.4.3   This work is being piloted in SAC schools, and the evolving data is being compared to the use of the same programmes in non-SAC schools. The analysis of this data will inform the rationale for further roll out across the authority, as a positive strategy to raise attainment and help close the poverty related attainment gap for other children.

5.4.4   Additional support from Speech and Language Therapy, including the deployment of 3 Speech and Language Support Workers will assist the schools to embed strategies to support the development of Oral Language and Reading skills. The recruitment and selection process for these staff has been has been slow but we anticipate this work commencing towards the end of this month.

5.4.5   As work has continued on emerging literacy across the authority and the Northern Alliance, benefits have also been possible in the SAC schools.

5.5   **Numeracy**

5.5.1   Numeracy has been a focus in all schools, and each has identified additional staff to focus on this, linking with a Highland Numeracy Development Officer and the Attainment Advisor. It has not as yet been possible to attract appropriate applicants to the additional Attainment Challenge Numeracy Development Officer post.

5.5.2   The Northern Alliance has committed to new workstreams on numeracy in Primary

Schools and attainment in mathematics in Secondary Schools, and benefits are envisaged for the SAC schools.

6.   Pupil Equity Funding

6.1   The Pupil Equity Fund was launched in session 2017-18. Allocations are based on the number of pupils from P1 to S3 who are eligible and registered for free school meals, with schools receiving £1,200 per pupil. This involved 90% of Highland schools, receiving almost £4m.

Primary	Secondary	Special	No. pupils	Total
151	29	3	3,270	£3,924,000

6.2   Plans for improvement in school session 2017/2018

6.2.1   Head teachers in Highland and across Scotland have put improvement plans in place for spending the Pupil Equity Funding. Head teachers have discretion, within a set of guidelines, on how to best spend the funds. The guidance is available at: http://northernalliance.scot/2017/05/23/highland-council-updated-pef-guidelines/

6.2.2   The Authority-wide focus is to target interventions to support raising attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. Schools have been supported to make best use of the funding, through existing improvement planning processes, and a 'bureaucracy-light' approach.

6.2.3   Schools have planned their monitoring and self-evaluation procedures throughout the year as per their improvement plans. Their monitoring and tracking procedures should be sufficiently robust to ensure that it is possible to identify pupils who are underperforming, and to target interventions.

6.2.4   Schools have been encouraged to pool their funding within clusters and ASG, and to collaborate with 3rd sector partners, to gain the greatest possible benefit from this funding.

6.2.5   Central support officers in Literacy and Health & Wellbeing are being deployed to help promote and share best practice, and to further build capacity of staff to use data effectively to identify gaps and measure the impact of interventions.

6.2.6   Increased collaboration with the 3rd sector to support schools find better and more bespoke strategies to aid planning for equity.

6.3   Support Activity

6.3.1   PEF briefings were held for Head teachers across the authority, before the summer break, and these sessions were helpful for finalising the authority guidance.

6.3.2   A database of 3rd sector services has been established, as well as a finance tracking system.

6.3.3   A PEF officer has been appointed to support planning and financial monitoring, and she is linking with schools, area and central support staff, and 3rd sector

organisations.

6.3.4   Ongoing support is being provided through Area meetings involving ASG representatives and 3rd sector partners, and a strategic forum bringing together the various key stakeholders.

6.4   **Better use of data to target intervention at authority, school and pupil level.**

6.4.1   Data training events have been delivered to both Primary and Secondary staff – 4 Primary SMT days, 4 Secondary PT sessions and a Secondary SMT day, supplemented with 4 twilight training sessions for Primary Schools on using Excel to track attainment.

6.4.2   The 'Risk Matrix' package has been set up and rolled out in Headteacher and Secondary PT Data Training Sessions. Feedback from both Primary and Secondary staff has been positive, highlighting the value of this data to inform improvement and identify pupils 'at risk' of disengaging.

6.4.3   Curriculum for Excellence level analytical datasets were produced and issued to schools in April. These graphs allow schools to analyse their data, start to map trends and identify pupils who did not achieve levels - and target and track them into the following year.

6.4.4   Secondary Insight datasets were issued to schools in January to inform SQA/ Insight analysis. More detailed graphs and more accessible datasheets are being produced to allow easier filtering and analysis of this data.

6.5   **PEF Central Support Officers**

6.5.1   Following a survey issued to schools in June, an appointment has been made for a literacy PEF officer, working directly with schools by request on the PEF aspects of their literacy agenda. The aim of this, is to up-skill and scale up existing good practice in Highland with a focus on children experiencing deprivation.

6.5.2   A PEF Health and Wellbeing officer has also been appointed and, in collaboration with Inspiring Scotland, is focusing on 'Active Play' to support physical and emotional wellbeing with specific schools by request. There has been good uptake to utilise this service, and it will also be possible to contribute to the central strategy around excellence.

7.   **Deployment of Funding**

7.1   Two thirds of PEF spend has been directed to additional staffing. This involves both additional hours for existing post holders, as well as new posts.

7.2   Where it is additional hours, the remit for the work conducted as part of PEF spend must be very clearly focussed on the targeted interventions.

7.3   The greatest proportion of this additional staffing has been directed towards Pipil Support Assistant hours. This is being used for dedicated work with individuals and groups of children, and for enhanced activity in relation to literacy (for example, paired reading), numeracy (homework clubs) and health and wellbeing (nurture support and breakfast clubs).

7.4 Additional Children's Service Worker staffing is enabling improved community and family links, and joint work with partner agencies.

7.5 Additional teaching is focussing on enhanced tuition, literacy, numeracy, after school clubs and outdoor learning.

7.6 A small number of schools have also purchased additional administrative support.

7.7 Some of these posts have proved difficult to fill, and Head teachers may need to review their expenditure plans.

7.8 One quarter of PEF expenditure has been directed towards supporting a range of activity. As well as literacy, numeracy and outdoor learning, this includes nurture, play, emotional literacy and English as an additional language.

7.9 10% of spend has been directed towards services from 3rd sector partners. Again, this is supporting a range of interventions, including family support, youth work, outdoor learning, mentoring, creative learning and vocational training.

7.10 Finally, a small amount of funding, around 3%, is being used to fund services from other internal partners, such as Social Work, and Speech Therapy.

8. Future Monitoring of Impact

8.1 The Scottish Government has recently initiated a consultation on how progress on closing the attainment gap will be measured.

8.2 It is proposed that there is a basket of 8 key outcome measures (and 17 supporting sub-measures) on the achievement and attainment of children - and the associated 'gap'.

8.3 The expectation is that a basket of 8 measures (as below) will give a broad enough picture of the attainment gap from early years to school leavers and, importantly, would be relatively simple to measure and report against. Having fewer indicators would risk losing important information about how the gap changes e.g. from P1 to P7, and how the drivers for improvement are affecting the gap at each key stage.
- 27-30 month health review (Children showing no concerns across all domains)
- Primary – Literacy (P1, P4, P7 combined)
- Secondary Literacy (S3, 3rd level or better)
- Primary – Numeracy (P1, P4, P7 combined)
- Secondary Numeracy (S3, 3rd level or better)
- SCQF 5 or above (1 or more on leaving school)
- SCQF 6 or above (1 or more on leaving school)
- Participation measure

8.4 In addition, it is intended to develop a set of related measures on factors known to influence attainment:
- P1 – Literacy
- P4 – Literacy
- P7 – Literacy
- P1 – Numeracy
- P4 – Numeracy
- P7 – Numeracy

- HWB: 27-30 month review uptake
- HWB: Children total difficulties score (4-12 year olds)
- HWB: Children total difficulties score (13 and 15 year olds)
- HWB: Mental wellbeing score: 13 year old boys
- HWB: Mental wellbeing score: 13 year old girls
- HWB: Mental wellbeing score: 15 year old boys
- HWB: Mental wellbeing score: 15 year old girls
- Primary attendance rates
- Secondary attendance rates
- Primary exclusion rates
- Secondary exclusion rates

9. Implications

9.1 **Resources** – It is important that the planning processes used in closing the attainment gap is fit for purpose. It is vital that we use our own resources and the additional resources that have been provided by the Scottish Government to deliver maximum benefit to the young people of the Highlands.

9.2 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - It is important that the implications of rural deprivation are taken into account in the planning process to close the attainment gap. The work to close the gap is fundamentally about addressing poverty, and achieving equity of opportunity for our young people, families and communities.

9.3 **Gaelic** - It is important to ensure the implications for Gaelic are clearly thought through and addressed as part of our future plans for Gaelic Medium Education.

9.4 There are no **Legal, Risk or Climate Change/Carbon Clever** implications

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Date	6 October 2017
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