

Agenda Item	15.
Report No	CLH 25/19

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Care, Learning and Housing

**Date:** 14 March 2019

**Report Title:** **Transformational Change in Highland Education**

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

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the rationale behind the planned changes in Highland Council's education service and to outline the steps planned to bring about improved outcomes.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the need to respond to the issues raised in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework data.
- ii. Note the plan for the formation of a Change Team to support the implementation of an 'empowered and collaborative system'.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Analysis of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data has initiated both a review and a re-design of Highland Council's education services. The intention is that at the end of this process we have the capacity to improve outcomes for all children and young people and that in doing this all available resource is used wisely and efficiently.
- 3.2 A key priority in responding to this situation is to achieve stable staffing for all schools. With this in place and with the planned changes in the support and challenge for schools, a more efficient and empowered school system will contribute significantly to improving this situation.

### **4. Engagement with Councillors and Head-Teachers**

- 4.1 In January at workshops with Members, the interim Director of Care and Learning and interim Head of Education shared some of the key attainment data and some basic analysis of the key messages emerging from this data. Those in attendance agreed that action was required to address this situation.
- 4.2 In November at Conferences with Head-Teachers the performance of schools, measured against national data, was shared. It was apparent that there are significant challenges: attainment is not where we would want it to be or where we believe it should be, inspection results are not what would be expected within the Council's family comparator grouping and teacher absence is increasing. Further meetings have taken place with Head-Teachers in January and February to discuss how best to collaborate to improve and transform Education. A variety of online methods have also been used to encourage participation in these discussions. The feedback can be summarised against three of the four themes that came through during the public consultation engagement events in November/December.

### **5. Key Messages and Future Plans**

#### **5.1 Theme 1: Making the Council More Efficient**

- 5.1.1 Efficiency is one of the strong themes which emerged from engagements sessions with Head Teachers. Within Care and Learning this objective is best delivered by the consistent and strategic allocation and deployment of staff. Whereas the Council have had additional staff allocated to schools to cover for a range of eventualities, there will be a change in procedures to allow schools to better predict and employ the requisite staffing at the start of session. Schools will be allocated staffing in line with national best practice i.e. adhering to national class size legislation and monitoring pupil rolls all year round. In addition, there will be a different approach to training- designed by Head-Teachers to allow the staff that the Council employ to work more efficiently because they have been given the training, mentoring and support required.
- 5.1.2 Even with this, the Council recognises that short-term acute situations arise and so there will be resource to provide additional support to schools. However, these arrangements will be closely scrutinised to monitor impact and brought to an end when the objective has been achieved.
- 5.1.3 High quality training and a strong wellbeing programme will support progress in tackling high levels of teacher absence. Head-Teachers have also asked that HR support is provided in regular and localised surgeries to support managers address

complex staffing matters quickly.

- 5.1.4 The savings identified in year 1 will be achieved from tighter allocation and tracking of staffing in Primary, Secondary and Special schools. Reductions in high levels of absence costs will also contribute to efficiencies.

## 5.2 Theme 3: Redesign and Improvement

- 5.2.1 Responding to the challenges of the LGBF data- primarily with regards to attainment- Highland Council's Education infrastructure needs to adapt and do things differently to get improved results. A lengthy consultation with Head Teachers has led to the creation of a new model for improvement. Based on the principles of collaboration and empowerment, a structure is being put in place to support schools whilst they work together to deliver meaningful and relevant improvements for their young people and their communities. We will have to move from a centralised model of quality assurance to one based on improving capacity in schools. Training for leadership at all levels will support this new quality improvement approach.

## 5.3 Theme 4: Flexible and Well Managed Workforce

- 5.3.1 Alongside engaging with the national review of ASN this year, we are also in the process of delivering the Early Years expansion programme. Successful engagement with both these initiatives will involve the flexible deployment of staff. Staff moving into new roles will need training and transition support. HR and education leaders will ensure this is in place.
- 5.3.2 In year 1 the opportunity to 'overspend' in PSAs and supply teaching will be removed and ASGs will work to their annual allocations. The challenge of funding following the child will be managed through better deployment of staff and a model which enables staff movement across the ASG. This will remove ad hoc additional and unnecessary spend. In year 2 following extensive training in communication, nurture, resilience, ACE and autism, it is anticipated that levels of support will evidence efficiency in requirements. It is important to clarify that children with severe and complex needs will continue to benefit from high levels of support.

## 6. **Change Fund Priorities**

- 6.1 The Change Fund could accelerate the transformation required in Education. Monies could fund a 'Change Team' to work with schools to develop their capacity to lead quality improvement work whilst also developing improved approaches to learning and teaching. This team will support the transition from our current approach to one which leading research calls a 'self-improving school system'. This is in line with the expectation of the Scottish Government as outlined in the *2019 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan* for education and the recent materials from Education Scotland about the need to develop an empowered system.
- 6.2 It is anticipated that this team will also facilitate staff training in communication, nurture, resilience and autism thereby helping staff to become better skilled leading to a more inclusive education system. Monies could also support additional HR staff to work in localities. Finally, additional monies could fund the set-up of a whole system approach to staff wellbeing to relieve stress and reduce absence.

## **7. Implications**

- 7.1 Resource - To support a sustained response to the messages from the LGBF data and from Head-Teachers, resource is required as per paragraph 6 above.
- 7.2 Legal - There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations of this report.
- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - The absence of stable staffing is felt most acutely in rural areas and work to improve this will help these communities. The fair and transparent allocation of resource will also support equality of provision.
- 7.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever - There are no climate change implications arising from this report.
- 7.5 Risk - There are no risk implications arising from this report.
- 7.6 Gaelic - There are no Gaelic implications arising as a direct result of this report.

Designation: Interim Director of Care and Learning

Date: 21 February 2019

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