

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	EDU/20/24

Committee: Education

Date: 12 September 2024

Report Title: Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report informs the Education Committee of the Council's updated and revised Learning, Teaching & Assessment Framework. The need to develop this framework, based on best practice and inclusive approaches, was outlined to Members in the 2022 - 2027 Education and Learning Service Plan. The report highlights our continued effort to improve the consistency and quality of learning and teaching in early years, primary and secondary settings. It outlines the ongoing engagement of officers with school teams to support implementation of the framework in practice.

1.2 In addition to the ongoing work in Highland around learning, teaching and assessment, the report highlights engagement with colleagues from The Northern Alliance to develop a learning and teaching toolkit. The Northern Alliance is a Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) comprising of eight local authorities, spanning across the North and West of Scotland: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar (Western Isles), Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands. The RIC has a shared vision to improve the educational outcomes and life chances of our children and young people through collaboration for improvement.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the expectations placed on all practitioners to ensure high quality learning, teaching and assessment.
- ii. Note that the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Framework will provide guidance and support for individual schools in developing learning, teaching and assessment approaches to best meet the needs of their school communities.
- iii. Approve the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework (Appendix 1)
- iv. Note the ongoing partnership through the Northern Alliance to develop further resources for school practitioners in learning, teaching and assessment.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - There are no additional financial costs in relation to the introduction of this framework.
- 3.2 Legal – there are no implications associated with this report.
- 3.3 Risk – there are no risks associated with this report.
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – there are no implications associated with this report.
- 3.5 Gaelic - There are no specific implications for Gaelic learners. The framework is relevant to learning, teaching & assessment in Gaelic and English.

4. Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment – Summary

- 4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening was undertaken on 8 August 2024. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.
- 4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there will be positive impacts on all children and young people from the introduction of the framework. All children and young people should experience high quality teaching and learning which should provide improved outcomes. It has therefore been concluded that a full impact assessment is not required.

4.3.3 Impact Assessment Area Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment

Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and Young People – positive• Children affected by disability – positive• Older adults – no impact
Socio-economic	no impact
Human Rights	positive
Children’s Rights and Well-being	positive
Island and Mainland Rural	no impact
Climate Change	no impact
Data Rights	no impact

5. Highland Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Highland Council's Learning, Teaching & Assessment Framework (Appendix 1) is a clear statement of expectation to ensure a consistently high standard of provision across all schools and sectors.
- 5.1.2 A Council-wide Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework will provide school teams with a shared understanding and language of high-quality learning and teaching. It is designed to exemplify the standards expected and share best practice. The framework aims to help individual schools design approaches to support the continuous improvement of learning, teaching and assessment.
- 5.1.3 Drawing on the principles of Curriculum for Excellence together with national guidance and [GTCS Teaching Standards](#), the framework can be used together with the [Collaborative Improvement Framework](#) to support the growth of a culture of self-improvement in learning and teaching across our schools.
- 5.1.4 The Highland Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework builds on [How Good is Our School? \(4th Edition\)](#) to provide exemplification of standards through illustrations, references, and guidance.

5.2 Development of the Framework

- 5.2.1 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework has been developed in partnership with headteachers, Associate Assessors and education officers. The team has varied experience across early years, primary and secondary settings, including rural, 3-18, Additional Support for Learning and Gaelic Medium. This is to ensure the framework is relevant and applicable to all Highland schools.
- 5.2.2 Children and young people have had the opportunity to contribute their views through focus groups. Their statements relate to each organiser (Learning and Engagement; Quality of Teaching and the Use of Assessment) and detail the impact teaching approaches can have on them when enacted to a high standard.
- 5.2.3 The framework was finalised in August 2024 and will be reviewed on a yearly basis in light of inspection outcomes and feedback from schools.

5.3 Implementation

- 5.3.1 In August and September 2023, all Highland Headteachers were invited to attend two learning, teaching and assessment training sessions delivered by Education Scotland colleagues. Overall, feedback from the sessions was positive with Headteachers cascading key messages to their school teams and using the information to support self-evaluation gradings. The key messages feature within the Highland Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework.

5.3.2 Primary Strategic Meetings

Learning and teaching has been the theme for recent primary headteacher strategic meetings. These events were attended by almost all Headteachers. Headteachers of schools where good and very good practice had been identified had the opportunity to share practice with colleagues. This element of the meetings was very well

received, with feedback reflecting the wish of Headteachers to have more opportunities to learn from one another.

5.3.3 **Highland Secondary Headteachers Association (HSHA)**

Over the course of last session secondary headteachers have been working together on reviewing good practice in learning, teaching and assessment with a particular focus being learning & engagement and quality of learning. Headteachers shared with colleagues, examples of good practice. In addition, examples of good practice from other Local Authorities were considered. A number of Headteachers then participated in learning visits to other schools to review learning & teaching. These opportunities to visit other schools and learn from colleagues were appreciated by Headteachers as a professional learning opportunity. Further visits are planned for the coming session.

5.4 **The provision of professional learning to realise improvement:**

5.4.1 **Highland Spotlights**

Highland Spotlights were developed in response to Headteacher feedback requesting more opportunities to share practice and learn from one another. Highland Spotlights are live sessions in which invited Headteachers share an element of practice which has been identified as good or very good. These are recorded and accompanied by a linked self-evaluation resource which can be used to support improvement planning in schools.



5.4.2 **Digital Resources**

The Highland Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework is built around three organisers: Learning and Engagement; Quality of Teaching and the Use of Assessment. For each organiser further support is available to school in an electronic format which gives teachers a visual and written illustration of what this looks like when done well. These illustrations are intended to support professional dialogue and critical reflection during ongoing self-evaluation. These are broad illustrations which should be able to be applied in any type of school.

5.4.3 **Digital Resources**

Examples of the resources for positive relationships are provided below:

Learning and engagement

Positive relationships

The classroom culture is one where everyone feels safe, respected and valued. Relationships are positive, nurturing and trusting with a strong focus on the learning. As a result, everyone understands and ensures that it is okay to make mistakes or not know. Mistakes are used as an opportunity for further learning and to determine misconceptions, misunderstandings or lack of knowledge. Adults recognise that positive relationships support wellbeing, and that dignity needs to be safeguarded in all interactions.

Within the setting and classroom there is a shared language which promotes words and actions demonstrating:

- a desire to be challenged
- a willingness to work together for positive results
- a willingness to work independently for positive results
- the ability to learn from mistakes and failures
- emotional resilience
- a love of learning and self-improvement
- a feedback seeking classroom
- a collaborative culture in the classroom where everyone is supported
- a commitment to children's rights

GTC Professional Standards

2.2.2

Demonstrate a depth of knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of teachers in establishing and sustaining positive and purposeful relationships across the learning community.

Health and Social Care Standards

1.1

I am accepted and valued whatever my needs, ability, gender, age, faith, mental health status, race, background or sexual orientation.

There are some differences because everyone is a different age and everyone has different resources and we all share everything that we might need.

Tara, P7



Learning and engagement

Positive relationships

HGIOS

2.3

The learning environment is built on positive, nurturing and appropriately challenging relationships which lead to high-quality learning outcomes.

3.1

The whole learning community has a shared understanding of wellbeing and the children's rights. All stakeholders promote a climate where children and young people feel safe and secure.

HGIOLC

2.3

Practitioners' sensitivity and responsiveness significantly contributes to the wellbeing of each individual child and their family.

HGIORS

Our learning and teaching

Our staff plan learning and assessment well so that we feel a sense of achievement. Their approaches support us to have positive mental health.

Looking outwards.....

[Highland Spotlights: Leadership and Rights \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Canberra Primary School summarised inspection findings, South Lanarkshire Council 04/06/24 \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

[Abernyte Primary School Summarised Inspection Findings, Perth and Kinross Council 12 December 2023 \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Self-evaluation ideas.....

2.3

How well are we enabling learners to become independent learners and develop the four capacities?

3.1

How well do all staff know and understand GIRFEC, the wellbeing indicators, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

How well do all staff understand their role and responsibility in supporting learners' health and wellbeing?

How well do we ensure that all children feel safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included?

- How effectively do I build relationships with learners?
- How well do I look beyond behaviour to understand needs?
- How well do I involve children and young people in planning learning that meets their needs and interests and is sufficiently challenging?
- How well do we as an education setting recognise and plan for learners who are at risk of disengaging or being excluded?
- To what extent do we take account of adverse experiences which may impact on behaviour and how effectively do we respond to this?
- How well do our policies align to values around building positive relationships and children's rights?
- How consistent is the understanding of relational approaches across all staff? To what extent are our staff trained in these approaches?

Helpful links...

[Supporting the wellbeing of our C&YP - WSA to Wellbeing \(wellbeinghighland.co.uk\)](#)

[The Compassionate and Connected Classroom: A health and wellbeing curricular resource for upper primary | Resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

[PPR Framework and Guidance 2021.pdf Applying Nurturing Approaches](#)

[Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing Profile \(GMWP\) \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

[Promoting positive relationships and behaviour in educational settings | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

5.4.4 Cooperative Learning Academy

Increasingly it is being highlighted that we need to prepare our young people with the skills for the 21st Century and many of the papers written on this stress that working with others is vital. Pupils need to learn how to work AS a group as well as IN a group. This can only be done if the groups are structured properly so that all pupils in the group are accountable to the group through working together towards a common goal (task). Social skills and the reviewing of these is fundamental to this process. Cooperative learning is an educational approach to organise classrooms into academic and social learning experience. This session, we are reintroducing a 3-day training course in the effective use of cooperative learning in classroom as a means of increasing pupil engagement and supporting learners to be active participants in the learning process.

6. Northern Alliance Learning and Teaching Toolkit

- 6.1 Highland is participating along with the 7 other Local Authorities in the Northern Alliance to develop a learning & teaching toolkit. Experienced practitioners from each of our eight local authorities have been working together to create 'overviews' for key themes to support learning, teaching & assessment. Each overview provides key features of highly effective practice, along with real life examples. Alongside the overviews are self-evaluation tools to support teams to evaluate their practice within each theme. The Toolkit is intended to support improvement activity within schools and settings. Over the course of this session, a team of seconded experienced practitioners from each of the local authorities will oversee the development of the toolkit and work with a small number of schools/ settings to test it and make further improvements, based on user feedback. The toolkit will then be shared more widely with schools to assist in their evaluation of their practice and, through targeted activity, build a shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment - thereby reducing variation and improving quality.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Every student in Highland has the entitlement to the highest quality learning, teaching and assessment. This framework will support school leaders and teachers, in partnership with learners, support staff and parents, to have a positive learning environment that maximises learning and progress through high expectations.

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Date: 15/08/2024

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Highland Learning, Teaching & Assessment Framework

The Highland Council: Education and Learning Learning, Teaching & Assessment Framework

1. Introduction

High quality learning, teaching and assessment is key to improving learner outcomes. Our learners have an entitlement to the highest quality learning and teaching. The purpose of this Learning, Teaching and Assessment framework is to provide a clear statement of expectation to ensure a consistently high standard of provision across all schools and settings. The framework aims to promote a common understanding among school staff of what constitutes highly effective practice which would create the right culture and conditions for learning to support the vision Highland has for its young people.

The context within which learning takes place varies from school to school and sector to sector. However, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment framework recognises that there are key features of effective classroom practice which are required to ensure consistently high standard of provision. This framework will support school leaders and teachers in partnership with learners, staff and parents to have a positive learning environment that maximises learning and progress through high expectations.

2. Rationale

The key to a successful learning, teaching and assessment framework is the extent to which it has a positive impact upon the learning process in our schools. This framework is deliberately concise and focuses upon those elements of the learning and teaching process which will make the biggest difference to the quality of learning and teaching in our schools. Schools should develop their own framework in line with this document, which may extend beyond these elements if so desired.

This framework is intended to have a positive impact upon the quality of the learning and teaching process in Highland. The framework should be used together with the Collaborative Improvement Framework to support the growth of a culture of self-improvement in learning, teaching and assessment across our schools. This document links directly with Quality Indicator 2.3 in [How Good is Our School \(4th Edition\)](#) and is designed to help staff in their reflection and improvement process.

3. The Fundamental Building Block of Good Practice

The framework is based around three key organisers identified nationally as contributing to effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment: Learning and Engagement; Quality of Teaching and the Use of Assessment.

Organiser 1 - Learning and Engagement

The establishment of an inclusive, positive learning environment and an ethos of achievement at classroom level are keys to effective learning, teaching and assessment. Effective learning, teaching and assessment is also dependent on the relationships established at classroom level through interactions between staff and learners and between learners themselves in group or whole class settings.

We recognise that quality learning flourishes in a nurturing environment of trust, respect and responsibility. The fundamental building block to establishing a positive climate for learning and engagement are:

- Ensuring learners are active participants who are fully engaged, resilient, highly motivated and interact well during lessons.
- Ensuring learners understand the purpose of their learning and lead the learning where appropriate (relevance and context of learning are present and clear).
- Learning is built on previous learning experience.
- Learning is challenging and well matched to learners' needs and interests.
- Learners have choice and increasing responsibility for their learning.
- Digital technology is appropriately used to enrich, support and challenge learning.
- The language of learning provides and supports opportunities for learner dialogue.
- Learning from mistakes is recognised as vital for maximum development.
- Learners can apply their new learning in a range of unfamiliar contexts.
- A range of resources are used which are engaging and relevant for the learning experience.
- There is a positive, rich learning environment (classroom organisation, displays, accessibility to resources)

Organiser 2 – Quality of Teaching

Highland Council, in consultation with staff, has developed an overview of the key features of high-quality teaching. These include:

- A clear lesson structure is apparent, whilst providing opportunities for flexibility based on ongoing assessment of learning throughout the lesson.
- Learning Intentions and Success Criteria are co-created with learners and are effectively revisited throughout the lesson. These should build on prior learning.
- Explanations and instructions are clear to all learners.
- A range of effective questioning techniques are used by the teacher with appropriate response or thinking time given and opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills.
- A balance of whole class, group and independent learning is used to meet the needs of learners.
- Pace, challenge and support are effectively planned in every lesson (effective differentiation).
- Plenaries are used consistently to 'round off' learning.
- Resources are appropriately used – including digital technologies.
- Teachers are actively engaged with students throughout the learning process – teaching, assessing and intervening.

Organiser 3 – Use of Assessment

To ensuring high quality learning, assessment also requires to be part of daily learning and teaching, and periodically a wider range of evidence is evaluated to ensure that learning is on track and to enable the teacher to plan, record and report on progress. The periodic assessment activity is part of our ongoing assessment and moderation practices.

The principles of assessment for learning will underpin ongoing assessment so that learners are actively involved in their learning and are provided with feedback to help improve their performance and raise attainment. Effective ongoing assessment ongoing strategies are evident when:

- Learners understand clearly what they are trying to learn, and what is expected of them.
- Classroom discussion, questioning and tasks promote and generate learning.
- Learners are given feedback about the quality of their work, and what they can do to make it better.
- Learners are given advice about how to go about making improvements.
- Learners are given the appropriate support to complete tasks.
- Self and peer assessment is used to increase learner responsibility and a better understanding of expectations.
- Use of plenary to capture the intended learning and evaluate success.

6. Conclusion

The Highland Council's Learning, Teaching and Assessment framework is a clear statement of expectation to ensure a consistently high standard of provision across all schools and sectors. In the delivery of this framework, it is the responsibility of Headteachers and their staff to contextualise what this means for their setting, as the decisions that shape the education of learners are made at classroom and school level. The role of central officers will be to support the development of effective practices to ensure decision making within the system is focused on making improvements to learning in classrooms, and subsequently improving outcomes for learners.