

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	16 September 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen City National Improvement Framework Plan
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/210
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Shona Milne
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to implement the refreshed Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Plan for 2025/26 following submission of the Self-Evaluation and Plan to the Scottish Government.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the content of the service Self-Evaluation and Plan contained in Appendix A;
- 2.2 instructs the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to implement the proposed Aberdeen City National Improvement Framework Plan 25/26; and
- 2.3 instructs the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to maintain a review of the 25/26 Plan in light of any impacting national legislative or policy provisions and advise Committee of any required changes in due course.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Plan is a statutory submission to the Scottish Government that requires to be provided by the end of September each year. The document presents an analysis of performance and a plan for improvement in keeping with the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 legislation and guidance. The analysis is informed by and informs School Improvement priorities and the Children's Services Plan.
- 3.2 There is considerable evidence that the Aberdeen City Council Quality Improvement Framework is improving central oversight of the quality of provision and clarifying expectations. There is evidence that inspection outcomes are improving but there remains some variation. There is a need to

continue to review arrangements, and drive the consistent application of the Framework, on a yearly basis.

- 3.3 Most school leaders make effective use of data dashboards and most staff have increased confidence in identifying the gap at class, faculty and school level. Our work in this area will continue given the importance of data in driving improvement.
- 3.4 There is evidence that some middle leaders seeking headships have not fully developed their skills in the leadership of change. Middle leaders in both Primary and Secondary need to be clearer of their responsibilities in relation to school improvement. This learning has been factored into the Plan for 2025/26.
- 3.5 Challenges in recruiting staff to some secondary specialisms continues to require creative approaches to timetabling and a reliance on city campus to provide course choices. The service will continue to work with national partners to address these challenges.
- 3.6 There is early evidence that the work being undertaken around the Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment Toolkit is beginning to have a positive impact on quality. There is also evidence that taking a focussed approach to Learning and Teaching across Early Learning and Childcare is helping realise gains. An increased use of the Toolkit, clearer focus on Learning, Teaching and Assessment in our National Improvement Framework Plan and broader use of Associate Assessors should help accelerate progress in schools over the next school session.
- 3.7 The service is pleased to see continued improvements in mental health and wellbeing among pupils, with reductions in loneliness, low mood, and risk of depression. This work will be maintained.
- 3.8 Work on developing the curriculum at school level and through ABZ campus has ensured almost all young people have access to a curriculum which meets their needs and are supported well in order to achieve. A reducing number of young people are currently on a flexible pathway. Tracking systems established and tested over 2024/25 will now be fully implemented. These systems will allow greater scrutiny of attainment throughout the year ensuring support can be targeted timeously and should help realise further improvement.
- 3.9 Data across ACEL (Achievement in Curriculum for Excellence Levels) is generally improving, however there is a dip at P1 this session, driven in part by the increase in the number of children with identified additional support needs in this year group. Individual schools have interventions in place to address this, however there is some evidence that this issue may be apparent in other Local Authorities. We need to work with our Early Learning and Childcare settings and partners to address this.
- 3.10 There has been a significant increase in presentations at the Senior phase. There is also evidence that breadth and depth is improving. Attainment at the senior phase will be further reviewed when Insight is published in September

given the broader range of courses now available to young people in our schools.

- 3.11 The work undertaken on the Behaviour Plan has improved the professional learning on offer to staff, ensuring all staff are aware of how to report an incident. A targeted approach has been developed to support schools or staff members where there is an increase in the number of incidents being reported. There is evidence staff are now confident in reporting an incident.
- 3.11 Our mandatory training has been refreshed and now ensures all staff have access to de-escalation training. The recent Additional Support Needs Festival was well attended with staff valuing inputs from practitioners. This is beginning to increase readiness to learn in the targeted group. Systems are now in place to track the impact of professional learning through gathering data 6 months after the original input to determine if confidence levels remain high. This data will allow us to ensure learning is impacting practice in the classroom. This approach will continue to be developed further over 2025/26.
- 3.12 The Northern Lights programme has seen a complete refresh of digital resources for staff and learners as well as upgrades to the teaching boards in classrooms. This investment, along with the work done with Aberdeen Computing Collaborative, has been welcomed by the service and will provide our learners with access to state of the art equipment to develop the skills to them to fully engage in the digital curriculum.
- 3.13 The significant increase in pupil population has presented challenges, but the school roll is now stabilising, with primary school rolls seeing a very slight decrease and secondary school rolls increasing slightly as young people move through the system. As a result of the changed cohort, the service is unlikely to meet its Stretch Aims set in 2022.
- 3.14 Members will note that officers have streamlined the number of areas identified for improvement/ development over session 2025/26. This mirrors the approach taken in ELC where a concentrated focus on leadership and pedagogy has ensured improvement across all settings.
- 3.15 Priorities for improvement have been scrutinised by Education Scotland who have endorsed the direction of travel.
- 3.16 The Strategy Board has reviewed the Plan to ensure the interconnection of Council business is reflected in the final Plan presented for Committee approval.
- 3.17 Officers propose to continue to keep members of the Education and Children's Services Committee sighted on progress through the now well established tracking appendix linked to Performance Reports.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The costs of all improvement actions will be undertaken within existing budgets and grants

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 requires that, as the Education Authority, Aberdeen City Council has a duty to:
- Enhance equity and promote a reduction in inequalities of educational outcome experienced by pupils because of socio-economic disadvantage.
 - Endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education with a view to achieving the strategic priorities of the National Improvement Framework.
 - Undertake annual planning and reporting and annual school improvement planning to address the four priorities of the National Improvement Framework
 - Ensure strategic decisions are taken with due regard as to how they will address, or help to address, the disparity of educational outcomes which exist between the most and least disadvantaged and at the same time raise attainment for all.
- 5.2 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 ("the 2014 Act") places further duties on local authorities and other bodies to more actively collaborate and take action to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Only positive environmental impacts have been identified. On-going promotion of pupil voice and their participation in decision making will help develop citizens who consider environmental implications in later life.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not improving outcomes for learners	Changes to our provision and service delivery will enable primary prevention and early intervention thereby reducing potential risk.	L	Yes
Compliance	Non-compliance with legislation, financial	Mitigated by services being	L	Yes

	claims, and legal challenge (tribunals).	realigned to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City and prevent escalation of need.		
Operational	Staff are overwhelmed, which leads to low morale as staff feel unable to meet the educational and well-being needs of young people.	Mitigated by staff engagement on the draft National Improvement Framework and the ongoing commitment to delivering high quality professional learning for staff to ensure that they meet their statutory duties under the relevant Acts.	L	Yes
Financial	Risk of not having sufficient resource.	Mitigated by realigning service delivery and resource through the National Improvement Framework to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City and make best use of Officer time.	L	yes
Reputational	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	Data scrutiny and reporting enhance the Council's reputation for transparency and accountability	L	Yes

Environment / Climate	Risk of lack of awareness of environmental/climate issues.	Mitigated by breadth and scope of Curriculum for Excellence.	L	Yes
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8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement Our partnership aims to ensure that every young person in our city is provided with educational opportunities and support that will give them the best possible start in life.	The education service self-evaluation and improvement plan is well positioned to support a closing of the poverty related attainment gap.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People	The detail within this report supports the delivery of Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes 4 to 9 in the refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
Regional and City Strategies Children's Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan	The universal provision of education is fully aligned to the Prevention Strategy and a key partner to the Children's Services Plan.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	NA

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

All Committee papers presented over the 2024/25 school session.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A–Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Evaluation and Plan

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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