

**NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTTISH EDUCATION**

---

**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The First Minister announced the publication of a first draft of the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015. The publication of the framework has been followed by an extensive period of consultation by the Scottish Government to help refine its contents and focus to ensure it helps meet the key strategic drivers of raising attainment and addressing educational inequalities.

1.2 The draft strategy and anticipated consultation timeline was presented for the information of the Community Services Committee at its meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 however there was limited time to consider the framework in any detail. It was agreed that the Education Service would attend the various engagement events planned by the Scottish Government and draw together a draft response for council consideration prior to submission. The final publication of the framework is anticipated in December 2015 and the Scottish Government have confirmed they will accept a response following the council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

**1.3 Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Note the publication of the draft national improvement framework for Scottish education by the Scottish Government.
- b) Note the programme of engagement events arranged by the Scottish Government to consult on the draft framework
- c) Note the key issues highlighted in relation to the draft national improvement framework and the critical importance of this framework to the delivery of national and local priorities for education.
- d) Note the involvement of Education Services staff in the improvement framework consultation activities
- e) Agree the submission of the draft response outlined at appendix A from Argyll and Bute Council to the Scottish Government.

**NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTTISH EDUCATION**

---

**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The First Minister announced the publication of a first draft of the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015. The publication of the framework has been followed by an extensive period of consultation by the Scottish Government to help refine its contents and focus to ensure it helps meet the key strategic drivers of raising attainment and addressing educational inequalities.
- 2.2 The draft strategy and anticipated consultation timeline was presented for the information of the Community Services Committee at its meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015, however there was limited time to consider the framework in any detail. It was agreed that the Education Service would attend the various engagement events planned by the Scottish Government and draw together a draft response for council consideration prior to submission. The final publication of the framework is anticipated in December 2015 and the Scottish Government have confirmed they will accept a response following the council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council:
- a) Note the publication of the draft national improvement framework for Scottish education by the Scottish Government.
  - b) Note the programme of engagement events arranged by the Scottish Government to consult on the draft framework
  - c) Note the key issues highlighted in relation to the draft national improvement framework and the critical importance of this framework to the delivery of national and local priorities for education.
  - d) Note the involvement of Education Services staff in the improvement framework consultation activities.
  - e) Agree the submission of the draft response outlined at appendix A from Argyll and Bute Council to the Scottish Government.

## 4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The Scottish Government is committed to developing an outcomes based framework for improving and reporting on the progress of Scottish Education and to provide an increasingly sophisticated assessment than the sole reliance on senior phase SCQF qualifications attainment or input measures such as teacher numbers or pupil: teacher ratios in isolation. In support of this work, the Scottish Government has worked closely with CoSLA and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) amongst other contributors. The framework is designed to build on the development of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

4.2 The draft framework contributes to the Scottish Government's vision for education:

- **Excellence through raising attainment:** ensuring every child achieves the highest standard in literacy and numeracy and the right range of skills, qualifications and achievements to allow them to succeed; and
- **Achieving equity:** ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed.

4.3 The Scottish Government's key priorities are indicated as:

- Improvement in attainment, specifically in reading, writing and numeracy
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Improvements in sustained school leaver destinations for all young people

4.4 The framework will bring together key information to evaluate performance and will use that data and evidence to plan improvements for children. There are key features that are summarised below:

- New national standardised assessments at P1, P4, P7 and S3 which will focus on progress on literacies and numeracy
- Greater focus on progress in relation to children's health and wellbeing
- From the above, improved understanding for pupils of their progress in learning and for parents about their child's progress
- An outline of the key drivers of improvement including school improvement, school leadership, teacher professionalism, assessment of children's progress, parental involvement and performance information.
- An outline of roles and responsibilities for teachers, head teachers, parents, local authorities, the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and other partner agencies such as Universities/ Colleges, the National

Parent Forum, ADES, CoSLA, and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)

- 4.5 The implementation of the framework is scheduled into stage 1 activities (2015-17) and stage 2 (2017 onwards).
- 4.6 The Scottish Government have conducted a series of regional engagement workshop events for education authorities complemented by the planned Scottish Government/ ADES/ CoSLA round table event and Directors of Education meetings throughout October and November.
- 4.7 The Scottish Government contacted all schools directly and invited responses to the draft framework. In drawing together a council response to the draft framework, the Education Services contacted head teachers in each school and the centrally based staff to request copies of any such responses or to provide their opinions on the content and implications for the delivery of education in Argyll and Bute. This feedback has contributed to the proposed response attached at Appendix A. In addition the Education Services have had regard to the responses drawn together by the Association of Directors of Education (ADES), CoSLA and the teaching trade unions. Local consultation with the teaching trade unions in respect of this proposed response has also taken place through the joint secretary of the teaching trade unions.
- 4.8 The Scottish Government has indicated it will consider all consultation responses to the draft framework and produce an updated draft in December 2015.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The first draft of the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education was published on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015 and outlines its support for the Scottish Government's vision and priorities for education. The draft framework will be consulted on between September and November 2015. Appendix A outlines a draft response from Argyll and Bute Council to following participation in a series of engagement events.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – The development of the National Framework for Scottish Education supports the central purpose of the Scottish Government and the delivery on the national outcomes. The framework would support delivery of the SOA Outcomes 1 and 3.
- 6.2 Financial – No direct implications arising directly from this report. There may be a financial consequence arising from the adoption, implementation and reporting requirements of any standardised assessment model.
- 6.3 Legal – No implications arising directly from this report
- 6.4 HR – No implications arising directly from this report

- 6.5 Equalities – one of the two main tenets of the Scottish Government’s vision for education is to address educational inequalities
- 6.6 Risk – No implications arising directly from this report
- 6.7 Customer Service – No implications arising directly from this report

**Cleland Sneddon**  
**Executive Director of Community Services**

**Councillor Rory Colville**  
**Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning**

28 October 2015

For further information contact:  
Ann Marie Knowles, Head of Education,  
Tel: 01369 708474,  
email: [annmarie.knowles@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:annmarie.knowles@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Appendix A: Draft Argyll and Bute Council Consultation Response to “Creating a Smarter Scotland: A draft national improvement framework for Scottish Education”

## **Appendix A: response from Argyll and Bute Council to the Draft National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education**

### Introduction

Argyll and Bute Council welcomes the development of a national improvement framework for education and the underpinning principle of moving the Scottish education system from good to excellent by building on the strengths developed under the Curriculum for Excellence. The framework reflects one of the key priorities in the “20/20 Vision” published in 2014 by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and supports a focus on outcomes for learners to gauge the quality of education in Scotland rather than narrower input measures or sole focus on senior phase SCQF examination results.

The national aspirations to address education inequalities and to raise attainment are recognised by everyone involved in children’s education and are to be supported. Legislation alone and the consequent creation of statutory duties linked to these priorities will not however deliver on these complex problems. They should be framed alongside more holistic assessments of a child’s development including raising literacy and numeracy skills, reinforcing wellness (health and wellbeing) and developing employability skills.

### The Building Blocks – Stitching Together Policy and Actions

Scotland has many of the legislative or policy building blocks of an excellent education system already in place including Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC); a coherent 3-18 child centred curriculum for excellence; the early years collaborative approach working towards national stretch aims and developmental milestones for children; Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce; Teaching Scotland’s Future driving the quality of our teacher professionals and teacher leadership; the many provisions in the Children and Young Persons Act, Additional Support for Learning Acts, etc.

An improved narrative is needed to demonstrate how these building blocks link coherently with each other. The National Improvement Framework could therefore more clearly articulate how these policy strands and statutory duties come together to form a coherent representation of a single education system that is based on the learner’s journey and experience. As short illustration, by the time a child enters P1 many of the impacts of inequalities (including but not limited to education inequalities) will be evident supporting the need to work with families from the pre birth stage through early level education and childcare and on into school to improve the life chances of children. The proposed application of relatively narrow standardised assessments in primary at P1, P4 and P7 do not appear to have had regard to the holistic child developmental assessments under the early years collaborative that take place up to the age of 8 years. It would make considerable sense to consider the assessment of a child’s progress as a single system from pre birth right through to leaving secondary school rather than having overlapping,

potentially duplicative or contradictory assessments being undertaken with the same child.

Once that learner journey and assessment framework is established, all future policy development should be impact assessed to ensure that it is complementary to the framework and no policy is implemented in isolation of the wider system.

### Standardised Testing and Assessment

Testing and assessment and the subsequent use of data are important tools for securing improvement. Data that is collected needs to be relevant for pupils, parents, teaching professionals and the production of data is not an outcome in its own right. What is collected must primarily support the consideration of individual learner's needs and progress and be capable of supporting further improvement. Systems such as the current national sample based Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) doesn't contribute to improvements at that individual level and is of questionable value in influencing improvement due to the nature of the small sample size .

The focus of the primary level assessments should be on a wider assessment of the child's progress relating to the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators within the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach. They should articulate with the developmental milestones extending from the early years collaborative, and include an assessment of wider literacy and numeracy and not the suggested narrower reading and writing focus.

The approach also should consider how the standardised testing contributes to the teaching professional's understanding of the four capacities as articulated by curriculum for excellence (Building the Curriculum 5). The framework should also assist with helping to moderate all practitioner's understanding of the levels in relation to each capacity and improving the consistency of assessment.

A consistent national approach to assessment and recording of data will support improved use of management information and a potential extension to the Insight system could collate data at different levels to allow for analysis and improvement planning but must avoid the development of league table reporting that lacks context and produces unintended consequences as experienced under the 5 to 14 curriculum.

The production of data for reporting should not be the primary focus of this work and significant care should be taken with how data is used for reporting purposes (see below).

### Publication and Reporting

There is a considerable concern regarding the publication and reporting of standardised assessment data as highlighted by the ADES representative on the NIF

Working Group. Whilst there is an appetite for available data to be reported at a national level to provide assurance about the progress on the priorities articulated in the NIF, the primary purpose of assessment is to support classroom practitioners to form professional judgements on the progress and learning needs of a child which can form a dialogue with the pupil and parents. Standardised tests should form only one aspect of that key professional judgement and is a fundamental principle of the Curriculum for Excellence. This is also correctly a key policy tenet for the teaching trade unions.

Release of testing data at school or even authority level presents considerable risks that the focus moves to the compilation of league table comparisons which drive a focus on teaching to pass standardised tests rather than on supporting individual learner needs. The latter reflects the discredited 5-14 approach and extreme care will be needed that the progress achieved over the last decade in implementing Curriculum for Excellence is not lost. ADES has suggested four models that would protect against reported data creating this negative outcome one of which proposes a change in legislation to prevent misuse of the data. The Council would strongly support a change in legislation to prevent inappropriate release and use of data.

### Improvement Support

There is considerable concern at the deployment of the £100m Attainment Fund and the targeting methodology that has seen the greater part of this funding being allocated to 7 large urban authorities. Their issues in relation to SIMD deprivation indicators are without doubt a significant challenge. However, when a large rural authority the size and diversity of Argyll and Bute with many challenging contexts receives around £20,000 from a national fund of £100m, there are serious question marks over the equity of the arrangements. The sum is also targeted to a single primary school which raises further questions about the planning for using the Attainment Fund to address the twin priorities of raising attainment and addressing inequalities.

There appears to have been little consideration of the challenges faced by rural authorities, those with island communities and those with very large geographies. Arguably, a child from a deprived household in a remote rural or island location with restricted access to specialist supports faces significantly greater inequalities than a counterpart family in a large urban setting which, although having concentrations of deprivation, offers easier access to facilities and supports.

The NIF should also recognise other aspects of inequalities and avoid a sole concentration on deprivation (SIMD) deciles. Closing the inequalities gap for pupils with additional learning needs, or looked after children, or ESOL children, etc are equally important. It is also important that the NIF represents wider achievement and again does not focus solely on senior phase examinations and standardised test results.



The launch of the Raising Attainment for All (RAFA) initiative, the use of the Attainment Fund and the development of the NIF do not appear to be developing in alignment and it would have been sensible to agree these elements together as a package of improvement measures coherently linked to the other building blocks outlined above.

I would hope the above comments are helpful in reviewing the first draft of the NIF for Education. The Council are fully supportive of the development of an appropriate outcomes focussed improvement framework and would see its adoption as a progressive step in replacing the current limited focus on teacher numbers and senior phase examinations as proxies for the quality of the Scottish education system. It would wish to continue to work in partnership with the Scottish Government, CoSLA, the teaching trade unions and professional bodies, parent bodies and other stakeholders in its development and would expect that partnership approach would be universally accepted. The Council would welcome the opportunity to work alongside the Scottish Government, CoSLA and ADES in contributing to the further development of the NIF.

**Cleland Sneddon**  
**Executive Director of Community Services**  
Tel: 01546 604112  
email: [Cleland.sneddon@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Cleland.sneddon@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

26 November 2015