

## **THE 2019 NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK - IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT**

### **Purpose**

1. To provide the Curriculum and Assessment Board with an overview of the recently published 2019 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan; to identify key curriculum and assessment related priorities contained in the 2019 NIF; and seek agreement from Board members on how they can collectively and individually support further improvement action relevant to the NIF's improvement drivers.

### **The 2019 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan**

2. The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education is designed to help deliver the shared aims of excellence and equity in education. In providing a single, definitive plan for securing educational improvement it is relevant across the education system 3-18 in Scotland. The Plan has also been informed by the data in the NIF Interactive Evidence Report, findings from the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the recommendations from the ICEA. A summary of key NIF data can be found in Annex A of this paper.
3. This paper identifies where the 2019 NIF and Improvement Plan is most pertinent to curriculum and assessment and therefore to the Curriculum and Assessment Board. The NIF drivers are discussed in turn before consideration of how the Board can support further improvement activity.

### **Assessment of Children's Progress**

4. This driver focuses on the range of evidence that indicates what children and young people learn and achieve throughout their education and how well this prepares them for life beyond school. As such, this driver covers curriculum and assessment delivery and is therefore of direct interest to the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Board.
5. The evidence gathered in relation to this driver confirms that teachers are becoming increasingly confident about making judgements on achievement of a CfE level, and the use of national standardised assessments going forward will support consistency in assessment within the broad general education. The evidence from the user review of the first year of the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs) demonstrates that the information generated by the assessments is being used to plan effective next steps in learning. Almost all of the sample schools inspected for the NIF by Education Scotland were evaluated as satisfactory or better in ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion; and latest statistics continue to show positive trends in the numbers of school leavers achieving qualifications, awards and going on to positive destinations.
6. Improvement activity in relation to this driver focuses on continuing to ensure the robustness of data collections which indicate levels of achievement and

attainment. This work includes a review of the SNSAs which will consider and provide recommendations on the compatibility of the assessments with the play based approach to early levels of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), the usefulness of the diagnostic information provided to teachers, how the diagnostic information supports their professional judgement and the future of the assessments themselves.

7. Education Scotland has taken forward activity to support the robustness and reliability of teachers' professional judgements. This support includes a national programme of Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer (QAMSO) events; the development of a Glow Moderation Hub for all practitioners; publication of the literacy and numeracy Benchmarks; regular meetings with local authority assessment coordinators and headteacher meetings within regional collaborative groups.

### **Teacher Professionalism**

8. This driver focuses on the teaching workforce and largely remains within the remit of the Strategic Board for Teacher Education. Ensuring that teachers in Scotland have the professional skills and competencies to support curriculum and assessment delivery is vital to deliver improved outcomes for learners. It should be noted that the NIF includes the assessment of Curriculum for Excellence levels under this improvement driver; an area of significant interest to the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Board.
9. The evidence contained in the 2019 NIF shows that the level of engagement in professional learning is increasing. More than three quarters of active teachers are now engaged in the five yearly cycle of Professional Update, and the number of teachers being awarded GTCS Professional Recognition of their expertise is high and increasing year on year.
10. Improvement actions outlined in the NIF include the commitment by Education Scotland to develop an enhanced package of subject-specific professional learning resources; a topic which was discussed and agreed by the Curriculum and Assessment Board at its October 2018 meeting.

### **School Leadership**

11. The 2019 NIF restates that in the most effective systems, decisions about learning and teaching are made as close to the child or young person as possible. School leaders play a critical role in creating a culture of empowerment and collaboration where curricular and learner pathways are designed and developed to meet the needs of children and young people.
12. Improvement actions in the NIF are focussed around the aim of creating a culture of collaborative and system leadership. Actions include the introduction of The Headteachers' Charter and the introduction of an enhanced package of leadership support from Education Scotland. The increased support from Education Scotland will see more headteachers have the opportunity to participate in leadership programmes.

13. As Curriculum for Excellence places decisions around design, development and delivery with the teaching profession, empowered leadership, at all levels, is vital to the effective delivery of curriculum and assessment in Scotland. Enhanced empowerment and collaboration will in turn provide teachers with the confidence to deliver education in ways that truly meet the individual needs of learners and thus give them the best chance to succeed.

### **Parental Engagement**

14. The 2019 National Improvement Framework recognises that effective engagement with parents and carers is central to improving young people's attainment and achievement.

15. Parental Engagement remains a priority of the Scottish Government and Education Scotland's pre-inspection evidence shows that there are high levels of confidence amongst parents about approaching the school with questions, and that the school gave them advice on how to support their child's learning at home. It also indicates that most parents feel they are being kept informed about the work of the Parent Council.

16. The 2019 National Improvement Framework indicates that improvement priorities will be taken forward across 13 key goals as identified in the joint Scottish Government / COSLA "Learning Together" national action plan. This will include steps to strengthen guidance, develop training and support materials and to improve the links between home and school.

### **School Improvement**

17. This driver looks at the overall quality of education provided by each school in Scotland and its effectiveness in driving further improvement. Identifying areas of concern and delivering improvement brings together a number of factors, some of which are of direct interest to the Curriculum and Assessment Board.

18. The 2019 NIF highlights that almost all of the sample schools inspected by Education Scotland for the NIF in 2017/18 were evaluated as satisfactory or better on 'learning, teaching and assessment', and most were evaluated as being satisfactory or better on raising attainment and achievement. Approaches for assessing and monitoring children's and young people's progress across the broad general education are improving. Staff are using a broader range of assessment evidence to evaluate children's and young people's progress in their learning. However, there is more work to be done to ensure greater account is taken of assessment evidence when planning learning and teaching. Additionally, almost all schools have gained confidence and knowledge in identifying incidences of the poverty-related attainment gap but work continues to ensure that schools identify appropriate interventions and crucially, robustly measure impact.

19. Improvement activity outlined in the 2019 National Improvement Framework includes continued focus on supporting leaders and practitioners across sectors

to further develop their skills to deliver professional learning, to drive innovation and improvement in learning and teaching, to use data to raise attainment and close the poverty related attainment gap, and to continue to improve the capacity of staff to self-evaluate for improvement.

### Performance Information

20. This driver recognises the importance of using data for improvement purposes and focuses on gathering and analysing the data collected from each of the other key drivers of improvement. This year has seen the introduction of a new online NIF Interactive Evidence Report which will provide data, in a more interactive manner, on key measures (the achievement of CfE levels, school leaver qualifications etc) allowing an overview of what we know about Scottish education and the context in which our children and young people learn.
21. The 2019 NIF outlines an intention to continue to support use of the Insight senior phase benchmarking tool at local level and the new BGE Improvement Tool for use by Regional Improvement Collaboratives, local authorities and schools to support school improvement focused dialogue.

### Discussion

22. The 2019 NIF reflects the fact that curriculum and assessment design, development and delivery is central to continued improvement within Scottish education. In light of this and in reference to the evidence and improvement priorities outlined in the NIF, the Curriculum and Assessment Board are invited to:
- Provide comment on the contents of the NIF and the associated development process.
  - Agree how the Board members can collectively or individually support:
    - **school leadership** by supporting the development of creative and innovative curriculum offerings (in both the broad general education and the senior phase) which embrace the entitlements within Curriculum for Excellence and truly meet the needs of learners;
    - the **assessment of learner progress** by aiding the identification of any areas of concern and the development of subsequent improvement activity;
    - **school improvement** by cultivating effective collaboration between education establishments at all stages within the 3-18 learner journey in an effort to support the identification of appropriate educational interventions, measure impact and improve attainment across the board;
    - **teacher professionalism** by promoting the continued development of subject and pedagogical expertise to aid effective curriculum and assessment delivery; and

- **parental engagement** by facilitating more consistent and effective engagement with parent and carer organisations with a view to extending curriculum delivery into the home and ensuring that learners are fully supported in choosing senior phase pathways.
- Discuss whether any aspects of the NIF relevant to curriculum and assessment should be discussed further by the Board and included in the Board's 2019 work plan.

## Annex A

**KEY NIF DATA AND INFORMATION***Achievement of CfE level data:*

- Across combined primary stages (P1, P4 and P7) , 85% of pupils achieved the expected CfE level for their relevant stage in listening and talking; 78% for numeracy, 79% for reading and 74% for writing.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the CfE level relevant for their stage is slightly higher in P1 than the later primary stages.
- For each organiser (reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy) around 90% of S3 pupils achieved Third Level or better.
- For each organiser, a higher proportion of pupils living in the least deprived areas achieved the expected CfE level compared to pupils from the most deprived areas. The performance gap between pupils from the most and least deprived areas generally widens throughout the primary stages. In S3, the performance gap ranged from 10 percentage points (listening and talking) to 14 percentage points (numeracy).
- Girls outperform boys across all stages and across all organisers.
- Pupils who have additional support needs or English as an additional language tend to perform lower than other pupils, at all stages and in all organisers.

*Qualifications data*

- There was a slight fall in the number of Higher entries in 2018 (-1.5%) compared to 2017, but to a lesser extent than the S5 and S6 school roll (-2.4%).
- There were over 61,000 skills-based qualifications, awards and certificates achieved in 2017.
- The proportion of young people in the most deprived areas getting qualifications at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6 is increasing faster than those in the least deprived areas, and an increasing proportion of school leavers in the most deprived areas were in a positive follow- up destination in March 2018.

*Attainment gap*

- Of the 11 key measures to assess progress in narrowing the attainment gap, 9 are showing a narrowing of the gap ; albeit due to a mixed underlying picture and to varying extents. For the other 2 key measures, one will not have any new data to compare until 2019, and the other cannot be compared directly as there has been a change in the data that has been collected.