
Standards and Quality Report and Improvement Plan

Report by Service Director, Children & Young People's Services

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

5 October 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to inform the Executive Committee of the progress made by the Education Service and schools during 2020-21 and to note the improvement priorities for session 2021-22.**
- 1.2 The Standard in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 places a responsibility on Local Authorities to provide schooling for children and to ensure continuous improvement of the education system. The 2019/20 Standards and Quality Report provides a high level summary of the performance of schools in line with the Education Service Improvement Plan. It notes but attainment and achievement across all aspects of service delivery.
- 1.3 The Standard & Quality Report is an evaluation of academic session 2020 -21 and draws on a range of data/information to support its conclusion (Appendix A). This report acknowledges the challenges faced by schools as a result of COVID-19 and the subsequent two periods of lockdown, but also highlights a number of successes and achievements across all sectors.
- 1.4 The Improvement Plan is a statement of our objectives for academic session 2021-22 (Appendix B). This Plan is a slimmed down Plan which takes cognisance of the recovery phase for education and a Build Back Better approach as outlined by Scottish Government. It is also important to note the inclusion of Inspire Learning as a key driver for improvement in schools.
- 1.5 Both documents evidence a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in the Borders and their families.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Executive Committee note both Reports, namely 'Standards & Quality Report 2020-21' (Appendix A) and 'Education Improvement Plan 2021-22' (Appendix B).**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Standard in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 places a responsibility on Local Authorities to provide schooling for children and to ensure continuous improvement of the education system.
- 3.2 In 2006, an amendment to legislation placed a responsibility on Local Authorities to prepare and publish an annual report setting out:
- (a) The steps taken to reduce inequalities of outcomes for pupils.
 - (b) The steps taken to comply with the duties imposed on it by legislation and Scottish Government recommendations.
 - (c) A statement of improvement objectives.
- 3.3 Our Standards and Quality Report 2020-21 evaluates a challenging year, not only for education, but across the Scottish Borders and indeed globally. Amid the challenges, there are notable achievements in Scottish Borders Council including:
- a) The continued roll out of our Inspire Learning Programme, which will create a world class learning environment for education in the Scottish Borders. This innovative programme became a lifeline for teachers and families during the pandemic and the distribution of ipads was accelerated to ensure all P4 – P7 children were able to access their learning digitally during the second lockdown.
 - b) The rapid response to engaging in a virtual environment to support workplace learning including pupils engaging in virtual work experience, the introduction of schoolhouse a platform for staff professional learning and the ability to engage with colleagues across Scotland without the need for travel.

Progress against the four core priorities for 2020/21 is evaluated fully in Appendix A.

- 3.4 In addition, performance information and evaluative data has continued to demonstrate improvements in the service including:

3.4.1 ATTAINMENT

- a) This is the third year of different assessment model for young people in Scotland. In May 2021, grades were awarded by teachers based on 'demonstrated attainment', not 'inferred' attainment as in May 2020.
- b) SBC had a robust SQA Alternative Certification Model which was endorsed externally by Education Scotland. This model included in school and cross school moderation activities with 28 subjects network teams. Each team consisted of a subject lead and a minimum of one representatives from every high school.
- c) A separate Attainment Report will be presented to Executive.

3.4.2 PUPIL EQUITY FUND (PEF)

Scottish Borders received £1.8 million to support schools to close the poverty related attainment gap. The funding which is allocated directly to schools has enabled schools to provide focussed and targeted support to pupils in receipt of free schools meals, care experienced children and children who are eligible for clothing grants. All schools have identified key areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as the focus for their interventions.

3.4.3 DEVELOPING LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

- a) The SBC Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework has been launched this year. This is an overarching document which provides direction and guidance to staff regarding legislation and expectations of inclusive practices in all schools.
- b) Schools and settings are further supported by the inclusion of SBC strategies for Literacy and English and Numeracy and Mathematics. This is supported by a network of numeracy and literacy champions across all 9 clusters.

3.4.4 WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

The wellbeing and mental health of our staff and our children and young people has never been more important than the last 12 months. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been keenly felt across all schools and settings with the transition from school to home/hub and back to school a key feature of learning last session. We have supported this by:

- a) Continuing to promote the Growing Confidence programme to build resilience in children.
- b) Further development of emotional health and wellbeing support for children and young people through schools counselling and Community mental health funding.
- c) Using digital platforms for self help support for young people.
- d) Partnership working to promote healthy weight in children and young people.
- e) Acknowledging and appreciating the role our staff have played this year to ensure our learners are safe, well and continuing to make progress in their learning.

3.4.5 PARTNERSHIPS AND FAMILY LEARNING

The rate of progress towards family learning was accelerated by the move to a second lockdown between January and April 2021. This allowed us to review and improve upon our approaches during the period of initial lockdown. The quality of online learning improved greatly as did the confidence and digital skills of staff. The digital access for all children and young people in P4 – S6 allowed a high level of daily interactions between teacher and pupil. Live lessons and teams sessions allowed families to work together to share learning and gain a better understanding of learners progress. Our work on family learning and partnerships was further strengthened by:

- a) The launch of our Partnership with Parents Framework, which includes

an audit tool for schools to use to baseline their current approaches to Parental Involvement and Engagement and provides references to relevant literature and professional reading to support progress.

- b) A significant increase in our frequency of meetings with Parent Council Chairs, these weekly meetings allowed senior leaders to connect with schools and listen and respond to views and parental concerns from across SBC.

- 3.5 (a) The National Improvement Framework requires each local authority to prepare and publish annual plans describing the steps they will take to cover the four strategic priorities:
- 1) Improvement in attainment, particularly numeracy and literacy
 - 2) Closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children
 - 3) Improvement in children's health and wellbeing
 - 4) Improvement in employability skills and positive school leaver destinations for young people
- (b) The plan for session 2021/22 reflects the key themes of Recovery, Equity and Innovation and has been prepared to address improvement in schools and settings post pandemic. In June 2021 the OECD published their findings and recommendations for curriculum review and reform, we are committed to ensuring our schools develop a curriculum which reflects not only these findings but the wider national agendas of No One Left behind, UNCRC, Learning for Sustainability and The promise.
- (c) The Education and Lifelong Learning service priorities for session 2021/22 Improvement Plan remain consistent to ensure continuous improvement across all sectors, they are as follows:
- 1) To Drive High Quality Learning, Teaching and Assessment across all Schools and Settings
 - 2) Support Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing for all Children and Young People
- (d) The main drivers which underpin our plan are the development of teacher professionalism, continuous school improvement and the assessment of children's progress. Each of these drivers will support capacity building in our schools and settings and ensure a positive journey towards a full recovery post COVID-19.
- (e) The information contained within this report and appendices is also made available on the SBC website. This can be accessed at www.scotborders.gov.uk/performance.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

There are no risks associated with this Report.

4.3 Equalities

It is anticipated that there are no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals in this report.

4.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no significant impacts on the economy, community or environment arising from the proposals contained in this report.

4.5 Carbon Management

There are no significant effects on carbon emissions arising from the proposals contained in this report.

4.6 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

4.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Signature

Service Director, Children & Young People’s Services

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Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Christian Robertson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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