

Education Directorate Improvement Plan 2026/27

Improving life chances for all



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Foreword

Fife's Education Directorate enters this next phase with clarity, honesty and ambition. We know our system well. In recent years we have built a mature and increasingly confident system of improvement, strengthened our quality assurance, and developed a clear understanding of what works and where greater consistency is still needed. This is a real strength. Our task now is to use what we know more deliberately so we can be bolder in our ambition and more effective in our impact.

This past year has brought significant challenges. Many parts of our service have been managing change, and we know that too many children and young people still face barriers to learning. Throughout this, colleagues across early learning, schools and central teams have shown exceptional commitment, professionalism and care. Their dedication to improving life chances for children and young people remains the foundation of this plan.

This Improvement Plan marks a deliberate shift to focus on areas where improvement is most needed, where evidence shows we can make the greatest difference, and where disciplined implementation can drive sharper decisionmaking, offer clearer expectations and secure greater impact for every learner.

Leaders of our Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and school settings have told us that they want clear, explicit non-negotiables for Fife's Education Directorate. We have listened. This year we will work with colleagues across the system to define a Fife Learning Standard, our universal strategies to meet the needs of all learners and the curriculum rationale that underpins and shapes the planned learning experiences for every learner in Fife.

This is ambitious work, and it will rely on the expertise and commitment of staff across the system. By shaping and implementing these shared expectations together, we can strengthen consistency and ensure that every child and young person benefits from high-quality learning, wherever they learn or whatever their circumstances.

Our ambition is clear, to move from a system that is good at identifying what needs to improve, to one that consistently delivers improvement at scale. This plan is a step towards that future, grounded in evidence, shaped by honest self-evaluation and confident in the direction of travel.



Donald MacLeod
Executive Director,
Education Directorate,
Fife Council

Introduction

Our vision is

Improving Life Chances for All

Our work is guided by our values of

Compassion, Ambition, Respect and Equity.



Fife's Education Directorate is committed to providing high-quality learning experiences for children, young people and families.

We want every child and young person in Fife to feel valued, included and supported to thrive, with opportunities to develop their skills, achieve their potential and have a genuine voice in their learning and development.



Section 1. Our Approach to Improvement

The Purpose of the Directorate Improvement Plan

The Education Directorate Improvement Plan provides our framework for improvement from 2026-30. It serves as Fife's National Improvement Framework (NIF) Improvement Plan and our statutory requirement under the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 (Sections 3F and 3H).

This plan also supports our contribution to the **Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29** and aligns with the ambitions of the **Plan for Fife** (Local Outcome Improvement Plan).

The Context for the Directorate Improvement Plan

The **National Improvement Framework 2026** sets out Scotland's vision, priorities and outcomes for education, and Fife's improvement priorities support the delivery of these national ambitions (see Appendix 1). The Plan also aligns with a range of other national policies (see Appendix 2).

This Plan marks a deliberate shift to focus on areas where improvement is most needed, where evidence shows we can make the greatest difference, and where disciplined implementation can drive sharper decisionmaking, clearer expectations and greater impact for every learner. Efforts to further develop this improvement work will be undertaken in collaboration with ELC and school settings in 2026/27 and will be informed by ongoing developments in national policy, including:

- A new Programme for Government – including reviews of national policy programmes – following the Scottish Parliamentary elections of May 2026.
- Wider reform activity, including the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC), which will shape how Scotland's curriculum evolves over the coming years.
- **National Additional Support Needs Data Improvement Programme**, using improved data and insight to strengthen planning, identify need more effectively and improve outcomes for learners with additional support needs (ASN).

The plan will be refreshed in August 2027 to reflect the emerging policy direction and learning from collaborative working undertaken this year.

Developing our Improvement Priorities

Evidence and engagement

The development of this plan has been shaped by a wide range of evidence, engagement and improvement activity across our education system. It builds on a review of progress against the Education Directorate Improvement Plan 2023-26, including a series of self-evaluation discussions during 2025-26 which considered the impact of improvement activity, outcomes for learners and evidence presented through our Annual Report.

This plan reflects the views and experiences of those who know our system best, including children and young people, staff, school leaders, partners and communities. Feedback was gathered through meetings, surveys and ongoing engagement around key strategies and priorities. The plan has been informed by collaborative work through the ADES Quad and ongoing improvement activity supported by Fife CYPIC. This enabled us to recognise what has worked well, identify areas requiring further attention and shape our future direction.

Overall, we have strengthened our approach to planning by using Quality Improvement methods, including Driver Diagrams, to articulate our theory of change across each strategic priority. The development of these Driver Diagrams was informed through engagement with the Extended Leadership Team and Secondary Networks, ensuring they reflect both strategic and operational experience. This work helped us identify the key drivers and actions most likely to have the greatest impact.

What the evidence told us

Our review of progress identified three key themes as essential to improvement in schools and ELC settings:

- 1. Improving Learning, Teaching & Assessment**
- 2. Meeting Learners' Needs**
- 3. Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways**

These themes reflect the core aspects of education and provide a basis to support ongoing improvement work.

As a key partner within Children in Fife, we have also contributed to the development of the **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** and the **Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29**. The Directorate, particularly our Early Years workforce, has a key role to play in delivering the Children's Services priorities.

Our Strategic Framework for Improvement

The Directorate continues to develop its Strategic Framework for Improvement, which supports ongoing and evidence-based improvement, helping to deliver our vision of **Improving Life Chances for All**

Our improvement priorities: The three Pillars

The three pillars that emerged from our review of progress over 2023-26 provide clear improvement priorities for an ongoing programme of improvement over the coming years.

1. Improving Learning, Teaching & Assessment
2. Meeting Learners' Needs
3. Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways



Our new Directorate structure

Following a review of the Directorate's structure in 2025/26, a new organisational structure has been developed to better support ongoing improvement, which is based on the three pillars. Each "Pillar Group" is overseen by a Head of Service and a team of Education Managers and Quality Improvement Officers.

Over the coming year, we will seek to use the subject matter expertise and leadership from across our ELC and school settings. By drawing on the strength of our established **self-improving networked learning system** - including collaboratives, networks and clusters - we will ensure that strategic actions are shaped by those closest to delivery, informed by real practice and supported through effective collaboration. Our ambition is to ensure that collective leadership and expertise help turn ambition into meaningful and sustainable progress.

The aim of this plan is to give schools and ELC settings clear direction to support future improvement. This should help each setting consider how they can contribute to the wider improvement effort and where their strengths can support progress at the authority level. Many settings are already performing well across these strategic areas, and for them, this plan should provide reassurance that this work is aligned with and accelerating improvement across the authority. Where further support is needed, we will prioritise and target our resources to help settings strengthen their practice and build the confidence and capacity required to contribute fully to our shared ambitions.



Section 2. Our Improvement Actions for 2026-2030

Pillar 1 – Improving learning, teaching and assessment

Ambition: To ensure all Fife learners benefit from high-quality, inclusive and engaging learning and teaching, strengthened by innovative digital practice, which promotes ambition, supports engagement, and secures appropriate challenge and progression.



The context for improving learning, teaching and assessment

National Context:

National inspection findings highlight generally positive school cultures and strengthening leadership across primary, secondary and special sectors, with particularly strong performance in primary and special schools. However, improvement remains inconsistent, especially in secondary schools where leadership and raising attainment continue to be key weaknesses.

Across all sectors, learning environments are positive and learners are generally engaged, but there is a continued need for greater consistency in high-quality learning and teaching, with pace, challenge, differentiation and the use of assessment information requiring further improvement.

Moderation and self-evaluation processes are developing, but stronger use of evidence, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) benchmarks and stakeholder involvement is needed to secure sustained improvement and better outcomes for children and young people.

Local Context:

In Fife, there is growing evidence of strengthened leadership and improvement capability. In 2024/25, 97.1% of ELC settings rated themselves as Good or above for Leadership and 96.2% good or above for Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Leadership development has been supported through the CYPIC Quality Improvement Programme (11 school leaders), targeted programmes for 17 secondary school leaders, and an expanding leadership pipeline, with 11 Into Headship graduates in 2025 and a further nine expected in 2026. Collaborative improvement networks and self-evaluation activity have led to more focused improvement planning and a clearer understanding of strengths and areas for development. Targeted Quality Improvement Reading and Writing programmes have improved outcomes, reduced equity gaps and strengthened improvement capability in participating schools.

While further work is required to achieve greater consistency in practice, quality assurance and learning environments, Fife has strong foundations in digital learning, with all teachers and P6-S6 learners having access to a 1:1 device, 91% of settings having a Transforming Learning Ambassador, widespread adoption of Showbie and an iPad breakage rate below the national average (5%).

National Improvement Framework (2026):

This pillar contributes primarily to **NIF Outcomes 5 and 7** through strengthening leadership, learning, teaching and assessment, and the effective use of digital technologies. It also supports **Outcome 3** by promoting inclusive learning experiences and improving learner progression across all settings.



Focus for improvement

Our work with leaders and networks identified that significant system-level change will require that: **Fife schools have a high level of confidence that they are meeting local authority standards and expectations for learning, teaching and assessment.**

Strategic Aims to achieve this change are set out in the action plan on the following pages, together with short to medium term measures of impact.

Success will lead to an **improved progress and pace with learning for all learners**. This will result in improved outcomes at Fife level for: CfE Achievement levels in the Broad General Education (BGE), stage-based measures of attainment in the senior phase.

Planned actions: Pillar 1 – Improving learning, teaching and assessment

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Leaders at all levels will have increased confidence to quality assure learning, teaching and assessment, using evidence to evaluate impact and drive continuous improvement.	1. In session 2026/27 we will: ● Build leadership skills and confidence through self-evaluation supports and targeted improvement support for all ELC/school leaders at universal, additional and intensive support levels based on self-evaluation evidence. ● Maximise Fife's participation in the National CYPIC Quality Improvement Programme for Senior Leaders. ● Strengthen quality assurance so that children and young people's voices are routinely gathered, considered and used to inform decisions about improvement.	By June 2027: ● 1.a Almost all ELC settings, primary and secondary schools will rate themselves as good or above in relation to the national standard for Leadership. ● 1.b Almost all ELC settings, schools and the Directorate can evidence involvement of CYP in self-evaluation and improvement.	By June 2030, all ELC settings/schools will: ● Self-evaluate as good or above in relation to the national standard for Leadership.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Strengthen a shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment across Fife, including the effective use of digital technologies, to improve consistency, progression and learner engagement across all settings.	In Session 2026/27 we will: - Develop a Fife Learning Standard and launch to all ELC/school leaders. - Streamline professional learning to support implementation of the Fife Learning Standard, reducing duplication and improving coherence and clarity. - Embed digital technologies into the professional learning offer which supports the implementation of the Fife Learning Standard. - Deliver four Quality Improvement Programmes (two QI Writing and two QI Reading) to accelerate attainment and reduce inequity in schools with literacy attainment below 70%. - Strengthen moderation and assessment practices to support consistent understanding of standards.	By June 2027: 2.a Almost all primary and secondary schools rate themselves as good or above in the quality indicator 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment. 2.b Majority of primary and secondary schools can evidence use of the Fife Standard into daily practice. (Baseline August 2026: 0%) 2.c Majority of primary and secondary schools will have participated in professional learning to support alignment with the Fife Learning Standard. (Baseline August 2026: 0%) 2.d Majority of teaching staff across primary and secondary will have participated in professional learning on the Fife Learning Standard, with almost all reporting confidence in implementing the standards within their daily practice.	By June 2030, all ELC settings and schools will: - Self-evaluate as good or above in relation to the national standard regarding learning, teaching and assessment. - Achieve good or above in relation the national standard regarding learning, teaching and assessment. through HMIE or Care Inspectorate inspections. - Identify the effective use of digital technologies as a key strength in learning and teaching. - Demonstrate that the Fife Learning Standard is embedded in everyday practice. - Report high levels of staff application of core aspects of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment to playroom/classroom practice.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Learning environments, including digital platforms and tools, will increasingly enable collaboration, inclusion and improved pedagogy, empowering practitioners to create high-quality learning experiences and support learners to demonstrate progress in meaningful ways.	In session 2026/27 we will: ● Identify, prioritise and plan improvements to learning environments to support high-quality, inclusive teaching and learning, including digital equity. ● Embed digital technologies into the professional learning offer which supports application of the Fife Learning Standard. ● Continue the work of the Digital Roadmap, including the deployment of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) refresh to ensure digital equity.	By June 2027: 3.a 20% of education establishments condition and suitability will be assessed to inform future investment planning. 3.b All classrooms will have the ability to cast wirelessly. (Baseline July 2026: 34%) 3.c Majority of primary settings will have an equitable allocation of updated ICT. 3.d All settings will have access to a standardised software library. 3.e Majority of schools are using Showbie as the main Learning, Teaching and Assessment platform.	By 2030: ● Almost all education estate achieves a satisfactory condition and suitability rating. By 2028: ● All primary school settings will have an equitable allocation of ICT. By 2030: ● All settings will use Showbie as the main platform to support Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

Measuring improvement: Pillar 1 – Improving learning, teaching and assessment

Key Outcome Measures

We report to the Education & Scrutiny Committee each school year on progress with Improving Learning, Teaching & Assessment.

We will report on progress with improving the following key outcomes:

Outcome measure	Baseline	Target by 2030
Percentage of all ELC settings and schools that achieve Good or above in relation to the national standard regarding learning, teaching and assessment . through HMIE inspections.	● 85.7% ELC settings, ● 76.5% primary, ● 50% secondary (2024-25)	100%
Percentage of the education estate achieving a satisfactory condition and suitability rating (B or above)	● 91.7% primary, ● 33.3% secondary (April 2025)	>90%

These outcomes are national measures, relating to outcomes for learners or to system quality and performance. Reporting to committee on these outcomes will include a comparative or benchmarked view of outcomes in Fife relative to national outcomes and outcomes in similar areas of Scotland.

Where the key measure relates to overall outcomes across a number of sectors (ELC, primary, secondary, special) outcomes will also be reported to committee at sector level (where such data is available and, in a format, suitable for public reporting).

We will also report on progress with the following Pillar 1 improvement actions:

Measure of progress	Baseline	Target by 2030
Percentage of all ELC settings and schools that self-evaluate as Good or above in relation to the national standard for Leadership .	97.1% ELC settings, 90.2% primary, 72.2% secondary schools in (2024-25)	100%
Percentage of all ELC settings and schools that self-evaluate as Good or above in relation to the national standard regarding learning, teaching and assessment .	96.2% ELC settings, 87.9% primary, 44.4% secondary schools in (2024-25)	100%
Percentage of all ELC settings and schools that identify the effective use of digital technologies as a key strength in learning and teaching.	Work to develop these approaches will be progressed during the 2026/27 school year, Suitable quality assurance measures and baseline data will be established to monitor ongoing improvement.	100%
Percentage of all ELC settings and schools that demonstrate that the Fife Learning Standard is embedded in everyday practice.		100%
Percentage of all ELC settings and schools that report high levels of staff application of core aspects of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment to playroom/classroom practice.		100%
Percentage of primary school settings will have an equitable allocation of ICT .		100% by 2028
Percentage of settings using Showbie as the main platform to support Learning, Teaching and Assessment .	35% (July 2026)	100%

These are local measures of progress, which are based on local data sources and which reflect local systems for school improvement within Fife.

Pillar 2 – Meeting Learners' Needs

Ambition: To sustain an effective continuum of support across Fife's schools and ELC settings, ensuring that the diverse needs of all learners are met and barriers to learning are reduced.

To ensure that Health and Wellbeing is promoted, protected and supported.



The context for meeting learners' needs

National Context:

National inspection evidence highlights strong progress in inclusive practice, wellbeing and personalised support. Across primary, secondary and special schools, staff generally know children and young people well and use nurturing, trauma-informed and rights-based approaches to support wellbeing and inclusion. Positive relationships and values-led leadership are notable strengths, with most schools providing inclusive, nurturing environments and a clear focus on improving wellbeing. Special schools are strengthening personalised planning and supportive environments, while most settings promote wellbeing, equality and children's rights effectively.

Areas for improvement include providing greater challenge for learners, making better use of wellbeing data, and strengthening individualised planning through clearer, measurable targets and review processes, particularly in secondary schools.

Local Context:

In Fife, there are positive developments in strengthening inclusive practice and support for children and young people, including an increase in primary enhanced provision places across Fife, providing more opportunities for children to access support within their own localities.

Further work is underway to develop a more consistent shared understanding of universal support across mainstream, enhanced and special settings and to simplify a landscape shaped by multiple approaches, guidance and initiatives. Quality assurance processes continue to evolve to ensure universal supports are implemented consistently and effectively across all settings.

Staff have identified challenges responding to violent incidents and meeting the needs of a small group of pupils who require more intensive support. This is reflected in the Staffwise survey, where 26.1% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel supported when there is an incident of violence and aggression in their school, team or centre, highlighting a key area for continued improvement.

National Improvement Framework (2026)

This pillar aligns with NIF **Outcome 4**, which seeks high levels of achievement for all learners while closing the poverty-related attainment gap, and **Outcome 6**, which focuses on improving relationships, behaviour, attendance and engagement in learning. Through a continued focus on equity, inclusion, wellbeing and universal support, we aim to remove barriers to learning and ensure every child and young person is supported to achieve their full potential.



Focus for improvement

Our work with leaders and networks identified that significant system-level change will require: **a high level of confidence that an effective continuum of support exists in each Fife school to meet learners' needs.**

Strategic Aims to achieve this change are set out in the action plan on the following pages, together with short to medium term measures of impact.

Success will lead to **confident and skilled staff at all levels who effectively meet the needs of children and young people at universal level.** This will result in improved outcomes at Fife level for: attendance, wellbeing, and closing of equity gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged groups of learners.

Planned actions: Pillar 2 - Meeting Learners' Needs

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Achieve sustained reductions in outcome gaps for all children and young people through a consistent focus on equity, equality and fairness across all settings.	4. In session 2026/27 we will: Continue to work with schools to implement Fife Education's promoting pupil engagement and attendance guidance.	By June 2027: 4.a There is a reducing trend in the number of Agreed Reduced Attendance (ARA) packages. 4.b Almost all schools are actively implementing suitable plans for young people on ARAs. 4.c There is an improvement in attendance rates for targeted groups of pupils.	By June 2030: - Overall attendance figures in Fife will show improving trends, showing recovery from before the Covid pandemic. - The equity gap in attendance between learners in targeted groups and their peers will narrow.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Strengthen universal approaches across all settings to deliver consistently high-quality support that improves outcomes for all learners.	5. In session 2026/27 we will: ● Work with schools to agree a clear set of universal strategies for all mainstream classrooms. ● Support schools to implement these strategies into daily practice. ● Test and refine universal strategies through Quality Improvement work in enhanced and special settings. ● Use Quality Improvement approaches including Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA), to agree the best universal support for care experienced young people and those receiving FSM.	By June 2027: 5. A minority of schools can evidence consistent implementation of agreed universal strategies in daily classroom practice.	By June 2030: ● Almost all schools can evidence consistent implementation of agreed universal strategies in daily classroom practice. By June 2028: ● Almost all staff agree with the statement 'I feel confident in supporting CYP with Additional Support Needs' in Staff Wise survey.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Improve health and wellbeing with a particular focus on relationships & behaviour.	6. In 2026/27 we will focus on relationships and behaviour through: ● Professional Learning: Co-design, test and scale effective learning approaches, delivering targeted support on wellbeing, relational practice and Gender-Based Violence prevention across primary and secondary schools. ● Quality Assurance: Implement a consistent Fife-wide approach to recording, monitoring and responding to Gender-Based Violence incidents. ● Supervision Models: Review, develop and pilot supervision models to strengthen staff support and practice across Education Services.	By June 2027: 6.a Almost all schools are actively implementing* Relationships & Behaviour action plan. (Baseline 0) <i>*Action plan in place with clear next steps.</i> 6.b Almost all Fife secondary schools are registered with Equally Safe at school (ESAS) and most will have completed the ESAS delivery plan objectives. 6.c Increase from 0% to 10% of schools where the majority of staff have completed Gender-Based Violence (Early Intervention) one-day training. 6.d Almost all of ELC settings, primary and secondary schools will rate themselves as good or above in quality indicator 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing and Inclusion/Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality through self-evaluation.	By March 2028: ● Increase in the percentage of staff that report 'I feel supported when there is an incident of violence and aggression in my school' from 73.9% to 80%. By June 2030: ● Schools will self-evaluate themselves as good or above in QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing and Inclusion (HGIOS4). By June 2030: ● ELC settings will self-evaluate themselves as good or above in Wellbeing, inclusion and equality (QI Framework for ELC Sector). ● Achieve good or above in QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing and Inclusion / Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality through Care Inspectorate and HM Inspections.

Measuring improvement: Pillar 2 - Meeting Learners' Needs

Key Outcome Measures

We report to the Education & Scrutiny Committee each school year on how well we are Meeting Learner Needs

We will report on progress with improving the following key outcomes:

Outcome measure	Baseline	Target by 2030
School attendance (primary, secondary and special)	91.7% primary, 87.6% secondary, 91% special (provisional 2025-26)	Improving trends, showing recovery from before Covid pandemic
Equity gap in attendance for learners living in SIMD Quintile 1	6.3pp primary, 7.7pp secondary (provisional 2025-26)	Equity gap in attendance between learners in targeted groups and their peers will narrow.
Equity gap in attendance for Free School Meals	7.6pp primary, 9.4pp secondary (provisional 2025-26)	
Equity gap in attendance for care experienced learners	3.2pp primary, 2.5pp secondary (provisional 2025-26)	
Percentage of settings that are good or above in QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing and Inclusion/Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality through Care Inspectorate and HM Inspections (ELC settings, primary, secondary, special)	66.7% ELC settings, 77.8% primary, 100% secondary schools (2024-25)	>90% (June 2027)

NB: equity gap measures relate to the percentage point (pp) difference between outcomes for the disadvantaged group in question and the Fife average.

These outcomes are national measures, relating to outcomes for learners or to system quality and performance. Reporting to committee on these outcomes will include a comparative or benchmarked view of outcomes in Fife relative to national outcomes and outcomes in similar areas of Scotland.

Where the key measure relates to overall outcomes across a number of sectors (ELC, primary, secondary, special) outcomes will also be reported to committee at sector level (where such data is available and in a format suitable for public reporting).

Measures of progress

We will report on progress with the following Pillar 2 improvement actions:

Measure of progress	Baseline	Target by 2030
Percentage of settings that self-evaluate themselves as good or above in QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing and Inclusion/Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality (ELC, primary, secondary, special)	97.1% ELC settings, 90.9% primary, 66.7% secondary schools (2024-25)	>90% June 2030
Percentage of schools that can evidence consistent implementation of agreed universal strategies in daily classroom practice	Baseline to be established in 2026/27	>90%
Percentage of staff that report ' I feel supported when there is an incident of violence and aggression in my school '	73.9% all settings	80% By 2028
Percentage of staff that agree with the statement ' I feel confident in supporting CYP with Additional Support Needs ' in Staff Wise survey	76.6% all settings	>90% By 2028

National ASN Data Improvement Programme

We will report to committee on progress with the National ASN Data Improvement Programme and the work that we will progress to improve our use of data to support learners with Additional Support Needs (ASN).

Pillar 3 – Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways

Ambition: To create the conditions to support the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, by ensuring a coherent and relevant curriculum rationale and design from early learning to the senior phase that values diverse learning pathways and improves learner attainment, achievement and sustained positive outcomes and destinations.



The context for strengthening our curricular pathways

National Context

Nationally, the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) is placing increased emphasis on developing a clear curriculum rationale, coherent progression, improved transitions and stronger alignment between the Broad General Education (BGE) and senior phase. Inspection evidence highlights the importance of flexible and personalised learner pathways that meet learners' needs, interests and aspirations, with special schools demonstrating strengths in skills-based curriculum and improving attainment, achievement and qualifications.

Across sectors, there is a continued focus on raising attainment and achieving equity through robust tracking, assessment and targeted interventions, while inspectors identify the need for greater consistency in progression pathways, curriculum continuity into S1, understanding of learner progress within the BGE, and the use of Curriculum for Excellence Benchmarks.

Effective tracking, recognition and profiling of achievements are becoming more established, with schools increasingly linking achievements to skills development and using data to monitor progress, although capturing skills progression and achievement consistently remains an area for improvement.

Local Context

- Fife has developed a clear operational definition of a coherent and relevant curriculum rationale and is establishing support for schools to adopt the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) through sector-specific steering groups.
- Outcomes remain strong, with positive destinations above national levels for S4 leavers (95.6%), care-experienced young people (92.2%), FSM learners (93.54%), SIMD 1 learners (94.32%), looked after children (92.23%, up from 81.72%) and learners with ASN (95.28%).
- S4 literacy and numeracy attainment is now above the virtual comparator at Levels 3, 4 and 5, and learners studying mainly at Scottish Credits and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Levels 3 and 4 continue to outperform national comparisons.
- While robust BGE declarations and Quality Passes (Levels 5 and 6) have been identified as areas for improvement, ongoing work is also focused on strengthening alignment between the BGE and senior phase, implementing Fife's Diploma of Achievement, and embedding learner profiling to support achievement and skills development.

National Improvement Framework (2026)

This pillar contributes directly to NIF **Outcome 3**, which promotes an inclusive and relevant curriculum and assessment system, and NIF **Outcome 4**, which focuses on achievement and attainment for all learners. By strengthening curriculum rationale and design, supporting implementation of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, improving transitions and widening learner pathways, we will ensure that children and young people develop the knowledge and skills required for learning, life, work and sustained positive destinations.

Focus for improvement

Our work with leaders and networks identified that significant system-level change will require that: **all learners in Fife are following a clear, skills-based curricular pathway enabling a wide range of positive, post-school opportunities.**

Strategic Aims to achieve this change are set out in the action plan on the following pages, together with short to medium term measures of impact.

Success will lead to improved outcomes – both for individual learners and at Fife level – for: school leaver achievement, attainment and sustained post-school destinations.



Planned actions: Pillar 3 - Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Embed progressive, responsive and aspirational curricular pathways in line with the national curriculum across ELC, the BGE and senior phase.	7. In session 2026/27, we will: Support ELC settings and schools to develop a coherent and relevant curriculum rationale and design from early learning to the senior phase that values diverse learning pathways and improves learner attainment, achievement and sustained positive outcomes and destinations.	By June 2027: 7. Most ELC settings, primary and secondary schools will have an evidence-informed Curriculum Rationale and Design, co-created with learners, families, staff and partners, that reflects the unique context of the setting and provides a clear framework for attainment, achievement, skills development and a range of positive destinations. (Baseline to be established)	By June 2028: All ELC settings, primary and secondary schools will have an evidence-informed Curriculum Rationale and Design, co-created with learners, families, staff and partners, that reflects the unique context of the setting and provides a clear framework for attainment, achievement, skills development and a range of positive destinations.
	8. In session 2026/27, we will: Support ELC settings and schools to build workforce knowledge and readiness and create the conditions to adopt the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC).	By June 2027: 8. All ELC settings/schools will have created time and space to raise awareness and structured sensemaking of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle materials, documentation to support phased adoption from January 2027.	By June 2028: All secondary schools have used the audit tool to ensure that S3 curriculum aligns to national expectations and guidance to support progression into senior phase. By August 2028: - Formal adoption of CIC – early, first, second and third. By August 2029: - Formal adoption of CIC – fourth level and beyond.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
	9. In session 2026/27 we will: ● Provide a flexible and broad curriculum model that provides diverse pathways aligned to labour market intelligence and learner aspirations. ● Increase opportunities in volunteering, leadership, enterprise and work experience to broaden progression routes. ● Target support to strengthen focus on S5 winter and summer leavers. ● Strengthen sustained destinations for CEYP and FSM. ● Maintain progress in positive destinations, and shift focus on increasing sustained destinations. ● Strengthen the quality and strategic use of SEEMiS 16+, attainment and participation portal to inform learner pathway planning, transitions and progression to appropriate destinations.	By June 2027: 9.a Most schools can evidence high-quality planning of opportunities: ● Volunteering ● Leadership ● Enterprise ● Work Experience (S4+) ● Industry-recognised qualifications. 9.b Reduce the Sustained Positive Destination gap for CEYP and learners in receipt of FSM. 9.c S5 leavers in an Initial Positive Destination increases from 93.86% to 95%. 9.d Secondaries will achieve 95% data completeness of SEEMiS 16+ information.	By June 2030: ● Almost all schools can evidence that learners are increasingly engaging with opportunities for volunteering, leadership, enterprise, Work Experience (S4+) and Industry-recognised qualifications (S4+). By June 2030: ● Almost all of S3 learners will report feeling confident that their current pathway aligns with and will support their future aspirations. By June 2028: ● Reduce the Sustained Positive Destination gap from: ● 13% to 8% for CEYP ● 4.5% to 2% for learners in receipt of FSM. By January 2029: ● Reduce the number of S5 winter leavers from 390 (Dec 2026) to 200 (Dec 28). By June 2030: ● Almost all secondary schools can demonstrate learner personalisation and choice with a clear data informed rationale for course choice and destinations.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Improve achievement and attainment across ELC and the BGE, leading to identified improvement for all learners in the senior phase.	10. In session 2026/27 we will: ● Focus on skills development – the curriculum builds skills and transferrable skills in a progressive way, linking learning across stages to prepare for future pathways and positive destinations. ● Support ELC settings and schools to implement a consistent 3-18 approach to tracking, recognising and profiling achievement across the 4 contexts of learning.	By June 2027: 10.a Almost all ELC settings and schools can demonstrate skills progression across all curricular areas. 10.b Almost all schools can evidence interdisciplinary learning (IDL) with a clear skills focus.	By June 2030: ● Almost all ELC settings/ schools that can evidence the implementation of the skills framework in everyday learning. By June 2030: ● Increase the percentage of learners that have an FDA. By June 2030: ● Almost all P7, S3 and senior phase learners will be tracking achievements and skills development. By June 2030: ● Almost all schools can demonstrate that learners can articulate their achievements and understand their next steps through effective profiling.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
	11. In 2026/27 session we will: ● Utilise the networks, 2.2, 2.3 and 3.2 to strengthen Quality Assurance processes and lead focused Quality Improvement work. This includes: ● A focus on strengthening BGE judgements across all curricular areas, particularly in S1-S3. ● Supporting aspirational course choice to maximise outcomes for all learners. ● Increasing presentations at aspirational levels and decreasing dual presentations in S4. ● Monitoring presentation levels and interventions.	By June 2027: 11.a We will accelerate progress with an increase in the proportion of P4, P7 and S3 learners working beyond their expected CfE level for their age and stage. All secondary schools able to show accelerated progress across all curricular areas from P7 to S3 for most children. 11.b We will increase the number of higher quality passes (grade A and B at National 5 in S4 and Highers in S5). 11.c The number of SCQF level 5 (S4) and SCQF level 6 (S5) learners presented will continue to increase and close the gap with national presentation levels.	By June 2030: ● Almost all of primary and secondary schools rating themselves as good or above in QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement. By June 2030: ● Almost all ELC settings rating themselves as good or above in Children's Progress. By June 2030: ● Learners will achieve higher quality passes (A and B at National 5s & Highers) at senior phase in line with National levels. By June 2030: ● The number of SCQF level 5 (S4) and SCQF level 6 (S5) will be in line with national presentation levels.

Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
Strengthen curriculum transitions at key points (ELC, P1, P7, S3 and on leaving school) through effective use of data and learner profiling, providing pathways that develop skills,	12. In session 2026/27, we will: ● Strengthen curriculum transitions at key points (ELC, P1, P7, S3 and on leaving school) through effective use of data and learner profiling, providing pathways that develop skills, wider achievement and positive destinations. ● Support an identified cluster to lead Quality Improvement work to strengthen transitions (Nursery – primary and primary - secondary).	By May 2027: 12.a Establish a baseline for the percentage of P7, S3 and senior phase learners who are tracking their achievements and skills development. By June 2027: 12.b Gather evidence through scoping, engagement and testing and existing research to understand what will have the greatest impact and use this learning to set measurable aims for 2027/28.	By May 2030: ● Almost all schools can demonstrate effective transitions, with practice consistently reflecting the agreed expectations and evidence-informed approaches established through previous scoping and Quality Improvement activity.

Measure improvement: Pillar 3 - Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways

We report to the Education & Scrutiny Committee each school year on how we are Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways

Key Outcome Measures

We will report on progress with improving the following key outcomes:

Outcome measure	Baseline	Target by 2030
Initial destinations of S5 school leavers	93.86% (2024-25)	95% (by 2027)
Sustained positive destination gap for school leavers in receipt of free school meals	4.5% (2024-25)	2% by 2028
Sustained positive destination gap of care experienced school leavers	13% (2024-25)	8% by 2028
Proportion of P4, P7 and S3 learners working beyond their expected CfE level for their age and stage.	Writing: P4 69.5%, P7 72.3%, Number: P4 75.7%, P7 76.9%. S3 Lit 65.0%, S3 Num 64.8% (provisional 2025-26)	An increase in the proportion of P4, P7 and S3 learners working beyond their expected CfE level for their age and stage.
Percentage of S4 learners who achieve higher quality passes (grades A and B) at National 5	59.8% (pre-appeal 2025-26)	Learners will achieve higher quality passes (A and B at National 5s & Highers) at senior phase in line with National levels
Percentage of S5 learners who achieve higher quality passes (grades A and B) at Higher	52.2% (pre-appeal 2025-26)	
Percentage of learners that have a Fife Diploma of Achievement	Baseline to be established 2026/27	Baseline to be established 2026/27

Outcome measure	Baseline	Target by 2030
Percentage of ELC settings rating themselves as good or above in Children's Progress	96.2% ELC settings (2024-25)	91-99% ELC settings June 2030
Percentage of schools rating themselves as good or above in QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement	83.3% primary, 50% secondary (2024-25)	91-99% primary and secondary (June 2030)

These outcomes are national measures, relating to outcomes for learners or to system quality and performance. Reporting to committee on these outcomes will include a comparative or benchmarked view of outcomes in Fife relative to national outcomes and outcomes in similar areas of Scotland.

Where the key measure relates to overall outcomes across a number of sectors (ELC, primary, secondary, special) outcomes will also be reported to committee at sector level (where such data is available and in a format suitable for public reporting).

Measures of progress

We will report to committee on progress with the following Pillar 3 improvement actions:

Measure of progress	Baseline	Target by 2030
Number of S5 winter leavers	390 (Dec '26)	200 (Dec '28)
Number of SCQF level 5 presentations per learner in S4	4.17 (2026)	4.54 (2027)
Number of SCQF level 6 presentations per learner in S5	2.3 (2026)	2.6 (2027)

Measure of progress	Baseline	Target by 2030
Percentage of ELC settings and schools that can evidence the implementation of the skills framework in everyday learning	Work to develop these approaches will be progressed during the 2026/27 school year. Suitable quality assurance measures and baseline data will be established to monitor ongoing improvement.	>90%
Percentage of ELC settings, primary and secondary schools that have an evidence-informed Curriculum Rationale and Design, co-created with learners, families, staff and partners, that reflects the unique context of the setting and provides a clear framework for attainment, achievement, skills development and a range of positive destinations.		>90%
Percentage of schools that can evidence learners are increasingly engaging with opportunities for volunteering, leadership, enterprise, Work Experience (S4+) and Industry-recognised qualifications (S4+)		>90%
Percentage of secondary schools that can demonstrate learner personalisation and choice with a clear data informed rationale for course choice and destinations		>90%
Percentage of schools that can demonstrate effective transitions, with practice consistently reflecting the agreed expectations and evidence-informed approaches established through previous scoping and Quality Improvement activity		>90%
Percentage of schools that can demonstrate that learners can articulate their achievements and understand their next steps through effective profiling		>90%
Percentage of P7, S3 and senior phase learners will be tracking achievements and skills development		>90%
Percentage of S3 learners who report feeling confident that their current pathway aligns with and will support their future aspirations.		>90% (2030)

Curriculum Improvement Cycle

We will report to committee on progress that schools in Fife are making in implementing the Curriculum Improvement Cycle.

Partnership – Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29

Children in Fife brings together public and third sector partners to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Drawing on data, evidence and feedback from a wide range of partners, a **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** identified key areas of need and informed the shared priorities set out in the **Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-2029**. These priorities focus our collective efforts on where we can make the greatest difference for children, young people and families.



The Fife Children's Services Plan identifies three shared priorities:

- 1. Strengthening mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children, young people and families.**
- 2. Building family resilience through early help and holistic, whole-family support.**
- 3. Improving early speech, language and communication to reduce inequalities and support lifelong learning.**

The Education Directorate has a vital role to play in delivering the shared priorities set out in the Fife Children's Services Plan. While we will contribute to all three priorities, our Early Years workforce plays a particularly important role in implementing Let's Connect and Communication High 5 across our ELC settings. By highlighting these priorities within the Directorate Plan, we are ensuring they remain visible and continue to inform service, school and nursery improvement planning recognising the vital contribution of our workforce to achieving these shared ambitions.

Fife Children's Services Strategic Aim	Strategic Actions	2026/27 Aims	Stretch Aims
PRIORITY 2: Building family resilience through early help and holistic, whole-family support.	Strengthen family resilience and build parenting skills by supporting the scale and spread of Let's Connect across Fife.	All two-year-old settings will have embedded Let's Connect (Baseline 2025/26: 35 of 44 two-year-old nursery settings).	To increase confidence that Fife has effective support in place for family resilience and reduce developmental concerns recorded at 27-30 month checks (Social – Emotional, Problem-Solving & Communication).
PRIORITY 3: Improving early speech, language and communication to close gaps and support lifelong learning.	Improve early language and communication outcomes for children not meeting their expected milestones by scaling and spreading Communication High 5 .	Strengthen language and communication through consistent implementation of Communication High 5 across 20 Early Learning Centres (Baseline 2025/26: 10 ELC settings).	Sustained improvement in early language and communication outcomes shown through eLIPS.

Section 3. Implementing our Improvement Plan

For each Pillar we have developed a **theory of change**, describing the key factors that we can influence that could lead to a significant improvement in outcomes.

This has been developed based on learning from improvement work with settings and networks.

Theory of Change

We will continue to test and refine our **theories of change** working with settings and networks, using various tools to support a robust approach.

We will share key learning from this work through case studies in our public performance reporting and workshops for elected members.

For each Pillar we have identified **Strategic Actions** and short-term aims for our improvement work in 2026/27.

Data and evidence about the impact of this work will be monitored through our **Quality Assurance Framework**.

Quality Assurance Framework

Schools and ELC settings will use the **Quality Assurance Framework** to monitor and demonstrate their progress towards Fife Directorate priorities.

Evidence gathered through self-evaluation and quality assurance activity will build a collective picture of progress across Fife, highlighting strengths and identifying areas for further improvement.

The Directorate will continue to monitor key outcomes for learners, via its **Performance Management Framework**. These outcomes will be used to assess whether our planned Strategic Actions will help lead to long-term improvements at a system level.

Performance Management Framework

Key outcomes within the **Performance Management Framework** will be reported to Education Scrutiny Committee each year and will be a key part of our Public Performance Reporting to families in Fife.

Evidence from our Quality Assurance Framework and Performance Management Framework will be used to test and refine our Theories of Changes and planned Strategic Actions

Appendix 1: Supporting NIF Outcomes

Pillar	NIF Outcome(s)
Strategic Framework for Improvement	Supports NIF Outcome 1 by supporting effective self-evaluation, providing us with confidence about the quality of education across ELC settings and schools in Fife and enabling continuous improvement.
Pillar 1: Improving learning, teaching and assessment	Supports NIF Outcomes 5 and 7 through strengthening leadership, learning, teaching and assessment, and the effective use of digital technologies. It also contributes to Outcome 3 by promoting inclusive learning experiences and improving learner progression across all settings.
Pillar 2: Meeting learners' needs	Supports NIF Outcomes 4 and 6 through a continued focus on equity, inclusion, wellbeing and universal support, helping to remove barriers to learning and ensure children and young people achieve their full potential.
Pillar 3: Strengthening our curricular pathways	Supports NIF Outcomes 3 and 4 through strengthening curriculum design, supporting implementation of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, improving transitions and widening learner pathways.
Valuing Partnership	As a key partner in Children in Fife, our work will contribute to NIF Outcome 2 , which supports wider partnership working to benefit children and young people through a GIRFEC approach. Through effective partnership working, we will strengthen support for children, young people and families, including improving outcomes in the early years.
Valuing People	Our staff and leaders have a central role to play in delivering NIF Outcome 5 . Our goal is to ensure that our staff and leaders are effectively supported to fulfil their role and responsibilities.
Valuing Place	We will ensure that learning environments are positive and engage learners, supporting NIF Outcome 6 . Our ELC settings and schools will have a Curriculum Rationale that recognises and reflects the context of the local community, supporting NIF Outcome 3 ; this will be developed and delivered through genuine partnership working with the local community, supporting NIF Outcome 2 .

Appendix 2: National Policy

The following table provides an overview of the key national policies, guidance and frameworks that influence the work of the Education Directorate. It also notes several forthcoming/ ongoing national developments that the Education Directorate will be closely monitoring.

National Policy/ Guidance		Description	Relevant Pillar
Policy	Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000	Places a duty on education authorities to secure continuous improvement in the quality of school education and raise attainment for all learners.	ALL
	Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004	Establishes duties to identify, assess and provide support for children and young people with additional support needs.	Pillar 2/ ALL
	Education (Scotland) Act 2016	Strengthens parental and learner participation and underpins aspects of the National Improvement Framework.	ALL
	UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024	Incorporates the UNCRC into Scots Law. Requires public authorities to act compatibly with children's rights.	Children's Services Partnership/ ALL
	Equality Act 2010	Places duties on public authorities to eliminate discrimination and advance equality.	Pillar 2/ ALL
	Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014	Introduces duties relating to wellbeing, children's rights, corporate parenting and children's services planning.	Children's Services Partnership/ ALL
Guidance/ Frameworks/ Strategy	National Improvement Framework (NIF)	Scotland's overarching framework for improving attainment, achievement, wellbeing and equity. Provides the key national measures used to evaluate education performance.	ALL
	Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)	Curriculum framework for learners aged 3–18, focused on developing the four capacities and supporting high-quality learning and teaching.	Pillar 3/ ALL

National Policy/ Guidance		Description	Relevant Pillar
Guidance/ Frameworks/ Strategy	Scottish Attainment Challenge	National programme aimed at reducing the poverty-related attainment gap through evidence-based improvement and targeted investment.	Pillar 2
	Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)	Framework for promoting children's wellbeing through early intervention, prevention and coordinated support.	Children's Services Partnership/ Pillar 2
	The Promise	National commitment to improve experiences and outcomes for care-experienced children and young people.	Children's Services Partnership
	Developing the Young Workforce	Strategy to improve employability skills and support pathways into learning, training and employment.	Pillar 3
	National Guidance for Child Protection	Outlines roles and procedures for protecting children at risk of harm. It emphasises collaboration, timely risk assessments and appropriate action.	Children's Services Partnership/ ALL
	Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Action Plan (2025)	Sets out a vision of ensuring that all children have the strongest start to speech, language and communication at the earliest stage. The Action Plan is structured around three pillars: Leadership and Accountability, Families and Communities and Skilled and Supported Workforce.	Children's Services Partnership
	Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC)	National team of improvement advisors working in Scottish Government to support national priority areas to apply the quality improvement journey both strategically and at targeted local level.	Other (Fife CYPIC)
	Stretch Aims Framework	National attainment and achievement targets agreed with local authorities.	ALL
	Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Delivery Plan (2023-25)	National strategy that aims to promote, prevent and provide mental health support across Scotland with a focus on equality, early intervention and partnership working.	Pillar 2

National Policy/ Guidance		Description	Relevant Pillar
Ongoing Developments	Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment (Hayward Review)	Independent review led by Professor Louise Hayward (2023) recommending a less reliance on final exams, increasing the use of coursework and teacher assessment, a proposal for a Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA), etc.	Pillar 3
	Qualifications Scotland	Replacement of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), with implications for qualifications, assessment, accreditation and quality assurance arrangements.	Pillar 3/ ALL
	Centre for Teaching Excellence	New national body focused on strengthening teaching quality, professional learning, leadership development and evidence-informed practice.	Pillar 1
	Curriculum Improvement Cycle	Education Scotland's programme of curriculum improvement and review, including updates to curriculum guidance, learning pathways and learner entitlements.	Pillar 3
	AI Strategy for Education and AI in Schools Guidance	Supports the safe, ethical and effective use of artificial intelligence in learning, teaching, assessment and educational leadership, while addressing risks relating to data protection, bias and academic integrity.	Pillar 1/ALL
	ASN Reform	Ongoing implementation of the Morgan Review (2020) recommendations, with a continued focus on inclusion, workforce capacity, early intervention, parental engagement and improved outcomes for children and young people with ASN.	Pillar 2

References

HMIE School Inspection Findings

- [Primary School Inspection Findings for 2024 to 2025](#)
- [Secondary School Inspection Findings for 2024 to 2025](#)
- [Special School Inspection Findings for academic year 2024 to 2025](#)

Quantitative terms used in this Plan

Many of the targets within the Directorate Plan are described using the quantitative terms used by HMIE. These are:

Term	Description
All	100%
Almost all	Above 90%, but below 100%
Most	75% to 90%
Majority	50% or above, but less than 75%
Minority/less than half	15% or above, but less than 50%
A few	Less than 15%