

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to share key features of effective practice in school¹ improvement planning, taking account of [Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 statutory guidance](#).

This guidance also considers potential drivers for improvement planning in session 2023-2024. Links are provided to publications which may be helpful points of reference in framing improvement priorities for 2023-2024.

Key feature 1: Shared understanding of local context

- All stakeholders have a common understanding of strengths, needs and local challenges. They are responsive to, and actively involved in, bringing about any necessary changes.
- All stakeholders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to establishment improvement priorities.

A wide range of relevant data and information, **including learners' views**, is used to accurately identify need and areas of improvement. **Seeking and acting on learners' views is especially important given the commitment to the centrality of learners' voice and rights** set out [Achieving Excellence and Equity: National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan 2023](#). Advice and guidance on learner participation can be found in the publication- [Learner Participation in Educational Settings \(3-18\) | Self-evaluation | National Improvement Hub](#)

- Actions take account of local improvement priorities alongside those in the National Improvement Framework (NIF).
- Progress achieved, and priorities to be addressed, are communicated clearly.
- Identified priorities take into account collegiate working time agreements, and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Professional learning focuses on the successful delivery of improvement priorities, including those associated with the NIF.

Key feature 2: Effective, collaborative self-evaluation

- Self-evaluation is accurate, rigorous and robust based on reliable and comprehensive data and information.
- Collaboration with all stakeholders, **especially learners**, is important to inform self-evaluation and identification of priorities.
- Approaches to deliver identified priorities, including outcomes, provide a clear, effective framework to track, monitor and assess continually the impact of planned improvements.

¹ Effective practice in ELC improvement planning could also take this guidance into consideration.

- Clearly identified arrangements for internal and external moderation of teacher judgement, using a wide range of evidence, are based on a consistent and shared understanding of standards within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- How good is our school? 4th edition ([HGIOS4](#)) and How good is our early learning and childcare ([HGIOELC](#)) frameworks, and other relevant self-evaluation tools, such as [How Good is OUR School](#), are used effectively to evaluate progress.

Key feature 3: A manageable, measurable plan

- Plans should outline clear outcomes to be achieved and how progress towards these will be measured.
- Plans should include a manageable number of achievable and appropriate targets, expressed as outcomes for learners, which are observable and clear measures of success.
- Plans should focus on learning, achievement and wellbeing linked to NIF drivers and [HGIOS4/HGIOELC](#) quality indicators (QIs) with clearly identified responsibilities for implementation and clear timescales which ensure priorities are achieved.
- Implementation of priorities should be carefully planned and managed to ensure maximum success.
- Plans should be reviewed regularly with all stakeholders and used proactively to monitor progress towards achieving identified outcomes and improvements.
- If, as a result of this ongoing monitoring, the plans are not achieving the results intended, plans should be reviewed, adapted or changed.

Key feature 4: An annual standards and quality report

- Records progress of an establishment's annual improvement plan in an annual standards and quality report.
- Promotes collaborative working with all stakeholders and provides an overall evaluation of the school's capacity for continuous improvement.
- Includes clear evaluations of progress achieved in relation to all establishment and NIF priorities.
- Provides robust information about the assessment of learners' progress and wellbeing, and the quality of their learning experiences, working with partners and community.
- Includes evaluations of the impact of the plan to ensure excellence, equity and positive outcomes for all learners.
- Reports on progress towards stated aims and tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.
- Identifies further actions to improve outcomes for all learners which are planned and communicated.

The 2023 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan

[Achieving Excellence and Equity: National Improvement Framework and improvement plan 2023](#) sets out the vision and priorities for Scottish education that have been agreed across the system. It can be used to support and inform improvement planning at establishment level.

Our **vision** for education in Scotland is:

- Excellence through raising attainment and improving outcomes: ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary to shape a sustainable future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.
- Achieving equity: ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Key **priorities** of the National Improvement Framework

- Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education.
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.
- Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.
- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

The **drivers** of improvement in the outcomes achieved by children and young people through education are:

- School and ELC leadership
- Teacher and practitioner professionalism
- Parent/carer involvement and engagement
- Curriculum and assessment
- School and ELC improvement
- Performance information

Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) planning

[SAC Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#), published on 30 March 2022, sets out the refreshed mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

Headteachers are empowered to identify and implement approaches to using PEF in their local settings. The guidance notes that plans for PEF should be included in School Improvement Plans and should provide clarity to stakeholders on how PEF is being used and its expected impact. For further guidance in relation to PEF planning see [PEF National Operational Guidance 2022](#).

Other relevant publications

The following publications may be helpful points of reference in framing improvement priorities for 2023-2024.

- [The Scottish Attainment Challenge Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-attainment-challenge-framework-for-recovery-and-accelerating-progress/pages/introduction.aspx)
- [Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/early-level-play-pedagogy-toolkit)
- [Pupil Equity Funding looking, inwards, outwards, forwards March 2022](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/pupil-equity-funding-2022)
- [SAC Theory of Change Logic Model](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/sac-theory-of-change-logic-model)
- [Realising the Ambition | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/realising-the-ambition)
- [Embedding race equality in schools - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/embedding-race-equality-in-schools/pages/introduction.aspx)
- [Decision-making: children and young people's participation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/decision-making-children-and-young-peoples-participation/pages/introduction.aspx)
- [Whole school and community approach to learning for sustainability \(LfS\) - Self-evaluation and improvement framework | Self-evaluation | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/whole-school-and-community-approach-to-learning-for-sustainability-lfs)
- [Change Programme ONE - The Promise](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/change-programme-one)
- [Additional Support for Learning Action Plan updated October 2021](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/additional-support-for-learning-action-plan)
- [Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/putting-learners-at-the-centre-towards-a-future-vision-for-scottish-education/pages/introduction.aspx)
- [Cost of the School Day | CPAG](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/cost-of-the-school-day)
- [Successful Approaches to Learning Outdoors | National Thematic Inspections | HM Chief Inspector Report | Inspection and review | What we do | Education Scotland](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/successful-approaches-to-learning-outdoors)
- [Health and wellbeing: a thematic review | National Thematic Inspections | HM Chief Inspector Report | Inspection and review | What we do | Education Scotland](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/health-and-wellbeing-a-thematic-review)
- [Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.improvement.gov.scot/learning-resources/strategic-framework-for-parental-involvement)