

# Our Children, Their Future Education Vision and Strategy



Community Services:  
Education



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# INTRODUCTION

The period 2016-19 is an exciting time for Scottish Education. Our children and young people's futures are at the forefront of national and local policy. Nationally, the key building blocks for a truly excellent education system are being assembled to reach the national ambition of making Scotland the best place in the world for a child to grow up. In Argyll and Bute, the message is even clearer. These are *Our Children, Their Future* and we want Argyll and Bute to be the best place to grow up. We want young people and families to remain in this area, and be attracted to live here.

To realise that ambition we need to take these important national building blocks and embed them within Argyll and Bute. This will allow us to produce a coherent set of policies that deliver an equality of educational opportunity and improve attainment for all. This starts from work we do with families before a child is born all the way through to making sure our young people move on to training, work or further education at the end of their school career.

This strategy will clearly identify the Education Service vision and embed this throughout *Our Children, Their Future*. High level objectives will deliver this vision, with associated priority actions. It is the responsibility of everyone within the Education Service to contribute to the delivery of these priority actions. While plans at all levels require to be linked to our high level objectives, there will continue to be flexibility to allow schools and services to respond to the needs of their own communities.

This strategy includes objectives and priorities and will be supported by a plan that sets out the specific actions we will take to deliver our vision. We will report on our progress annually.

## 2 POLICY CONTEXT

This is a time of significant change for Education and Children's Services. The pace of change, the drive to improve services and the financial context combine to place increasing demands on the delivery of education. Despite these challenges, it is important that we remain ambitious to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people.

The National Outcomes for Scotland include:

- Our children have the **best start in life** and are ready to succeed
- Young people are equipped through their education to become **successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens**
- We have tackled the **significant inequalities** in Scottish society
- We have **improved the life chances** for children, young people and families at risk

These are inarguably the driving forces behind the work we do and are reflected in national strategies such as the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education and in our local strategies for delivering services in Argyll and Bute.

The **National Improvement Framework** (NIF) for Scottish Education and the underpinning Education (Scotland) Act 2016 seek to draw a number of these areas together at a national level and helpfully clarify the vision as delivering **excellence through attainment** and **achieving equity**.



The NIF is supported by four national priorities:

- *Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy*
- *Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children*
- *Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing*
- *Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people*

The development of a framework that is focused on outcomes and able to represent the full range of a child's educational experience is strongly welcomed. The national vision and key priorities will support us in improving outcomes for children in Argyll and Bute and help us deliver on the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) with the Scottish Government. SOAs are the way in which Community Planning Partnerships deliver improved outcomes for their communities. They are based on a clear understanding of local needs and reflect agreed local priorities, as well as the NIF described above.

Locally, we work in partnership with others to identify and deliver on clear shared objectives through the Integrated Children's Service Plan (ICSP), which will be reviewed regularly. The ICSP outlines how services work together to improve outcomes for children and young people. The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and local authorities have a strong commitment to raising attainment for all and addressing barriers to learning. There is a clear focus on overcoming disadvantage and reducing the significant gap in educational attainment between the most and least deprived children and young people. The term *disadvantage* is used to describe children and young people who are experiencing barriers to learning caused by factors including

- deprivation
- rural isolation
- additional support needs
- Looked After status





## OUR CHILDREN, THEIR FUTURE: THE VISION

Our aspiration is to ensure that Argyll and Bute is the best place in Scotland for our children to grow up. Our vision is that **together we will realise ambition, excellence and equality for all**. Our vision sends a signal about the importance we attach to education, is simple in message and is recognised by everyone. This is best captured as:



Our vision is underpinned by our values: **respect, openness** and **fairness**.

This vision will be delivered for all our children through the following 6 key objectives.

We will:

- **Raise educational attainment and achievement for all**
- **Use performance information to secure improvement for children and young people**
- **Ensure children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed**
- **Equip young people to secure and sustain positive destinations and achieve success in life**
- **Ensure high quality partnership working and community engagement**
- **Strengthen leadership at all levels**

Our strategy for realising this vision is best explained by showing how our six objectives link to priority actions. Further explanation around each objective is provided within the section *Our 6 Objectives* beginning on page 12. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to deliver the key actions. This will be achieved through improvement planning in schools, establishments and services, ensuring our values are reflected in all that we do.

# 4

## LOCAL CONTEXT

Argyll and Bute is geographically the second largest authority in Scotland. Education is delivered in a range of settings, including

- Childminding
- Early Learning and Childcare
  - Primary and secondary schools including the delivery of Gaelic Medium Education
  - One special school
  - Youth Services
  - Partnerships with local colleges

The size of schools varies significantly across the authority with primary school rolls ranging from under 5 to around 400, and secondary school rolls ranging from around 25 to over 1300. There are currently 25 primary schools with a roll of under 20 pupils. The needs of most pupils, even those with significant and complex needs, are met within mainstream classes or in learning centres situated within mainstream schools. A very small, and reducing, number of children and young people are educated in day and residential schools outwith Argyll and Bute.

Argyll and Bute is an area of outstanding natural beauty sitting within an ancient landscape with a strong cultural identity. Today, the culture of Argyll and Bute is reflected in its traditional industries of fishing, farming and crofting, sports such as shinty and in its world class musicians and artists as well as its modern commercial industries such as wind turbine production and fish farming.





# 5

# EDUCATION STRATEGY SERVICE OVERVIEW

## SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT (SOA)

**Outcome 3:** Education, skills and training maximises opportunities for all

**Outcome 4:** Children and young people have the best possible start

Cross cutting themes

Education Service Key Objectives and associated Priority Actions



1. **We will raise educational attainment and achievement for all, by**
  - Improving the overall quality of learning experiences
  - Tackling disadvantage and deprivation to close the attainment gap
  - Improving literacy, numeracy and health & wellbeing outcomes for children and young people
  - Continually improving curriculum design and development
2. **We will use performance information to secure improvement for children and young people, by**
  - Effectively assessing, tracking and monitoring the progress of our children and young people
  - Implementing strong self-evaluation, quality assurance and improvement planning
  - Clear reporting of outcomes
3. **We will ensure children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed, by**
  - Providing high quality Early Learning and Childcare
  - Working with parents, families and partners
4. **We will equip young people to secure and sustain positive destinations and achieve success in life, by**
  - Equipping children and young people with knowledge and skills for learning, life and work
  - Promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship
  - Supporting lifelong learning
5. **We will ensure high quality partnership working and community engagement, by**
  - Developing and strengthening parental engagement and participation
  - Improving curriculum links between schools and colleges
  - Developing and strengthening partnerships with business, the community and other agencies
  - Working together to secure improvement
6. **We will strengthen leadership at all levels, by**
  - Focusing on effective educational leadership
  - Promoting career long professional development for all staff
  - Providing professional learning opportunities for front line services
  - Maximising the use of resources

# 6

## CROSS CUTTING THEMES

As shown above, 4 themes have been identified that cut across and influence all 6 objectives. These are:

- a. Legislative compliance
- b. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)
- c. Prevention and early intervention
- d. Evidence based practice

### **a. Legislative compliance**

It is critically important that all policy, guidance and practice complies with the legislation that determines how education should be delivered to meet the needs of all children and young people. The key legislation that guides our delivery of services includes

*Education (Scotland) Act 1980*

*Standards in Scotland's School etc. Act 2000*

*Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006*

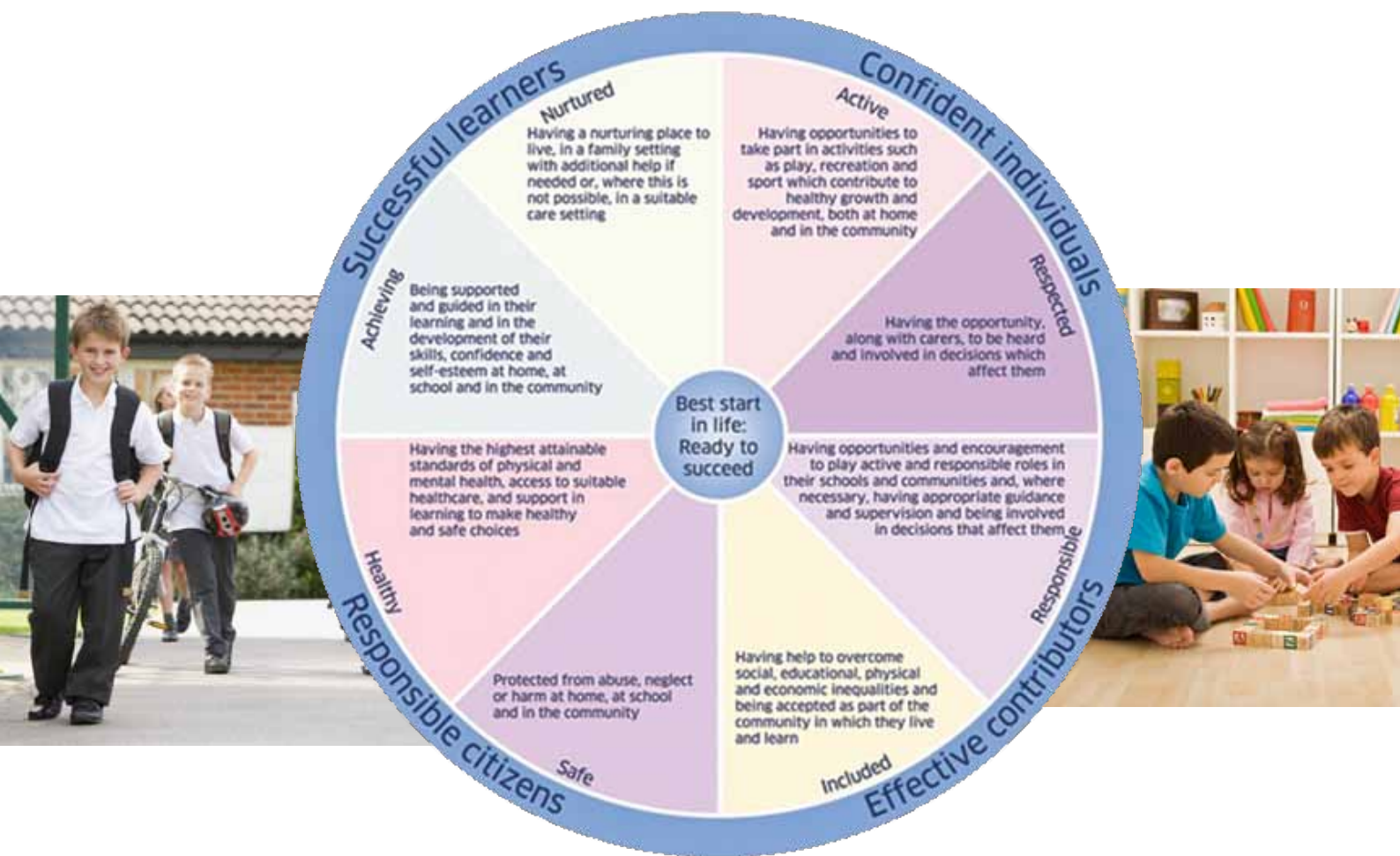
*Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 and 2009*

*Equality Act 2010*

*Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*

*Education (Scotland) Act 2016*





## b. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

Getting it right for every child is the approach used across Scotland for working with children and their families to ensure that all agencies work in partnership. Children and their families should receive the support they need to be safe, be cared for and reach their full potential. The approach uses the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators which stand for Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. These indicators help those who work with our children assess their progress and ensure that the support offered is appropriate, proportionate and timely.

Every child has a named person, usually a health visitor for a preschool child and a member of staff from Education Services from school age onwards. The named person will be available to listen, advise and help a child or young person and their family, be able to offer direct support or help them access support from others. Where necessary, this can be taken forward through the development of a child's plan. We always involve the child and their family in these discussions to reach agreement around the planning process.



### **c. Prevention, staged intervention and early intervention**

Staged intervention is used as a means of identification, assessment, planning, recording and review to meet the learning needs of children and young people. It provides a solution-focused approach to meeting needs at the earliest opportunity and with the least intrusive level of intervention. The process involves the child, parents/carers, school staff and, at some levels, other professionals working in partnership to get it right for every child.

Wherever possible we will look to address issues before they become difficulties through preventative approaches. For example, we can provide primary age children with strategies to talk about and understand emotions and behaviours to reduce the likelihood of future anxiety or depression. Early intervention involves identifying children and families that may be at risk of running into difficulties and providing effective support at the right time. Working with partners we will identify these issues at the earliest possible point and agree what supports should be provided to improve the life chances for children and young people.

#### **d. Evidence based practice**

To have the greatest impact and to improve outcomes for children and young people it is important that we make the most of 'what works'. To do this we need to consider the type of programmes and services that we use and to be clear and rigorous about the way in which we use them. The most effective programmes are clear about who they should be used with, for example toddlers or teenagers, and the way in which they should be used for maximum effect. Across all 6 objectives, it is important that we consider what we are doing, how we are doing it and identify the difference that this is making. Interventions need to be effective at improving outcomes for children and young people and provide best value for money.





# OUR SIX OBJECTIVES

## 1. Raise educational attainment and achievement for all

The curriculum includes a broad range of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, to help every child and young person to develop knowledge, skills and attributes for success in learning, life and work.

Research and evidence consistently demonstrates the direct link between poverty and deprivation and lower attainment and achievement. We also accept the direct link between underachievement in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and sustaining positive post school destinations. In order to address this, our vision is founded on a high level of ambition for all children and young people. The three pillars of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing underpin the entire 3 to 18 curriculum across all subject areas, and will be a key focus for Education Services in implementing *Our Children, Their Future*.

### PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Improve the overall quality of learning experiences
- Tackle disadvantage and deprivation to close the attainment gap
- Improve literacy, numeracy and health & wellbeing outcomes for children and young people
- Continually improve curriculum design and development



## 2. Use performance information to secure improvement for children and young people

Education services gather, analyse and report on a wide range of performance information which allow us to deliver services effectively and demonstrate that we are continually improving outcomes for children and young people. For example, we use information about the progress of our children and young people to inform the approaches to learning and teaching in the classroom.

The National Improvement Framework will collect national data on the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels for literacy and numeracy at the end of P1, P4, P7 and S3, based on teacher judgement and informed by standardised testing. Nationally produced standardised assessments for literacy and numeracy will be available for use from 2017, and will contribute to the much wider range of data that teachers use to assess, track and monitor the progress of children.

Other performance information routinely gathered and analysed includes:

- Participation in sport and leisure activities
- Youth achievement awards
- Attendance and exclusion rates
- Audit and inspection outcomes
- Leaver destinations

It is everyone's responsibility to gather and use performance information to intervene to secure improvement for both individual children and groups. We will actively engage parents and young people in this process.

### **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

- Effectively assess, track and monitor the progress of our children and young people
- Implement strong self-evaluation, quality assurance and improvement planning
- Clearly report outcomes

### 3. Ensure children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed

In Argyll and Bute, we work together to ensure children and young people experience a positive start that supports and nurtures as well as builds firm foundations for later life. These steps begin before our children are born. We know that children develop faster in the first few years of life than at any other time so, to make an impact and ensure we tackle potential disadvantage, this is a priority area for us.

We will continue to improve the way we work together with partners and families. A number of key initiatives have been developed under the Argyll and Bute Early Years Collaborative (EYC) to help us with this. The EYC is a national approach targeting how we improve the life chances of our children by:

- testing changes to how we do things
- measuring these changes to see if they lead to improvements, and
- spreading the approaches that work.

In Argyll and Bute, key developments that will lead to the achievement of the stretch aims include *The Argyll and Bute Family Pathway* and *The Developmental Milestone Toolkit*.

The Education Service provides Early Learning and Childcare services (ELC) either directly or through commissioning arrangements with private and voluntary providers or through registered childminders. Children over 3 years of age, and some 2 years olds, have an entitlement to up to 600 hours of free early learning or childcare each year.

#### PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Provide high quality Early Learning and Child Care
- Work with parents, families and partners





## 4. Equip young people to secure and sustain positive destinations and achieve success in life

The overarching aim for the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership is to grow the population through economic development. Argyll and Bute offers outstanding opportunities for business growth and features many outstanding employers with globally recognised branding and cutting edge technologies. For that growth to be realised, our industries need a workforce with the right skills, attitudes and capacities. This is consistent with the findings of the Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce.

We will:

- ensure our young people fully understand the employment training and academic pathways and opportunities that are available to them locally in Argyll and Bute
- nurture a spirit of entrepreneurship and enterprise and raise the ambition of our young people that they can develop and succeed in new business opportunities
- expand our engagement with local businesses to increase opportunities for work experience and business mentoring for young people at all academic levels
- work with other partners including Skills Development Scotland and Job Centre

Plus to ensure our young people receive appropriate careers advice

- support young people to secure sustained positive destinations in employment training or further/ higher education.

### PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Equip children and young people with skills for learning, life and work
- Promote enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Support lifelong learning



## 5. Strengthen high quality partnership working and community engagement

We recognise that most of a child's development takes place outwith our schools and ELC settings therefore the role of families and carers is critical to ensuring our children and young people succeed. We want to support families to engage meaningfully in their child's education and to be part of leading improvements with schools. We believe it is time to establish a different relationship with parents and carers that reflects this central role for them in the development of education services in Argyll and Bute at a school and an authority level.

We will empower parents and carers to be part of the decisions that are taken in respect of their children's education and development, and to work along with the staff in each school on improvement planning. We will engage parents and carers in dialogue around the new duties on education authorities, new approaches to learning and ultimately their role in their children's education.

Consulting with children and young people and encouraging meaningful participation is not simply a preferred approach, but is a requirement placed upon professionals. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to consult with children and young people and highlights the importance of adopting appropriate consultation methods to ensure young people are able to participate effectively in decisions that affect their lives. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 strengthens children's voices in matters



that affect them and also extends the rights of children with additional support needs. Careful consideration needs to be given to the ways in which we consult with children and young people to allow them to participate effectively. This will include young children and those with additional support needs. We also need to be clear about what happens in response to the views that are shared.

We will ensure that strong partnerships are created and maintained with local bodies including businesses, third sector organisations and community groups. This will broaden and deepen the curricular experiences offered to children and young people by our educational establishments. We will work in partnership and consult appropriately with Parent Councils and relevant community bodies or groups when considering the quality of provision delivered in our educational establishments in accordance with the principles of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

## PRIORITY ACTIONS

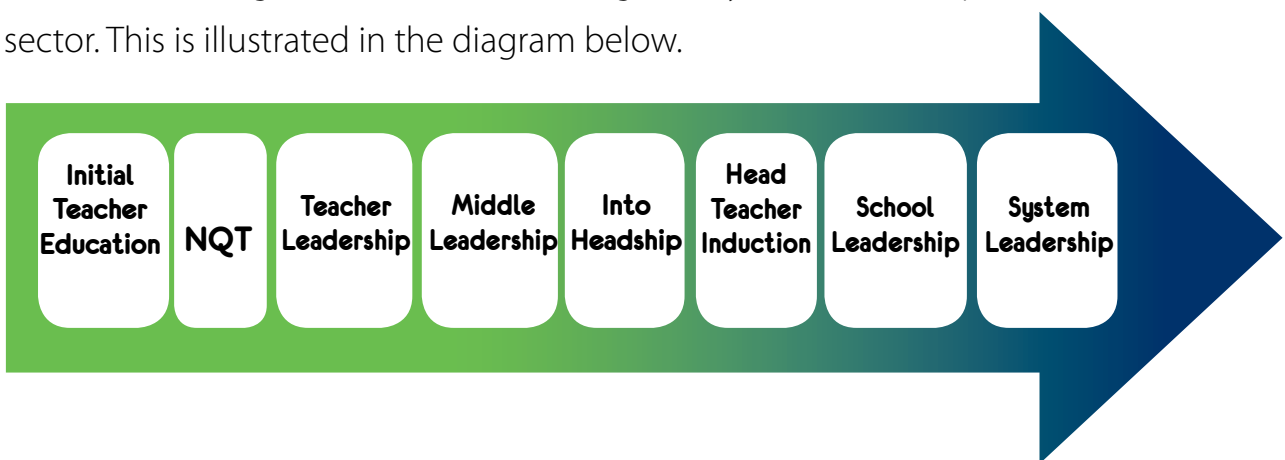
- Develop and strengthen parental engagement and participation
- Improve the curriculum links between schools and colleges
- Develop and strengthen partnerships with business and the community
- Work together to secure improvement



## 6. Strengthen leadership at all levels

Research has demonstrated a strong link between the quality of educational experience enjoyed by our children and young people and the standards and competence of our teaching professionals. Leadership in schools at all levels is essential in ensuring that experience is of the very highest standard.

Head Teachers and teachers who are empowered, and empower others, have a strong record of ensuring the highest quality of learning and teaching. This ensures that all children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes. Our approach ensures a consistent focus on career long professional development from the initial teacher education, through the various career stages to system leadership across the education sector. This is illustrated in the diagram below.



Leadership for continuous school improvement is most effective where every member of the school staff is empowered to lead and where every member of staff develops their ability to lead.

We also recognise the challenges of recruiting teaching and support staff in a large rural area like Argyll and Bute. We are committed to growing our own future staff, future leaders and applying creative solutions. We work with a range of partners to achieve this including innovative work with Argyll College UHI to deliver a post graduate diploma in education locally in Argyll and Bute. This approach is more sustainable and contributes to developing career options for people to stay in Argyll and Bute.

### PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Focus on effective educational leadership
- Promote career long professional development for all staff
- Provide professional learning opportunities for front line services
- Maximise the use of resources



## PLANNING TO DELIVER IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Education services gather, analyse and report on a wide range of performance information which allow us to deliver services effectively and demonstrate that we are continually improving outcomes for children and young people. For example, we use information about the progress of our children and young people to inform the approaches to learning and teaching in the classroom.

To deliver improved outcomes for children and young people Education Services will:

1. Ensure that plans are in place for Education Services, individual teams and schools across the Council and that these include appropriate measures of success
2. Take action to deliver the key ambitions for our children, young people and communities
3. Monitor progress against clear measures found in Council, Service and School Improvement Plans
4. Sustain continuous improvement and address agreed areas for further development highlighted through self-evaluation

This will be achieved through a number of approaches including:

- Presentation of quarterly performance information to Council and Community Services Committee as part of the Council's performance management reporting systems
- Preparation and publication of an annual statement of standards and quality reporting
- Presentation of relevant committee papers to Community Services Committee for example SQA examinations outcomes
- Submission of relevant performance information to Scottish Government for example outcomes for looked after children, attendance and exclusions

It is essential to gather and use performance information to intervene to secure improvement for both individual children and groups. We will actively engage parents and young people in these processes.

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## REPORTING ON OUTCOMES

It is centrally important to evaluate the impact of improvement activities. Effective evaluation needs reliable data from a range of sources. Data should be able to demonstrate improvement against baseline information. In addition to performance data such as exam results and standardised assessments, information should include analysis of people's views and evaluations based on direct observation of the quality of learning.



Building capacity across education is supported by sharing professional learning. We need to be able to consider what the evidence tells us about progress for individual children and across ELC, classes, schools and education services. We need to identify success and use our evaluation information to plan next steps. We will report on progress on an annual basis.



## MONITORING AND REVIEW OF *OUR CHILDREN, THEIR FUTURE*

The Scottish Education system is going through another period of significant change and the expectations on staff working with our children and young people have never been higher. *Our Children, Their Future* seeks to be clear about our strategy in Argyll and Bute to realise both the national vision for Scottish Education but also our local vision for our children and young people.

The National Improvement Framework will set out additional performance reporting requirements and we will collect that information to report our progress towards achieving equity and excellence through attainment. This will introduce changes to school and local authority standards and quality reporting which will contribute to reviewing the impact and outcome of our work. We will produce a report on this work on an annual basis in line with the requirements of the National Improvement Framework.

*Our Children, Their Future* belongs to those whose education we provide, to the families that support them and to our staff who daily have the challenge and joy of being such a critical part of those children and young people's lives. We will ensure that we involve all stakeholders' in monitoring and reviewing our strategy.



ARGYLL AND BUTE  
A great place to live, invest and visit

Education Service  
Argyll House  
Alexandra Parade  
DUNOON  
PA23 8AJ

Website: [argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01369 704000