



**STANDARDS & QUALITY REPORT  
AND  
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**FOR**

**ALFORD ACADEMY**



**LAST UPDATED: September 2019**

**Aberdeenshire Council Education & Children's Services**

“Education & Children's Services works to improve the lives of children and young people, families and communities through the delivery of high-quality services across Aberdeenshire”

## **Introduction: National and Local context**

This Faculty Standards and Quality Report and Improvement Plan is influenced by both Aberdeenshire, National and school priorities. These can be summarised as follows:

### **National Improvement Framework 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 and
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people

### **National Improvement Framework Drivers:**

- School leadership
- Teacher professionalism
- Parental engagement
- Assessment of children's progress
- School improvement
- Performance information

### **Aberdeenshire Priorities 2019 - 2021:**

- Improving Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Partnership Working to Raise Attainment
- Developing Leadership at All Levels
- Improvement Through Self-Evaluation

### **Alford Academy 3 Year Priorities (2017-2020):**

- To develop our inclusive, healthy and ambitious community through further development of leadership/capacity building at all levels.
- To improve teaching, learning and assessment of learner's progress.
- To support and enable our young people to be the very best learners with a particular focus on their health & wellbeing, equality and inclusion, our partnerships with parents/carers and family learning.
- To review and improve our curriculum, increasing achievement pathways through innovative partnerships and equipping all children and young with the skills required for their next phase of learning.

These priorities are reflected in all areas of this document and the actions that emerge from it. When work is undertaken on each of the improvements identified, we aim to maximise opportunities for working and learning with Cluster Primaries and Campus colleagues.

## CONTEXT OF OUR SCHOOL

### Alford Academy Vision, Values and Aims

*“Working together to nurture, inspire and achieve”*

#### Mission Statement

Alford Academy recognises that one size does not fit all. Our young people are born individuals and should leave school as individuals. Alford Academy is committed to unlocking each youngster’s potential, raising their aspirations and helping them to be all they can be, in a safe, healthy and caring environment.

#### Our Values

The work and life of our school is underpinned by 5 values:-  
Honesty, Hard Work, Ambition, Respect, Kindness

#### Our Aims

##### • Attainment and Achievement

To raise attainment and wider achievements for all our pupils, especially through the skills of literacy, numeracy, health and well-being, digital literacy and working with others.

##### • Learning, Teaching and Assessment

To promote the highest quality learning experiences for pupils by investing in professional learning to create knowledgeable and skilled teachers capable of getting it right for every young person, raising the attainment and achievement levels of our pupils.

##### • Inclusion and Equality

To provide equality of opportunity to access education in a way that is engaging and appropriate to the pupils’ interests, physical and intellectual needs.

##### • Values and Citizenship

To work with pupils, parents and employees to promote self-respect, respect for others and interdependence within society. In turn our pupils will understand the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.

##### • Learning for Life

To equip pupils with positive attitudes and expectations, encourage creativity, ambition and entrepreneurial skills that will help them prosper in our changing society.

*Alford Academy is not just a school, it is a learning community that recognises teaching and learning does not start and stop at the school gates. Through developing our partnerships in and out of school, we work together to increasingly provide the very best learning and leadership experiences and opportunities for all. In turn we aim to support and furnish each individual youngster with the knowledge, skills, experiences, insight and drive that will set them on their path to a prosperous future, effectively contributing to life and work in Aberdeenshire, Scotland and worldwide.*

## **Our Ethos**

Alford Academy has a very positive inclusive ethos. We are a welcoming and caring, professional, ambitious and proud school. Through our approachable leadership style, culture of open dialogue and commitment to continuous improvement through self-evaluation, we encourage all to 'say it as it is' and to work together to further develop our culture of ambition and achievement for all our learners.

We have an inclusive approach where all pupils are valued and supported in their learning by all staff. They are proud to belong to one of four houses: Craigievar, Forbes, Glenbuchat and Kildrummy. Pupils are known well by their Principal Teacher of Guidance and the Depute Head Teacher linked to their House group.

## **Our Community, Links and Partnerships**

Alford Academy is a six-year non-denominational secondary school located in the Donside village of Alford, approximately 25 miles to the west of Aberdeen and within easy reach of the Cairngorms National Park. Our rural catchment area of approximately 600 square miles stretches from Echt in the east to Corgarff in the west. The village of Alford and surrounding area is rich in local culture and heritage, including the 'Doric' dialect, the famous poet; Charles Murray, the Sculpture Workshop at Lumsden, Craigievar Castle and Castle Fraser, local estates and Alford's Transport Museum and Heritage Centre.

Our new Alford Community Campus opened in October 2015. This shared campus is home to Alford Nursery, Primary and Academy, Community Learning and Development, Live Life Aberdeenshire and a Community Library. Our indoor facilities include a swimming pool, sports hall, climbing wall and theatre. Outdoors we have an all-weather pitch, running track, grass pitches and dry ski slope. A short distance away is the school's own forestry plot, gifted by the Murray Park Trustees.

Alford Academy is an Enhanced Provision and Community Resource Hub, a key characteristic of which is our positive, nurturing relationships which are deeply rooted in the support for our learners within school and across our wider cluster schools. Key information is shared with all teaching staff to support learners and learning.

The school has 53.2 full time equivalent teaching staff. The school is led by a Senior Leadership Team of 4 (Head Teacher, three Depute Head Teachers) and a CSN Support Services Co-ordinator. There are 9.0 fte Principal Teachers (Faculty), four Principal Teachers Guidance and one Principal Teacher of Additional Support for Learners. The following faculties are currently in place: English, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Business Education and Computing, Science (Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics), Enterprise and Creativity (Art & Design, Home Economics and Technical), PE/Health, Performing Arts (Music and Drama) and a Faculty of Humanities (RMPS, History, Geography, Modern Studies). There are 11.7 full time equivalent Additional Support for Learners (ASfL) teachers working across the Alford Cluster Schools. An extensive team of support staff, incorporating janitors, technicians, pupil support assistants and office staff, support the work of Alford Academy and cluster schools.

Alford Academy works with its thirteen associated primary schools on a formal and informal basis to improve our 3-18 curriculum, pastoral care and welfare and to plan and deliver career long professional learning events and programmes.

The school is well supported by an active Parent Council with members supporting the work of our Student Council and actively engaging in consultations and discussions about policies, values, Pupil Equity Funding and school improvement.

We continue to work collaboratively with a range of agencies, business partners and organisations including:-

Our ‘flagship’ partnership with Mackie’s of Scotland  
 NESCOL (North East Scotland College)  
 SRUC (Scotland’s Rural College)  
 Skills Development Scotland  
 RGU (Robert Gordon University)  
 DYW North East Scotland  
 Alford & District Rotary Club (working with our Interact club)  
 Our school chaplains (Rev J Cook, Rev E Glenn, Rev S Mitchell)  
 Our consortia schools :- Aboyne Academy, Banchory Academy, Westhill Academy,  
 Cairngorms National Park  
 Local businesses  
 GREC  
 Grampian Transport Museum  
 Scottish Sculpture Workshop  
 Bennachie Rangers

## **Our School Profile (including Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD))**

Alford Academy is one of the smaller Aberdeenshire secondary schools with a school roll of 680 pupils in the September 2019 census. 44 pupils attend Alford Academy through placing requests. Our Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), (the Scottish Government's official tool for identifying those places in Scotland suffering from deprivation with decile 1 being the most deprived through to decile 10 the least deprived) is as follows: 0% of our pupils are in the most deprived deciles 1,2,3 and 4 and the majority of our pupils (88%) are in least deprived deciles 8, 9 and 10. Details are as follows:-

Deciles 1,2,3,4	Decile 5	Decile 6	Decile 7	Decile 8	Decile 9	Decile 10
0.0%	7.9%	3.4%	<1%	42.9%	28.2%	17.1%

## **Detail and Allocation of Pupil Equity Funding**

Our Pupil Equity Funding was again used to support a range of work and opportunities for our young people. Throughout session 2018/19 we continued our focus on promoting positive mental health and delivered a range of well attended activities for pupils and staff during National Mental Health Week 2019. Approximately 150 parents attended a parents’ workshop on how to support children and young people with anxiety, this was also very well received. All parents who formally fed back shared how useful the workshop had been and included comments referencing strategies they would use with their child/children, in particular, listening and how to interact.

Staff from all Alford Cluster schools, attended a follow up presentation and workshop delivered by ‘Art of Brilliance’, informing them about the importance of ‘a can-do’ attitude and modelling the ‘best version of themselves’ to children and young people. This led to positive discussion and evidence of a

positive conversations with pupils. Providers Tree of Knowledge further supported this work through delivery of motivational workshops to pupils.

Our partnership with the Scottish Sculpture Workshop continued. Five pupils attended workshops which resulted in developing their personal skills, increased their confidence and self-esteem and developed traditional craft skills. 5 pupils took part in Rural Skills training, developing their skills and supporting their future pathway. In partnership with Community Learning and Development, a program focussing on employability skills, confidence to cook and car maintenance, attended by 8p~ pupils, led to increased engagement and skills development of identified pupils during the SQA exam diet. Further career education opportunities at SRUC and NESCOL in the form of year group excursions and workshops were financially supported to supported to ensure all pupils had the opportunity to experience college life and learning for one day.

Additional PSA staffing was used to support literacy development to support paired reading activities and the purchase and use of Literacy On-line to develop all areas of literacy. Young people involved increased their Reading Age by 9 months over the period, on average.

### **Factors affecting our progress**

Alford Academy has gone through a period of significant change over the past five years. Our new campus development, senior phase curriculum changes, significant staff changes and a rising school role, are challenges and opportunities we continue to work through. Our school role has risen from 595 to 680 since moving into the new campus in 2015, in turn necessitating the creation of a fourth guidance house for session 2018-19, significant strategic planning of our curriculum and staffing allocation and recruitment of additional staffing.

Our staffing profile has significantly changed over the past 5 years with a change to over 60% of our staff. 32 full time staff (from an average 49 FTE) have moved on from Alford Academy, relocating, changing career pathway, 8 have retired, 3 were promoted out with school and a further 5 have been promoted internally. Our Extended Leadership Team (i.e. Principal Teachers) is a significantly new team with 8 of the 15 Principal Teachers recruited in the last three years.

Over a period of two years a transition to an innovative 3-18 school Senior Leadership Team structure for the campus, was being developed (led by the Academy Head Teacher). This work stream came to a halt in February 2018. During session 2017-18, a full - time permanent DHT post, filled on a temporary basis for 20 months, was recruited for in May 2018. These factors and associated work have affected the strategic leadership capacity to progress some improvement priorities in our three-year plan.

## The Core Areas of Our Practice

This report summarises the strengths of our school, our recent improvements and what we need to improve further. We gather this information throughout the year in a variety of formal and informal ways to make sure our report is as accurate as possible. These include

- seeking the views of our learners at classroom, Faculty and Whole School levels
- our Student Council actively seeking the views of pupils
- our Parent Council sharing and seeking the views of parents and working together with the school on policy development and our improvement agenda
- gathering the views of the staff, the local community and school partners
- actively seeking views at Parents Evenings, Information Evenings and via our website/blog
- comparing what we do with local, national and international examples of best practice.
- visiting each other's classes to share standards in learning and teaching.
- looking at learner's work to see how they are progressing.
- learners peer assessment and self-assessment
- analysing factual data and information including leavers destinations, attainment results, tracking data all levels across our school

### Our Key Strengths

- Our young people.
- Our positive, inclusive school ethos, working together in a climate of mutual respect and ambition for every individual.
- We know our pupils.
- Our celebration of our pupils' wider achievements.
- Our quality of support provided. Staff, pupils and parents work well together and share any circumstances which might affect our young people and their learning.
- Our wide-ranging partnerships: working with pupils, parents, businesses and organisations, neighbouring schools and further and higher education, to support learning, the wider life of the school and to plan and deliver our curriculum offered to young people.
- The many and varied opportunities for staff and pupil leadership.
- The leadership of key members of the school pipe band to design a school tartan and fundraise over £12000 for kilts and jackets.

### Our Improvements and Successes Last Session

- The percentage of all S4/5/6 pupils attaining Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF level 4 has increased and is above the national comparator.
- Continuing our focus on our new values in the everyday life and work of the school.
- Continuing to improve the consistency in our self-evaluation at class, faculty and whole school levels, through our emerging work with our hub schools, Aboyne and Westhill Academies.
- Sharing practice is a key feature of almost all our meetings.
- Working together on our 'top ten distractors' leading to more consistency and increased learning time in most lessons.
- An improvement to our professional judgements in 'learning walkthroughs'.
- Our work with the Parent Council to support parents/carers
- Our Student Council and Parent Council planning school improvement together
- Our focus on wellbeing including the work of our Campus Health and Wellbeing focus group.
- Planning together with our neighbouring schools and local college to increase the range of learning pathways for all our learners

- Increased focus on skills development through our emerging ‘Skills Development Academy’ period
- Our Careers Fayre and ‘Pathways’ Information Sessions attended by parents.
- Our focus on mental health awareness.
- Consultation on and implementation of a fourth guidance house
- Increasing partnership working and enhancing learning through relevant context.

## **Our Priorities for Improvement Next Session**

To raise attainment and achievement we will focus on:-

### **Leadership Development and School Improvement by continuing to**

- develop collaborative approaches to self-evaluation through work in school and across our trio of schools
- develop and implementing a programme of opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in school improvement and improve how we share feedback and actions taken
- develop our vision of a school ‘without walls’ with vibrant learning/learning spaces (in and outdoors) which relate to now, the workplace, local community and the future
- embed our school values in our daily work and developing our ‘branding’
- improve how we identify improvements and track/monitor impact
- raise attainment in literacy, numeracy, identified subjects/ courses
- increase positive destinations
- develop leadership capacity through mentoring, coaching, professional learning
- develop our 'in-house' programme of professional learning workshops

### **Improving the consistency and rigour of Learning, Teaching and Assessment by continuing to**

- improve pedagogy
- develop our Digital Learning Strategy
- improve planning together highest quality teaching. learning and assessment
- share standards through moderation of literacy and numeracy
- improve the quality assurance of learning and teaching through planned activities at all levels (including learning visit schedules)
- improve tracking and monitoring each learner’s progress, the impact of interventions and how we track progress of cohorts of learners over time.

### **Our Young People – the very best learners**

Improving how we support our young people to enable them to learn by

- continuing our focus on wellbeing, equality and inclusion and further embedding well-being indicators in our practice
- updating our safeguarding policy and procedures including child protection, anti-bullying and equalities
- continuing to develop the role of PSAs
- continuing to develop partnership working to implement strategies for identified non-attenders/ disengaged learners and our Pupil Equity Funding
- reviewing our restorative practice approaches
- developing positive education approaches (positive attitudes to learning, growth mindset, praise) and a strategy for coaching and mentoring

- increasing communications with parents
- planning and piloting family learning events (initially focussing on numeracy)

**Further developing our Curriculum/Learning Pathways by continuing to**

- plan curriculum content and structure collaboratively within school, across schools and with further and higher education partners and businesses/ organisations :-
- review our BGE and Senior Phase through lens of Excelerate programme with a clear focus on skills development/work-based learning, effective IDL/project-based learning
- improve pathways and accreditation of wider achievement opportunities
- pilot new programmes of study i.e. Positive Education/Wellbeing, Personal Development and Leadership through Skills Development Academy programme, outdoor learning
- develop 3-18 skills framework and how we track and monitor skills
- develop career education content at each stage (PSE and Universal support) - focus on gender inequalities, CLPL for staff (Career Education Standard), information for parents/carers
- re-develop our numeracy strategy
- increase our partnerships (including with The Wood Foundation - Excelerate) and evaluate impact
- audit and evaluate uptake of wider achievement opportunities, how they develop specific skills and equity (gender, ability, age, proximity to school).

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?

<b>NIF Priority/Priorities:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>NIF Drivers:</b>	<b>School leadership, Teacher professionalism, School improvement</b>

#### OVERVIEW

The school actively promotes a collaborative approach to leadership and school improvement at all levels and with all stakeholders.

#### Self-Evaluation for Self-Improvement

Our focus on evidence-based self-evaluation has continued and a range of self-evaluation ‘tools’ and methods of gathering feedback across the school are in place. All Faculty leaders review previous improvement priorities and their impact on learners. They critically examine and report on their SQA results (including component marks) and Insight data, identifying priorities for improvement and actions to be taken and in most courses have demonstrated improvement in key components. Senior Leaders and Faculty Leaders are more skilled in evaluating evidence of impact of improvement strategies. We see the use of on-line surveys, questionnaires and focus groups at all levels across the school. We see most class leaders seeking feedback from pupils. Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation within school and across schools are emerging. We have Faculty and Class leaders liaising with peers in and out with school through curriculum support networks and planned visits.

There is emerging practice of ‘trio partnerships’ to support and moderate our self-evaluation. The Head Teacher works closely with the Head Teachers of two neighbouring schools, reviewing self-evaluation processes and sharing practice. This led to the co-planning and implementation of a new whole school Validated Self Evaluation visit involving peer Head Teachers and Quality Improvement Officers from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The outcome of which was very much in line with our own school self-evaluation. Depute Head Teachers work together with their peers in the other two schools and also more widely. Professional learning for Principal Teachers was delivered to support the ownership and development of peer self-evaluation and moderation. Internally Principal Teacher trios are becoming established and almost all meet informally to review and share their work. An emerging model of peer-to-peer learning visits has started.

At whole school level, we actively seek the views of parents at our well attended Parents Evenings. Informal “Share the air” coffee and chat sessions with the Head Teacher have been offered leading to identification of improvement priorities to raise attainment. We use our website/blog/on-line forms to gather views from our community. Our Student Council is consulted with and they consulted with pupils on whole school improvement priorities including outdoor learning spaces, social spaces and a survival guide for new ‘S1s’. They have used different methods throughout the year including a ‘pop-up’ Student Council drop in. A ‘Big Ideas’ week provided an opportunity for feedback from all pupils, with analysis of responses led by the Student Council. All S6 pupils had the opportunity to feedback their views to the Head Teacher at the end of the year. This exit pass feedback informed planning improvements.

Almost all staff understand that self-evaluation is at the heart of our school improvement and almost all staff are aware of the school’s strengths and priorities. We see emerging good practice focussing

on 'How Good Is Our School 4?' challenge questions at some meetings. Our staff teams are becoming more skilled at demonstrating the impact of improvements on outcomes for our young people.

We have worked with our cluster school Head Teachers, sharing attainment data, key priorities for improvement and we have focused on what we are measuring and tracking (supported by Aberdeenshire Improvement Officers). This has led to a shared understanding of the strengths of our children and young people across the cluster and an increasing understanding of the gaps in progress in learning.

Across our school we have actively provided opportunities for sharing practice at Senior Leadership Meetings, Extended Leadership, Faculty, Whole Staff Meetings and at most Faculty Meetings. We have adopted an 'On safari' model, with Extended Leadership Meetings rotating around school venues.

## **Leadership of Learning**

All staff have opportunities to contribute to our collegiate learning culture across the school. Our school improvement priorities include a focus on learning, teaching and assessment. Ambassador, champion, mentoring and informal buddy roles are in place to support and inspire staff, including a new Student Teacher Mentor role. Staff who take up leadership roles take ownership of our school improvement agenda and contribute to our professional learning programme through consultation, sharing practice and producing resources. Two of our teaching staff completed the Tapestry Leadership of Learning professional development programme and led a school-based Teacher Learning Community. Further to feedback from Cluster School colleagues our Cluster Schools Teacher Learning Communities have been restructured to provide a forum for dialogue at different stages and focused on leadership of improvement and moderation. A continued focus on Teaching and Learning at Whole Staff meetings and on In-service days has increased opportunities for teaching staff to lead practice and collaborate.

All staff are committed to Career Long Professional Learning and are encouraged and supported to attend in-house, Aberdeenshire and other externally delivered professional learning. All staff take part in professional learning at whole school, faculty and subject levels. There is increased evidence of professional dialogue focussing on pedagogy and raising attainment. All staff take part in one of our four key driver Collegiate Improvement Teams. Twelve staff had one or more roles with SQA, and a few led professional learning events out with school. All curriculum areas have staff representatives attending relevant SQA Understanding Standards events. Staff have worked hard to keep up to date with all course requirements at all levels within the Senior Phase.

A wide range of leadership opportunities are in place for our learners in school and on campus. A decline in the number of pupils applying for pupil leadership roles has led to a review of leadership roles which was led by Senior Pupil Leaders and the Student Council. This resulted in co-planning new House Leadership Roles for S1-S3 pupils and re-branding roles. A continued focus on supporting our young people to develop resilience using a range of 'growth mind-set' resources and workshops delivered by 'Tree of Knowledge', has inspired some pupils to think more positively. Our learners are involved in discussions about their learning in our classrooms and work with teachers to set and monitor progress towards target grades in the Senior Phase. Our learners are given dedicated time to discuss their next steps in learning and plan careers, in their Personal and Social Education programme, Skills Development Academy, subject classes and through 1:1s with key staff. Our Pupil Achievement Log (PAL) is evolving and supporting learners to become more accountable and take responsibility for their learning. Informal and formal feedback from our learners provides evidence of how much they value the encouragement, advice and expertise of school staff.

## **Leadership of Change**

All staff are ambitious for our young people. Almost all staff are aware of the social, economic and cultural context of our community. All staff are aware of our school values and vision.

School improvement takes place in the context of the school's values and vision. School improvement priorities are identified by considering their potential impact on raising attainment/improving outcomes for all learners and taking into account our capacity to action the improvements by planning them into our collegiate calendar.

Discussions with teachers on our Working Time Agreement has ensured time is ring-fenced for collaboration. Time is planned for professional dialogue (including moderation), professional learning, self-evaluation and for all Cluster school staff to work together.

All staff take responsibility for implementing change as seen through their work in collegiate teams. Our community is encouraged to be innovative and creative, supported through additional resources e.g. apps, software, professional learning. Google chrome books were purchased for the Faculty of Modern Languages are used to enhance engagement and learning. We share practice at almost all meetings at all levels across the school.

## **Leadership and Management of Staff**

Senior leaders are described as very approachable and are proactive in supporting and challenging their teams. At senior levels we work closely with all campus partners, through Calendar checks, Campus Leadership and Campus Operational Team meetings. We build our staff team through our on-going communications (weekly staff briefings, e-mails, meetings and 1:1s). We seek to improve and streamline our communications and piloted the use of OneNote and weekly bulletins. Our Professional Review and Development process is in line with national guidance. Professional reviews are held annually and have a focus on GTCS Standards. Professional learning is delivered to support professional development and school improvement and partners have been involved in delivering workshops to staff e.g, leadership of learning. School chaplains join school staff to provide pastoral support and our Human Resources Officer works closely with the school team to support health and well-being. Our school culture is very positive. All stakeholders are encouraged to share their views/concerns and ideas and have been given increased opportunities to do so. These views and ideas are responded to in a timely manner. A new concerns and complaints recording and monitoring system is being piloted.

## **Management of Resources to Promote Equity**

Finances are allocated in an equitable way. Faculty leaders are accountable for all monies allocated and are better skilled at monitoring and evaluating their purchase of new resources to ensure there is an impact on raising attainment. Systems and support are in place to monitor finances. Feedback from pupils has resulted in the purchase of additional lockers, additional seating for the Dining Area and funding for a new Forensics Cub. A system is in place for bids to be made to the Parent Council to fund activities / events / innovation. Over the session strong leadership from members of our school Pipe Band has led to fundraising and the design of a school tartan and purchase of kilts and jackets.

## **KEY STRENGTHS:**

- All staff have high aspirations for all our young people.
- Almost all school leavers moved on to a range of positive destinations including local employment, apprenticeships, further and higher education, sports scholarships abroad and volunteering.
- Senior Phase data analysis ‘toolkits’ support interrogation of data, improving the consistency and rigor of self-evaluation.
- Professional learning activities are linked to professional and school improvement priorities
- All staff are involved in Collegiate Improvement teams which focus on whole school improvement priorities.
- All staff and parents have the opportunity to discuss school improvement. 1:1s and ‘Share the Air’ with the Head Teacher have been introduced.
- Opportunities for learners to regularly review their progress in learning and set targets.
- Leadership opportunities for staff, pupils and parents
- Pupil Leadership (Senior Executive, Student Council, Library Ambassadors, My World of Work Ambassadors and a Saltire Awards Champion)
- Our professional learning and self-evaluation work with our partner schools
- Our Campus Health & Well Being Team’s leadership of events and communications.

## **IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

- Continue to improve consistency in approaches to self-evaluation at class, faculty and whole school levels in particular through collaboration with other schools
- Increasing opportunities to involve all stakeholders in self-evaluation and school improvement
- Improve how we share feedback received, actions taken and evaluating impact.
- ‘Bring to life’ our school values through branding and a consistent understanding of behaviours associated with the values
- Further develop our vision of a school ‘without walls’ with vibrant learning/learning spaces (in and outdoors) which relate to now, the workplace, local community and future
- Further develop leadership capacity at all levels, staff, pupils and parents.
- Continuing to improve leadership of learning by
  - sharing practice and moderation of learning
  - developing our ‘learning walkthroughs’/class visits programme and supportive tools
  - developing a well-planned ‘in-house’ programme of professional learning workshops and evaluating impact
- Raise attainment in literacy, numeracy, identified subjects/ courses, increase positive destinations

## ***‘TAKING A CLOSER LOOK and SHARING OUR FINDINGS’***

### **Evaluation of QI 1.3 Leadership of change**

#### **Sources of evidence/evaluation activities undertaken:**

- Analysis of Insight data/SQA exams results/tracking data
- Faculty, Middle Management and Senior Leadership meetings
- Student Council meetings
- Parent Council meetings
- School blog and forms
- Parental questionnaires
- Self-Evaluation at school level using HGIOS 4 QI’s
- Discussions with staff at Professional Review and Development meetings
- Learning walkthroughs led by our Learning & Teaching Team and Senior Leadership team
- Learning visits led by Faculty Leaders
- Peer-peer learning visits
- Leadership opportunities and increased uptake of these by staff at all levels
- The work of the Leadership Collegiate Improvement team
- Exit interviews with S6 pupils
- Range and frequency of wider opportunities for our young people (inc. additional curriculum support/revision sessions)
- Informal feedback from pupils
- Parent led events

#### **Overall evaluation of level of quality:**

##### **Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community**

Our shared Alford Academy and Alford Community Campus Vision of “Working together to nurture, inspire and achieve” and our recently refreshed school values drive our approach to school improvement. Everything we plan and implement is based on our commitment to our young people. All staff are committed to achieving the highest standards of attainment and achievement for all our young people. In our classrooms almost all pupils are engaged in their learning, most are hard-working and ambitious and almost all are kind and respectful. On Inservice days and at meetings we regularly reflect on our vision and values. The Head Teacher’s ‘Monday Message’ and Weekly Bulletin celebrate success and reinforce the importance of our values. Our annual Awards Ceremony has been reviewed in partnership with the Parent Council which led to an increase in the number of boys having achievements acknowledged. All staff are aware of, and almost all understand the social, economic and cultural context of our community. Our Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation data, exam results data, leavers destination data and labour market intelligence is shared with all staff (teaching and non-teaching) leading to an increased understanding of our gaps in attainment and achievement. Almost all school leavers move on to a range of positive destinations including local employment, apprenticeships, further and higher education, sports scholarships abroad and volunteering.

All Senior leaders work closely with our Student and Parent Councils on strategic plans including consultation on the use of ShowMyHomework, parental engagement events and wellbeing indicators. The Student Council has focused on 3 priorities in line with whole school improvements

i.e. reviewing current pupil leadership roles and planning improvements, outdoor learning opportunities, understanding feedback from pupils on Teaching and Learning and discussing next steps. Four pupils represented Alford pupils at the Aberdeenshire Pupil Participation Forum.

### **Strategic planning for continuous improvement**

School improvement takes place in the context of the school's values and vision. Improvement plans are driven from the learners/classroom up. Gaps in attainment are shared with all staff (teaching and non-teaching) and views sought in improvement priorities. This has led to increasing engagement in staff discussing and contributing to identification of priorities and also suggesting strategies for improvement. A 'Big Ideas' week was introduced for all staff and pupils resulting in improvement priorities being taken forward by the Student Council. In addition, proactive staff have suggested when there was a need to refocus on key aspects of practice and improvements emerged leading to increased consistency in classroom expectations across the school. Most staff use data to effect change, by identifying improvements in their own practice. Engagement of staff, pupils and parents in effective self-evaluation is improving. Whole school improvements are consulted on with teaching staff at dedicated Whole Staff meetings, with Support Staff at Head Teacher meetings, Student Council and all pupils, Parent Council and the wider parent forum at Parents Evenings and 'Sharing the air' events. Senior Leaders participate in Local Area Improvement Planning meetings. Our three-year plan and 4 key drivers were developed and written to be understandable by all and these are 'touchstones' for planning at all levels in school.

When considering change we look inwards at our current practice, then research how we can improve by learning from other schools, through Professional Learning events and from individuals' CLPL. We always endeavour to work with pupils, staff and parents when planning change to ensure understanding and ownership. This has included work on our Skills Development Academy programme, 'Top Ten Distractors' and Well-being Indicators.

School improvement priorities are planned carefully within our Working Time Agreement. Time for professional dialogue (inc. moderation), professional learning and self-evaluation is built into our working time agreement for secondary teachers with ring fenced time for all Alford Cluster Schools' staff to work together, a priority agreed at Cluster School Head Teacher Meetings. This is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

### **Implementing improvement and change**

All staff take responsibility for implementing change. We see staff taking action on feedback and developing courses in line with SQA requirements. Staff have an increased knowledge of benchmarks, informing learning, teaching and assessment in the Broad General Education. There is an increased focus on analysing learner's progress and potential progress to better plan pathways for all learners. Our Validated Self Evaluation visit in November 2018 endorsed our own self-evaluation of our school and we continue our work on our four drivers for change i.e. leadership and school improvement, teaching, learning and assessment, curriculum: learning pathways and well-being, equality and inclusion. There is evidence of improvement e.g. an increase to the number of learning pathways on offer, increased awareness of school values and related behaviours, an increased focus on learning intentions and success criteria and learners using success criteria to evaluate their progress in learning.

Working together is central to our school improvement. Everyone has a voice. Staff work together in improvement teams, faculty teams and interdisciplinary trios which is leading to increased ownership of school improvement and increased leadership of priorities at Faculty and Whole School levels. Pupils lead improvements through Senior Pupil Leadership roles, Student Council roles, and other pupil leadership roles such as MVP ambassadors. A sub-group of the Parent Council meet with our Student Council to support ideas e.g. internal seating and the woodland area.

Two parents supported pupil/parent information sessions. Our community is encouraged to be innovative and creative, supported through additional resources e.g. apps, software, professional learning. We share practice at meetings at all levels across the school.

<b>Level of quality for this QI:</b>	<b>4 (Good)</b>
How Good Is Our School? Scale 1-6	

## LEARNING PROVISION

### How good is the quality of the care and education we offer?

<b>NIF Priority/Priorities:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>NIF Drivers:</b>	<b>Teacher professionalism, School leadership, Parental engagement, Assessment of children's progress</b>

#### OVERVIEW

Alford Academy offers a good quality of care and education.

#### Safeguarding and Child Protection

At Alford Academy Safeguarding and Child Protection are of the highest importance. Almost all pupils have shared through feedback that they feel safe. Our staff are regularly kept up to date with safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures and follow them. Pupils in prefect roles are briefed on child protection procedures and all pupils know about child protection and wellbeing issues through aspects of the curriculum. Parents and partners with the school (including all our campus partners) have key contacts and we see procedures being followed as required. Our school ethos and culture is one which encourages pupils and parents to have their say, with general concerns raised and addressed through Parent Council and Parental Engagement events focusing on Mental Health and Drugs awareness. Our DHT (Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion) is leading the local GIRFEC group and contributes to strategic work at local authority level. Our positive relationships have led to most pupils and parents approaching staff directly with concerns when they need help.

#### Curriculum

Learners are at the heart of our curriculum design. Our curriculum is under on-going review and continues to evolve. It takes into account our local circumstances and National guidance with a clear focus on Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). We have an increased focus on skills development through our Skills Development Academy, a programme under development for S1-S6, which focuses on personal development, leadership skills, volunteering and also planned time for reflection on progress in learning. This is leading to increased accreditation of skills. We have increased learning pathways and improved relevance of learning in some curriculum areas through increasing co-planning with partners, including with neighbouring schools, local Further Education providers and our business partners, Mackie's of Scotland. Creative approaches to delivery of courses have been progressed i.e. successfully delivering Higher Psychology via e-sgoil with 9 out of the 11 pupils attaining a course award. The result of this increase in partnership planning and delivery is an increase in the number of learning pathways on offer, new work experience placements and an increase in positive destinations.

#### Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Almost all our young people behave well and most demonstrate a positive attitude to learning. Pupils who have barriers to learning are well supported through support teams monitoring their progress and staged interventions. The outcome of these discussions has resulted in increased attendance to classes for most pupils over time. We see a range of questioning skills in most lessons and almost all explanations and instructions are clear. There is emerging innovative use of technologies in some of our faculties, in particular the use of Google classroom. Assessment and moderation is well embedded in the Senior Phase. All staff are familiar with new benchmarks in our Broad General Education and there is increased confidence in planning and moderation. Standardised data is included in our tracking processes and there is evidence through Faculty Review meetings of it's increasing use in tracking progress in learning and target setting. There is

variable consistency in the use of all tracking data to confirm next steps in learning or to plan interventions to support progress in learning. Across the school a range of tracking systems are in place at faculty level. Consistency in the use of our whole school tracking and monitoring systems is increasing.

### **Personalised Support**

Our young people are given dedicated time with their Guidance Teacher and Skills Development Academy teacher, to review their progress and discuss and agree next steps in learning. Our recently introduced Skills Development Academy focuses on skills development, including reviews of learning, planning next steps/setting targets. Our Principal Teachers of Guidance meet with pupils to discuss their well-being and progress. Depute Head House links review tracking data with Principal Teachers of Guidance and target learners requiring intervention. Following the Senior Phase reports in November 2018, 30 underperforming pupils were identified and provided with 1:1 mentoring through to the SQA examination diet. The result of the mentoring was that on average their total tariff points increased by 14%. with one pupil increasing by 104%. We have strong partnerships with pupils, parents and partner agencies. Through working together, we provide very good support for almost all young people.

### **Family Learning**

Key staff work well with parents and carers to reduce potential barriers to engagement and are responsive to family circumstances. We have strong partnerships with agencies, working well together to ensure timely interventions. The majority of parents/carers attend Parents' Evenings. We delivered workshops in partnership with our Parent Council to support parents and families i.e. on understanding tracking report data, a substance abuse information evening and a mental health awareness evening. Our Network Librarian delivered a family learning circle which focused on how to access free on-line books, journals and reference resources to help parents to support learning. Our website and updates on the school blog and social media have established additional mechanisms for communications with parents and the wider community. Following positive feedback, we have continued with an 'open evening' format to our S1 Parents' Evening. This continues to be received very positively and families have been engaged in presentations about the community library and ShowMyHomework.

### **Transitions**

We have very good pastoral transitions from our 13 Primary Schools to Secondary School. We work with parents and other partners to support our pupils with stage to stage and post-school transitions and have changed the format of our curriculum evenings to include presentations from Further and Higher Education and pupils studying Foundation Apprenticeships. These are well attended and very well received. Our young people are involved in work experience placements and those most at risk of not sustaining a positive destination post school, are monitored and supported by Skills Development staff and the Aberdeenshire Employability Service. We are actively improving our tracking and monitoring at all levels across the school to further support and challenge progress in learning and also inform curriculum planning.

### **Partnerships**

We have a range of partnerships to support the work and life of our school. Our partners are firmly committed to improving outcomes for our learners and we see our young people securing employment/training/further education with some of our partners. We have a clear strategy to further increase our partnerships at Faculty and Whole School levels. We consistently involve our Parent Council in shaping policy (e.g. progress codes in our tracking system, review of Awards Ceremony merit and commendation awards) and actively seek the views of parents and carers at events throughout the year. We continue our work on improving feedback on these views/actions.

## **KEY STRENGTHS:**

Our positive relationships.

Our highest expectations for all learners.

Our young people and their positive attitudes to learning.

Senior leaders provide regular support and direction to staff with regards to safeguarding and child protection. Robust arrangements are in place.

Pupils in prefect roles are briefed on child protection and all our S6 pupils

Our procedures to monitor pupil punctuality.

Our young people and their parents/carers are fully involved in decisions about how their needs will be met.

Our young people in S1 were supported to understand the role of the Bystander through the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Programme, with S5 and S6 pupils taking on the mentor role.

Our new campus and the opportunities it affords to further develop learning indoors and outdoors.

Class leaders sharing practice at Inservice Days, 'Lunch and Learns', team meetings.

Our P7-S1 pastoral transitions.

The revised format to our curriculum evenings for parents to include information about different pathways including apprenticeships, college, university.

Our pupil My World of Work leaders, Digital leaders, Saltire leaders, Young Sports Ambassadors and 'I can lead' leaders

Our close links with SRUC and NESCOL including visits for S1 and S2 pupils.

Our CFE activity days and events.

Our Princes Trust Achieve programme

Our annual Career's Fayre.

Our proactive Parent Council.

## **IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- Improve the consistency of highest quality teaching, learning and assessment with a focus on depth of learning and knowledge of differentiation, to increase pace, challenge and enjoyment (inc. focus on boys)
- Develop and implement a Digital Learning Strategy
- Increase cluster dialogue on moderation
- Improve quality assurance of learning and teaching through planned QA activities at all levels (inc. learning visit schedule)
- Further improve tracking and monitoring progress in learning and the impact of interventions with increased focus on attainment of groups of learners over time
- Improve CLPL programme
- Develop the role of PSAs
- Continue on-going review of BGE and Senior Phase through lens of Excelerate programme. Focus on skills development/work-based learning, effective IDL/project-based learning
- Further improve pathways (all faculties planning with primaries and reviewing courses on offer)
- Further develop strategic planning with hub schools, FE/HE and businesses/organisations
- Introduce new Positive Education/Wellbeing, Personal Development and Leadership units through SDA programme
- Further develop 3-18 skills framework and tracking and monitoring - co-planning with primary colleagues
- Further develop career education content at each stage (PSE and Universal support) - focus on gender inequalities, CLPL for staff (Career Education Standard), information for parents/carers
- Continue raising attainment in literacy and increase focus on raising attainment in numeracy

- Improve monitoring and accreditation of wider achievement opportunities. Audit and plan how to evaluate uptake, how they develop specific skills and equity (gender, ability, age, proximity to school).

## ***‘TAKING A CLOSER LOOK and SHARING OUR FINDINGS’***

### **QI 2.3 How good is our learning, teaching and assessment?**

#### **Sources of evidence/evaluation activities undertaken:**

Learning walk throughs and visits.

Validated self-evaluation -November 2018

Learning conversations with young people - class teachers, SDA tutors, Faculty Leaders, Principal Teachers of Guidance, Principal Teacher Additional Support for Learning, Senior Leadership Team.

Collegiate professional dialogue focused on pedagogy and moderation (3-18 collegiate time programme).

Parent questionnaire feedback.

Pupil feedback at all levels.

Faculty, Extended Leadership and Senior Leadership meetings – Sharing Practice

In-Service Day programmes

Whole Staff meetings

Cluster Head Teacher meetings

School and faculty improvement plans

Professional Review and Development meetings

School blog and forms

Insight data

#### **Overall evaluation of level of quality:**

##### **Learning and engagement**

The school values: Hard Work, Honesty, Ambition, Respect and Kindness are increasingly significant influences on the climate of learning across the school. They are referenced in most classrooms. In almost all classes, most young people behave very well and demonstrate a positive attitude to learning. Most young people are motivated and aspirational. In most lessons there is evidence of consistent restorative approaches being used and there is evidence of mutual respect in most relationships between pupils and teachers and pupils and peers. Almost all classes reflect a commitment to children’s rights and responsibilities. Pupils who have barriers to learning are well supported through our support teams monitoring their progress and planning and implementing staged interventions. When opportunities are given to contribute to the school and wider community, a majority of pupils are very keen to get involved. A majority of S6 pupils engaged positively with leadership opportunities including opportunities to be subject buddies, participate in committees, plan/help at events.

In most lessons, the purpose of learning is shared with pupils and the majority of pupils understand how to achieve success. In almost all classes learning intentions and success criteria are communicated clearly at the beginning of lessons or units/topics of work. Increasingly our young people can talk about their next steps in learning. A few classes involve pupils co-creating their own personalised learning intentions, There is evidence of profiling based on success criteria or benchmarks in most subjects, in booklets or profile sheets and also evidence of feedback being discussed and used to inform next steps in learning and targets. In some subjects there is evidence of parental engagement. In almost all lessons there is highly effective direct teaching and, in most

lessons, effective questioning. Where there is independent learning or group work, the engagement of almost all young people is increased. In a few lessons, the majority of learning is teacher led and learning is passive.

Most lessons are well planned and include starter tasks, learning activities which meet the needs of most learners and a plenary which focuses on achievement of success criteria and also in some lessons, feedback on both learning and teaching. In almost all lessons teachers are actively engaging with all pupils by moving around the room, giving and gaining feedback and gauging progress in learning. In some lessons, support staff and teachers are liaising to ensure learning needs are met.

In most faculties, pupil 'voice' is strong, valued and acted upon. The school is beginning to increase how pupil views are sought from Pupil Leaders and all pupils and also improving how actions are fed back. A significant minority (just less than half) of all pupils contribute to the life of the wider school.

### **Quality of teaching**

All teachers recognise the school values underpin, teaching, learning and assessment. Almost all model our values in their teaching practice. In almost all lessons, expectations are high and instructions and explanations are clear. In some classes there is evidence of young people understanding the level they are working at through reference to Broad General Education Benchmarks or SQA success criteria. In most lessons there is effective questioning through for example the use of higher order questioning to challenge young people to explain and deepen their learning.

In the majority of lessons there is evidence of the use of the interactive whiteboard to enhance teacher explanations. In some lessons there is highly skilled use of the whiteboard to demonstrate key concepts and skills. Most young people are accessing Google Classroom and responding positively to feedback from their teachers. In a minority of subjects there is innovative use of laptops. Typically, on a daily basis 50% of our young people are accessing Glow and more than 80% are accessing it on a weekly basis. In most lessons there is a variety of learning approaches and experiences. Where group work is well planned and members of the group have clear roles and responsibilities, typically there is increased enjoyment and increased responsibility for learning.

There is emerging use of the BGE benchmarks by young people in assessing their learning and planning next steps in learning. During lessons, almost all staff are effective in providing well timed interventions to support learning.

All faculties and staff show commitment to professional learning and benefit from the regular sharing practice at faculty meetings, well planned In-Service Day programmes and increasingly through peer led whole school professional learning workshops. Almost all middle leaders took part in a paired learning visit, sharing their observations and leading to increased confidence and consistency.

### **Effective use of assessment**

In some faculties, subject leads and teams are taking a collegiate approach to planning learning experiences and assessment and the resulting moderation. This is leading to increased confidence in the quality, validity and reliability of pupil experiences and our judgements relating to these. Assessment and moderation is well embedded in the Senior Phase. All staff are becoming familiar with new benchmarks in our Broad General Education and are becoming more confident in their

judgements. A few faculties are working with Primary School colleagues to plan and moderate learning and assessment.

Most staff are confident in using SQA standards to plan and deliver effective learning, teaching and assessment. There is evidence in most faculties of rigorous moderation activities. Feedback on SQA moderations is consistently very positive. 12 staff are SQA markers and 1 member of staff is a Visiting Verifier. Two staff delivered an In-Service workshop for peers across Aberdeenshire.

Self and peer assessment is used effectively in most lessons. Almost all young people value this form of assessment and use it to help them make judgements on their progress in learning. In addition each young person and their parents/carer receive two tracking reports, one full report and a parents meeting each year, supporting assessment judgements of attitudes towards learning, and progress in learning. Almost all faculties discuss regularly pupil progress and plan interventions as appropriate. Systems are in place for alerting Principal Teachers of Guidance and parents by letter of on-going concerns about attitudes or progress in learning. These are in almost all instances, positively received.

### **Planning, tracking and monitoring**

The school has a tracking system in place through SEEMIS, the Management and Information and System. Data is monitored on a range of factors and interventions taken by DHT House links, Principal Teachers of Guidance and teachers as appropriate.

A range of mechanisms are used by teachers to track learner's achievement across all curricular areas, assessing whether learners are making progress and providing appropriate support and challenge. Standardised data is included in our tracking processes however greater consistency is needed in the use of all tracking data to inform next steps in learning. Most staff regularly track pupil progress, use this data/feedback to plan changes to learning and teaching and evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions.

<b>Level of quality for this QI:</b>	<b>4 (Good)</b>
How Good Is Our School? Scale 1-6	

## SUCSESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### How good are we at improving outcomes for all our learners?

<b>NIF Priority/Priorities:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>NIF Drivers:</b>	<b>Assessment of children's progress, School improvement, Performance information</b>

#### OVERVIEW

##### **Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion**

Alford Academy is an inclusive school where our young people are listened to and cared about. Almost all relationships across our school community are very positive and supportive. The principles of GIRFEC, wellbeing, inclusion and equality are embedded in our ethos. Staff are increasingly knowledgeable about the Health and Wellbeing responsibilities of all. Diversity is discussed, valued and celebrated through PSE inserts in S1-S3 and through Modern Studies and RME. Our school chaplains meet regularly with senior staff and also a pupil focus group to plan and discuss how they contribute to the wellbeing of our young people. Across our cluster schools we identified the need to focus on the mental health of our young people and together are using our Pupil Equity Funding to deliver inserts to children, young people and staff. This has led to increased staff knowledge and skills with 6 staff coming forward to be trained in Mental Health First Aid and the DHT (Wellbeing, equality and inclusion) contributing to the Aberdeenshire ECS Thematic Mental Health Strategy Group.

##### **Raising attainment and achievement**

Almost all 2018 leavers attained literacy and numeracy SCQF level 4 with attainment at SCQF 5 below the virtual comparator data i.e. data for similar young people with similar needs and backgrounds. 2018 S4/5/6 leavers' attainment is in line with or above the virtual comparator. S6 leavers' attainment is very positive as is S5. The attainment of S4 leavers is lower across the measures.

The percentage of 2018 leavers in positive destinations improved for the previous year. Most S4 leavers enter into employment or Further Education. 45 pupils left school at the end of S4 with most entering into employment or Further Education and some going on to Higher Education. 77% of S6 leavers went onto Higher Education which is above comparator school data whereas the percentage of S6 leavers leaving to attend Further Education or employment is lower than the virtual comparator data.

Our gap in attainment does not replicate the national picture. 2018 leavers attainment is a mixed picture with a general trend of those in our least deprived areas attaining better than those in the most deprived areas. However, there are significant anomalies in this.

##### **Creativity and employability**

Learning about and with digital technologies is evident in STEM faculties and in some classrooms across the school. We continue to work with former pupils, parents/carers, employers, colleges and universities to deliver careers education and make use of digital and on-line resources to enable our young people to make informed choices about their future learning pathway. Our increase in information sessions for parents and information on the website has led to an increase in the uptake of college courses. This is firmly anchored in our school vision to work together, nurturing and inspiring all our young people to achieve excellence, which we acknowledge and support as being different for each young person.

## **KEY STRENGTHS:**

- Our positive relationships and knowledge of our young people.
- Our pen portraits and their use by all teaching staff.
- PSE curriculum inserts in S1 and S2 to develop pupil understanding of ‘diversity’ including ADHD, autism and dyslexia.
- How well we listen individual young people and their parents and discuss and plan with them to improve their wellbeing and future
- Strong attainment in literacy and numeracy at National 4 level.
- A continuing increase in positive destinations for our school leavers.
- Wider achievements including Duke of Edinburgh awards, participation in sport at National and International levels, in performing arts and volunteering.
- Vulnerable learners/those at risk of disengaging have varied individual programmes
- Dynamic Youth Awards and Princes Trust Awards delivered in partnership with Community Learning and Development and Aberdeenshire’s Employment Support Team.
- Open University Young Applicants in Schools Scheme.
- Learners’ achievements in and out of school are recognised regularly at Recognising Achievement House assemblies, year assemblies, and shared externally at our annual Awards Ceremony, through blog posts, newsletters and press articles and Head Teacher’s messages.

## **IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- Further increase staff knowledge and skills of well-being indicators and their place in their curriculum and practice.
- Deliver professional learning to improve mental health awareness.
- Update safeguarding policy and procedures inc. child protection, anti-bullying and equalities,
- Develop the role of PSAs.
- Improve equality through partnership working to implement strategies for identified non-attenders/ disengaged learners, PEF.
- Review of restorative practice approaches.
- Implement positive education approaches (positive attitudes to learning, growth mindset, praise)
- Increase parental engagement including communications with parents
- Develop and implement Family learning numeracy events and promote on-line family learning activities.
- Continue developing how well all staff scrutinise data and use it more effectively to plan learning.
- Plan, implement and monitor improvement priorities to raise boys’ attainment, attainment in literacy, numeracy and identified courses.
- Audit and evaluate wider achievement opportunities/uptake and how they develop specific skills and the four capacities and equity in terms of how open they are to all learners with regards to gender, ability, age, proximity to school.

## ***‘TAKING A CLOSER LOOK and SHARING OUR FINDINGS’***

### **QI 3.1 How well do we ensure wellbeing, equity and inclusion?**

#### **Sources of evidence/evaluation activities undertaken:**

Positive behaviour of almost all pupils evident in and around school/community.  
Restorative practice – staff feedback and analysis of referrals.  
Feedback from parents and agencies we work with, gathered via formal and informal consultations.  
Attainment of learners in our lowest SIMD deciles.  
Attainment of ASN pupils and Looked After Pupils  
Scrutiny/analysis of Child Protection procedures  
Standardised benchmarking predictions and SQA results  
Faculty Self Evaluations  
Learning conversations with pupils  
Tracking and monitoring records  
Pupil reports  
Faculty, Middle Management and Senior Leadership link and Pupil Information Exchange meetings  
Pupil led Interhouse achievement assemblies and records of achievements.  
Awards and Leavers Ceremonies  
Compliments and complaints

#### **Overall evaluation of level of quality:**

##### **Wellbeing**

As a school community we are positive and ambitious and committed to ‘working together’ to remove barriers and help every young person achieve success. This along with our commitment to restorative approaches when responding to/taking action with disruptions to teaching and learning has led to positive relationships with almost all parents and young people.

Our strategy for wellbeing to date has included pupils, staff and pupils. We have focused on safety, tolerance, kindness and resilience, through curriculum inserts in Personal Social Education and also assemblies which has led to an increased awareness of the wellbeing indicators. Wellbeing Indicators are shared with all staff and used consistently by our support team.

All staff are able to access information about our pupils through pen portraits and almost all support strategies using this. In addition, at our weekly briefings our focus is on sharing current information on the wellbeing of individual pupils and how they can be supported leading to an improved understanding of dynamic changes to wellbeing and potential barriers to learning.

Pupils are comfortable talking to staff about any issues and are actively involved in discussion and decisions which may affect them. The school works with a range of other professionals to best meet the needs of our young people, when required i.e. CAMHS Professionals, Social Work Teams including Family Support Worker and local Police teams. These interventions have led to key members of staff having a clearer understanding of individual difficulties and strategies to support them to ensure needs are being met. Strategies are then disseminated to the wider teaching and support team for implementation and in turn almost all pupils are well supported with their learning/engagement in lessons.

Pupils are made aware of the importance of well-being and in particular how important it is to talk to someone about mental health issues through creative and high profile events led by up and coming young contemporary music artists who share their music talent and also the challenges they have faced and overcome. Significantly an S6 pupil invited Katie Melua, renowned singer songwriter and James Toseland, former world class sportsman, to share their stories with our school community, with a clear focus on mental health. This led to a raised awareness of mental health issues with some pupils and almost all staff.

PE is delivered to all years with almost all pupils engaging in activities. In partnership with our Active Schools Co-ordinator an increased range of experiences for our young people to be active and healthy is on offer along with the many and varied sports events which pupils take part in. Boccia has been introduced to increase equity, providing more opportunities for identified groups of pupils. In addition, our annual sponsored walk is a positive day outdoors for our young people. Our Active Schools data shows less than 50% of our pupils take part in activities led by school or Active Schools staff. Our feedback from pupils during our Wellbeing Week 2019, shows a further 23% of our pupils take part in activities outwith school. We highlight the importance and success in these activities through bulletins, our blog, house achievement assemblies and our annual Awards Ceremony.

Our Positive Behaviour policy supports and challenges wellbeing and is based on a staged intervention approach. Principal Teachers (Faculty), Principal Teachers (Guidance and ASL) and the Senior Leadership Team track data input from teachers and intervene when patterns of behaviour/referrals cause concern, this has led to earlier interventions and parental awareness and involvement as appropriate.

Through our learning visits there is evidence in some classrooms of teachers planning with Pupil Support Assistants how best to support learning. Almost all staff are making use of the pupil pen portraits to plan learning and support for learners.

In almost all classrooms there are positive relationships between teachers and almost all young people.

### **Fulfilment of statutory duties**

Staff follow statutory guidelines. Our four House teams know their pupils very well and through a range of meetings track, monitor and plan interventions for their pupils to ensure pupils attend school, are in class and attain and achieve. Individualised programs to support those young people who have significant barriers to learning/support needs, are planned in consultation with the young person, parent/carer and other professionals as appropriate. There is evidence of increased attendance to school and class for some pupils.

Staff are updated at In-Service Days on the requirements of the Equality Act and awareness of protected characteristics and also the requirements of the General Data Protection Act (GDPR). All staff undertake on-line training and regular refresher courses on Prevent, Equalities and GDPR. We regularly review our procedures and focus on supporting our young people to be in school and to be in class.

### **Inclusion and equality**

Curriculum inserts are in place to provide opportunities for our young people to discuss, understand, value and celebrate the diversity within and beyond our community (in particular through our PSE and RME inserts). PSE Curriculum: a group of S2 pupils studied Children's Rights, incorporating the Anne Frank award and led the development of pupil understanding of the Wellbeing Indicators and their link to the UNCRC Articles. We challenge discrimination. Restorative meetings take

place to challenge actions and words and repair relationships and in almost all instances impact positively on the young people and staff involved.

The impact of our targeted work by ASL staff, Principal Teachers of Guidance and the Senior Leadership Team has led to increased engagement in learning by most young people. We have increased our focus on tracking progress in learning of groups of learners and improved interventions for individuals. Our Pupil Equity Funding is being used to improve well-being, with targeted resources to support learning and ensure equity in terms of wider school experiences and excursions.

Our assemblies, PSE and RME programmes all reinforce the importance of respect and safety. Bullying (including cyber bullying) incidents and how these are recorded and monitored at House and whole school levels, is under review. When information is shared about bullying, the victims are supported timeously and where appropriate other agencies are involved.

Thirty S5/6 pupils were trained in Mentoring Violence Prevention and delivered a series of 4 workshops to S1 pupils.

<b>Level of quality for this QI:</b>	<b>4 (Good)</b>
How Good Is Our School? Scale 1-6	

## **‘TAKING A CLOSER LOOK and SHARING OUR FINDINGS’**

### **QI 3.2 How well do we raise attainment and achievement?**

#### **Sources of evidence/evaluation activities undertaken:**

Standardised benchmarking predictions  
SQA results  
Analysis of INSIGHT data  
Achievement of Curricular Levels (ACL) data  
Faculty Self Evaluations  
Learning conversations with pupils  
Tracking and monitoring records  
Our data capture of wider achievements  
Faculty, Extended Leadership and Senior Leadership meetings  
Pupil led Interhouse achievement records.  
Awards and Leavers Ceremonies  
Faculty attainment reviews  
Whole School Attainment reviews  
Skills Development Scotland partnership data sharing

#### **Overall evaluation of level of quality:**

#### **Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy**

##### **BGE (S1-S3)**

Our MIDYIS data is showing a downward trend.

By the end of S3 in 2019 96% of learners achieved Level 3 Literacy, in line with the previous session. 55% of learners achieved CFE Level 4 for Literacy. At Levels 3 and 4, our data shows a significant decrease in Listening and Talking from the previous year. 96.3% of learners achieved Level 3 Numeracy, an increase on the previous session with 62.6% of learners achieving Level 4 for Numeracy, lower than the previous year.

Over time both literacy and numeracy are improving in the BGE. Confidence in professional judgements is increasing in literacy. Through the work of our Whole School Literacy Champion, staff are increasingly revitalising literacy development across almost all areas of the curriculum. Our Whole School Literacy Team trialled a literacy enhancing ‘toolkit’ and met to review progress and shared and moderated practice.

Numeracy development has focused on preferred methods shared across the school and with primary colleagues and is under review. Through consultation with parents, the need to deliver parent workshops in numeracy and maths has been identified as a priority to improve how parents can support learning. The Maths Faculty have shared a range of on-line resources with parents via the school blog. On-line programmes such as Ninja Maths are used to increase pupil engagement and enjoyment. Maths Faculty staff have attended professional learning workshops in mastery of maths and have visited and shared learning with local primary colleagues. There is an increased focus on ‘mental maths’ across the Maths Faculty.

## **Senior Phase**

Analysis of performance of all candidates at S4 shows a decrease at SCQF level 4 with 80% attaining both literacy and numeracy and an increase at SCQF level 5 however this remains lower than our virtual comparator. Performance at S4 in literacy has improved year on year for the past three years and is above the virtual comparator data at SCQF 4 and remains below at SCQF 5. Numeracy has decreased at SCQF level 4 and although there is an increase at SCQF 5 this remains below the virtual comparator data.

Analysis of performance of all candidates at S5 shows a slight improvement in literacy at SCQF 4 and 5, a decrease in numeracy at SCQF 4 and an increase at SCQF 5.

Performance of all pupils at S6 has improved to 100% at SCQF level 4 in both literacy and numeracy. At SCQF level 5 there is a decrease more significantly in numeracy than literacy. At SCQF level 6 there has been an increase in both literacy and numeracy.

Almost all 2018 school leavers attained literacy and numeracy at SCQF 4. At SCQF level 5 81% attained literacy and 62% attained numeracy. There is a slight upward trend at SCQF level 5 in literacy and downward trend in numeracy.

## **Attainment over time**

### **BGE**

At whole school level there is a strategic overview of attainment over time in the BGE. At Faculty levels there is emerging practice of tracking and monitoring progress over time. MIDYIS data is shared with teachers along with data and information from primary colleagues. Teachers work with colleagues in school and with other Aberdeenshire Schools to improve their judgements of young people's progress in learning.

Through regular updates of our tracking system by teachers, teachers track and monitor the progress of learners and interventions have led to improved engagement and progress in learning for some pupils. Targets for improvement are discussed with learners further to tracking episodes. Increasingly these are recorded in their PAL (Pupil Achievement Log) and lead to more focused learning conversations with their class teachers. Senior leaders benchmark progress in learning over time and also compare attainment across curriculum areas.

By the end of S3 almost all pupils who studied a full curriculum (including Modern Languages) have achieved at least level 3 in all curriculum areas.

Further to consultation with pupils and staff, a new programme of skills development i.e. Skills Development Academy, focussing on 'self in the community', 'self in work' and 'self-awareness', was introduced to all S1-S3 pupils.

## **Senior Phase**

Attainment for all pupils in S4 has generally improved on the previous year. There is improvement in our highest and lowest 20% attainment, whilst the middle 60% is in line with previous years and the virtual comparator data. The number of pupils attaining five or more SCQF 5 awards has increased. Boys' attainment is improving however it remains below the virtual comparator data.

Attainment for all pupils in S5, has improved on the previous year. Notably the number of girls attaining three or more awards at SCQF 6 and five or more awards at SCQF 6, has significantly increased. However, the performance of boys remains below the virtual comparator data and the

low number of boys attaining 5 or more awards at SCQF 6 is highly notable. This remains a significant improvement priority.

Attainment for all pupils at S6, is slightly below the virtual comparator data. The percentage of pupils attaining one or more awards at SCQF 7 is higher than the virtual comparator with girls' attainment notably higher.

The attainment of our 2018 leavers, although decreasing, generally remains above that of our virtual school data. The attainment of boys who left at the end of S4 is significantly lower than the virtual school data.

2018 leavers attainment are in all generally in line with or above the virtual comparator data with the exception of leavers in SIMD 4. 2018 leavers in the most deprived areas are attaining slightly less well than those in the least deprived areas.

In 2018 almost all young people leave school to go on to a positive destination. 46% of our school leavers left school to study at university. Over the course of the year increased parental information and presentation evenings delivered in partnership with colleges, has led to the number of school leavers moving on to college increasing by 5%. The percentage of leavers leaving for employment and to attend Higher Education continues to be higher than the virtual comparator whereas the percentage of leavers leaving to attend Further Education and training, is significantly lower than the virtual school comparator.

## **Overall quality of learners' achievements**

Our curriculum continues to evolve. There is increased specialisation as pupils progress through the Broad General Education. In S3 pupils continue with a broad curriculum however they have choices to study subjects in more depth within curriculum areas. Our curriculum is increasingly planned using labour market intelligence. We work with other schools and further education to offer a range of pathways for young people including Rural Skills, foundation apprenticeships, and a range of skills for work courses in partnership with colleges including construction and hospitality.

Most young people participate in a range of opportunities for wider achievement in and outwith school. The evolving Skills Development Academy course provides opportunities for personal skills development and leadership awards for all pupils. All S5 pupils are involved in The Youth Philanthropy Initiative and finalists delivered highest quality performances. Our winning group were again invited to the annual conference in Perth 2019. Wider achievement awards include Saltire Awards for volunteering and Dynamic Youth Awards. Participation in wider achievement has been captured and increasingly pupils can share the skills they are developing through these activities.

Three S6 pupils achieved YASS courses in a range of subject areas. A wide range of clubs and activities are on offer to our pupils to help them gain confidence and develop new skills. These included a range of sports, music, drama, art/graphics, sustainability and philanthropy(Interact). Duke of Edinburgh is on offer with achievement of 20 Bronze awards, 6 Silver awards and 5 Gold awards. We work with our partners in Community Learning and Development to support our young people to achieve Dynamic Youth Awards through to Gold level. Four S5 pupils in Princes Trust achieved a Leadership Award at SCQF Level 6. Our pupils take part in a range of competitions and almost all are proud of their school. When out and about we receive positive comments about how well our young people contribute to activities. Individually, and in teams, they achieve success in local and national competitions. The range and quality of wider achievements is acknowledged and celebrated at our annual Awards Ceremony and through House Achievement assemblies, our blog, daily bulletins and regular newsletters.

S5 and S6 pupils are keen to take on responsibility in the school as prefects, senior and head prefects, house captains, ambassador roles and Student Council. These leaders have worked together to plan a new structure to leadership roles in school and plan to introduce S1-S4 House Leaders next session to further increase opportunities.

### **Equity for all learners**

Almost all staff are aware of the context of the school and gaps in attainment.

The school is making increasingly good use of data to track and monitor the progress of young people in their progress in learning. This has resulted in interventions and planning to remove barriers to learning which have led to pupils leaving school to secure positive destinations and for most a range of qualifications. There are no financial barriers in place for pupils wishing to study practical courses. Travel costs to college are supported by the local authority. Curricular excursions are subsidised by the school fund and where there is hardship pupils are fully funded to attend. Pupil Equity Funding has been utilised to support transport to events such as college taster days.

The school has reviewed the curriculum to increasingly meet the needs of learners through increasing pathways for learners at all levels. When choosing courses, a 'free choice' option model is used. Increased offers of college courses at NESCOL and SRUC and college Foundation Apprenticeships have led to pupils leaving school at the end of S4 and S5 to continue their education at college.

<b>Level of quality for this QI:</b>	<b>4 (Good)</b>
How Good Is Our School? Scale 1-6	

## What is our capacity for improvement?

Our overall capacity for improvement is very good. This is based on the following factors:-

- Our ethos
- Our highest aspirations for all
- Highest levels of commitment and ambition for our young people by almost all staff
- Our positive relationships and partnerships with young people, our parent forum and wider community
- Our rigorous analysis of data
- Positive feedback about the school from learners, parents and visitors to the school
- Positive feedback from activity leaders and members of the public, when learners are out of school at competitions, events and activities
- Our partnerships working with local schools, colleges, businesses and parents
- Our increased stability in staffing

Alford Academy's key drivers for change are:-

- **The very best 'Leadership and school improvement'**  
To develop our inclusive, healthy and ambitious community through further development of leadership at all levels.
- **The very best 'Teaching, learning and assessment'**  
Support teacher professionalism to deliver consistent highest quality teaching, learning and assessment of learner's progress.
- **The very best learners 'Our young people- empowered learners'**  
To support and enable our young people to be the very best learners with a particular focus on their health & wellbeing, equality and inclusion, our partnerships with parents/carers and family learning.
- **The very best Curriculum**  
To review and improve our curriculum, increasing achievement pathways through innovative partnerships and equipping all children and young with the skills required for their next phase of learning.

These drivers are in line with the National Improvement Framework and Aberdeenshire Education and Children's Services priorities for improvement.

# **APPENDICES**

1. Alford Academy Improvement Plan 2019-2020 – Overview

## ALFORD ACADEMY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2019-2020 OVERVIEW

School Key Driver	School Priority	Link to HGIOS 4 Q.I	Link to NIF Key Driver	Link to NIF priority	SLT Lead
The very best Leadership and School Improvement	<b>1. Self evaluation</b> - further develop collaborative approaches (in/out of school) - implement programme of opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in school improvement. - improve how we share feedback and actions taken	QI 1.1 Self Evaluation for Self-Improvement	School leadership Teacher professionalism School improvement Performance information	Improvement in attainment Closing the gap	Head Teacher
	<b>2. Vision and values</b> - further develop our vision of a school ‘without walls’ with vibrant learning/learning spaces (in and outdoors) which relate to now, the workplace, local community and future - further development of branding/ and embedding our values	QI 1.3 Leadership of Change	School leadership Teacher Professionalism School improvement Parental engagement	Improvement in attainment Closing the gap Positive school leaver destinations Young people’s health and wellbeing .	
	<b>3. Improve identification of improvements, tracking and monitoring the impact of interventions</b> - increase ‘check-ins’ at all levels/focus on improvement priorities at all meetings - raise attainment in literacy, numeracy, identified subjects/ courses, increase positive destinations				
	<b>4. Leadership development at all levels</b> - Further develop leadership capacity at all levels through mentoring, coaching, outward and forward looking CLPL				
	<b>5. Career Long Professional Learning ((learning together)</b> - develop well planned 'in-house' programme of professional learning workshops and evaluate impact - further develop learning visits programme (‘trios’ approach) - promote ‘on safari’ approach to meetings at all levels	QI 1.2 Leadership of Learning	Teacher Professionalism		Head Teacher / DHT (Teaching, Learning and Assessment)

School Key Driver	School Priority	Link to HGIOS 4 Q.I	Link to NIF Key Driver	Link to NIF priority	SLT Lead
The very best Teaching. Learning and Assessment	<b>6. Further Improve Pedagogy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- re-focus on purpose and impact of assessment</li> <li>- develop shared understanding of an ‘excellent lesson’</li> <li>- begin professional learning programme - ‘Making thinking visible’</li> <li>- improve skills and knowledge of differentiation, to increase pace, challenge and enjoyment (inc. focus on boys)</li> <li>- develop and implement Digital Learning Strategy</li> </ul>	QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	School leadership Assessment of Children’s Progress Teacher Professionalism School Improvement Parental engagement	Improvement in attainment Closing the gap Young people’s health and wellbeing	DHT (Learning, Teaching and Assessment)
	<b>7. Improve Moderation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- moderate planning of teaching, learning and assessment</li> <li>- increase cluster dialogue on moderation</li> <li>- share standards through moderation of literacy and numeracy at all levels</li> <li>- improve quality assurance of learning and teaching through planned QA activities at all levels (inc. learning visit schedule)</li> </ul>	QI2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	School leadership Teacher Professionalism	Improvement in attainment Closing the gap	
	<b>8. Tracking, monitoring, impact of interventions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increase rigour and focus on progress over time.</li> </ul>	QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment QI1.1 Self Evaluation for Self-Improvement	Assessment of Children’s Progress School Improvement	Improvement in attainment Closing the gap Young people’s health and wellbeing	
Our Young People - The Very Best Learners	<b>9. Wellbeing, equality, inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- further embed well-being indicators in practice</li> <li>- update safeguarding policy and procedures inc. child protection, anti-bullying and equalities</li> <li>- develop role of PSAs</li> <li>- further develop and implement Wellbeing strategy</li> <li>- develop partnership working to implement strategies for identified non-attenders/ disengaged learners, PEF</li> <li>- review of restorative practice approaches</li> </ul>	3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion 1.3 Leadership of Change 2.3 Learning, Teaching and assessment 2.4 Personalised Support 2.7 Partnerships	School leadership Teacher Professionalism School Improvement Assessment of children’s progress	Young people’s health and wellbeing Improvement in attainment Closing the gap Positive destinations	DHT (Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion)
	<b>10. Universal support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop positive education approaches (positive attitudes to learning, growth mindset, praise)</li> <li>- develop and pilot a strategy for coaching and mentoring</li> </ul>		School Leadership		
	<b>11. Parental engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increase communications with parents</li> </ul>		Teacher Professionalism School Improvement		
	<b>12. Family learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- plan and pilot numeracy events</li> <li>- explore on-line family learning activities</li> </ul>		2.5 Family Learning Parental engagement		

School Key Driver	School Priority	Link to HGIOS 4 Q.I	Link to NIF Key Driver	Link to NIF priority	SLT Lead
The very best Curriculum (Learning Pathways)	<b>13. Structure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on-going review of BGE and Senior Phase through lens of Excelerate programme, Focus on skills development/work-based learning, effective IDL/project based learning)</li> <li>- further improve pathways (all faculties planning with primaries and reviewing courses on offer</li> <li>- strategic planning with hub schools, FE/HE and businesses/organisations</li> </ul>		School leadership Teacher Professionalism School Improvement Assessment of children's progress		DHT (Curriculum)
	<b>14. Content – Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new programmes piloted for Positive Education/Wellbeing, Personal Development and Leadership through SDA programme, outdoor learning</li> <li>- further develop 3-18 skills framework and tracking and monitoring</li> <li>- develop career education content at each stage (PSE and Universal support) - focus on gender inequalities, CLPL for staff (Career Education Standard), information for parents/carers</li> <li>- renewed focus on numeracy and redevelopment of strategy</li> <li>- increased focus on literacy and learning for sustainability ('adopt a global goal')</li> <li>- increase partnerships (through TWF initiative - Excelerate) and evaluate impact</li> </ul>	QI 2.2 Curriculum QI 2.4 Personalised Support QI 2.6 Transitions QI 2.7 Partnerships QI 3,3 Creativity and employability		Improvement in attainment Closing the Gap Young people's health and wellbeing Positive destinations Improvement in attainment Closing the Gap	
	<b>15. Improve monitoring and accreditation of wider achievement opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audit and evaluate uptake, how they develop specific skills and equity (gender, ability, age, proximity to school).</li> </ul>	QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	Assessment of Children's Progress School Improvement		