

Standards and Quality Report

2021/22

ALNESS ACADEMY



HIGHLAND COUNCIL- ALNESS ACADEMY,
Alness Academy Drive, Alness, Ross-Shire, IV17 0WA

This report is provided to families and partners to identify our achievements this session. The next steps in our improvement journey are also outlined.

Throughout the year we continuously evaluate what we do and how it makes a difference to our learners. We want to know what is working well for our school community and what needs further improvement.

Our children and young people are actively consulted and involved in this process. We also give staff, parents/carers, and other partners the opportunity to participate in discussions and activities in order to shape our improvement journey.

When we develop our improvement projects we use key questions at planned review times throughout the session in order to know how well we are progressing towards achieving these positive outcomes and changes.

Our School

Alness Academy is a non-denominational secondary school on the Cromarty Firth in the Highlands of Scotland. We serve the town of Alness and the villages of Evanton and Ardross along with 5 associated primary schools. We have a current role of 481 students, this is growing year on year. Our School Community was pleased to move into our new school building in October 2020 with an opening ceremony during which we hosted the Princess Royal early in 2021.

We are well staffed across most curricular areas however there are some areas where the school is currently struggling to recruit due to a shortage of applicants. Currently this is a particular issue with the recruitment of Maths teachers. Recruitment efforts are ongoing and creative solutions are being sought. We have many new staff starting this year and have shared welcome videos via our social media accounts.

55% of our current school roll has been recorded as having additional support needs, 20% of our young people are registered for a free school meal, 48% of our young people are living in the most deprived zones in Scotland.

Social and equity issues affect many of our young people so we have focussed our Strategic Equity Funding along with our Pupil Equity Funding towards supporting nurture, wellbeing and attendance in our school.

In 2022 we returned to full programme of SQA examinations for the first time since 2019. Our target as a school was to equal or improve on our whole school results from 2019. This is a target which we have met (see below). This is a reflection of the hard work and determination shown by our staff and

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students in extremely difficult circumstances particularly in the light of extensive Covid related absence among staff and students in 2019.

National 5

2019

- A 20%
- B 24%
- C 22%
- D 16%
- NA 19%

2022

- A 20%
- B 23%
- C 22%
- D 22%
- NA 12%

Higher

2019

- A 10%
- B 19%
- C 25%
- D 28%
- NA 18%

2022

- A 16%
- B 23%
- C 22%
- D 23%
- NA 16%

Our School Vision, Values and Aims

Our vision is that Alness Academy will be a school where positive relationships are key to everything we do and where everyone's pathway and destination is held in equal esteem.

Our aim is that our curriculum at Alness Academy serves students as individuals, develops their resilience and enhances opportunities for learning which opens the pathway to their chosen destination.

At the heart of everything we do are our core values, Leadership, Aspiration and Compassion.

Pupil Voice: what is working well in our school?

Our children and young people identified the following strengths for our school this session:

Alness Academy has an active and thriving group of prefects who sit on the student council. Views of the students are represented through a weekly meeting between the Head Teacher and the Head Students who chair the student council. Their views are included below:

More extra curricular activities have been set up recently following our return from Covid.

More people have been wearing school uniform

We have a good sense of community in the school due to a mutual respect between staff and students

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Pupil Voice: what changes would you like to see made?

Our children and young people identified the following changes they would like to see and the difference these changes could make.

More School trips

Be more open to students about disciplinary procedures

Create more incentives for good behaviour

Provide more support groups for senior students e.g regarding subject choice, exams and career options.

Our Improvement Journey Headlines Session 2021/22

These projects are linked to the vision and priorities for Scottish Education based on delivering excellence and equity. Parent/Carer information is available [here](#).

Improvement Project 1: Project Paws – deployment of therapy dogs at Alness Academy

Primary focus: School and ELC improvement

Year of Project: 1

Purpose: Project paws is intended to pioneer the use of therapy dogs in Alness Academy as therapy animals for students with identified wellbeing needs.

Progress and impact:

A Key driver of the National Improvement Framework is school improvement. The NIF references the health and wellbeing of staff and learners (including mental wellbeing) as a vital theme for improvement. The aim of project paws is to address this. We have made progress towards this aim as a school but with Covid and Non-Covid related challenges along the way. We have deployed our Therapet, Bru, with identified students and engaged with parents of targeted students. We have also engaged with our wider school community through our digital presence where project paws and Bru became a key part of the public face of the school. We have worked in partnership with charities 'Pets and Therapy' and 'Therapet' who have provided 'paws for stress' events for staff and students. The programme has featured in the media on several occasions.

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Where our therapist was deployed we have seen patterns of negative behaviour including exclusions ease for targeted students and relationships with staff improve. Student feedback about the benefits of the programme has been positive.

However, the programme has not been as successful in the first year as might have been. Our aim was to bring further Therapets in to work in the school. Unfortunately, this was disrupted by the ongoing Covid restrictions. Also, the sad death of our Therapist has currently resulted in the project being on Hiatus.

Next steps:

We are currently in the process of training and registering a new therapist who will be ready for deployment when she has reached the age of 9 months and successfully completed her registration with pets as therapy.

We have made good progress with this project and will look to build on this over the next school year.

Improvement Project 2: Curriculum Rationale

Primary focus: Curriculum and assessment

Year of Project: 1

Purpose: In 2022/23 Alness Academy redeveloped and improved our curriculum rationale in order to provide a streamlined curriculum rationale statement which will provide the 'WHY' of our curriculum and will provide an underlying philosophy to drive curricular development forward.

Progress and impact:

School Leadership and School Improvement are two key drivers of the National Improvement Framework, which underpin this work. Well led curriculum development is a key factor in school improvement and a clearly articulated curriculum rationale is key to this.

SLT worked in partnership with the Northern Alliance and attended the 'Reimagining Your Curriculum Rationale' online workshop. SLT then worked together to create an updated Curriculum Rationale Statement; "Our curriculum at Alness Academy serves students as individuals, develops their resilience and enhances opportunities for learning which opens the pathway to their chosen destination" Going forward this will underpin and drive our curricular development and has been shared with

our school community via parent council meetings and the school website.


Next steps:

Use the curriculum rationale as a philosophy for curriculum development going forward.

Improvement Project 3: Skills and Employability Project

Primary focus: School and ELC improvement

Year of Project: 2

 **Purpose:** The project is aiming to make more of our young people 'work ready' prior to leaving school. We are seeking to raise their aspirations and help them to appreciate the skills they already have and give them opportunities to develop more. By forging links with local business and employers, we are looking to raise the awareness of our students in terms of the wide variety of careers that exist in the local area.

Progress and impact:

A Key driver of the National Improvement Framework is school improvement. As a school enhancing pathways into positive destinations is a priority for the community we serve and therefore an important aspect of school improvement.

Progress for this project over the last two years has been challenging due to Covid, especially as it has been impossible to provide a range of work experience to meet student's needs. However, our team has worked very hard to provide alternative experiences for young people. To fill this gap our DHT skills and employability and our DYW team have arranged over 20 events which interested and targeted students have been able to engage with. Throughout the year we have also hosted regular job fairs. At the end of school year 21/22 we hosted our first DYW local employer engagement forum. Through our DYW coordinator we have engaged with the partners listed below:

Inverness College (Taster sessions visit)
North Highland College (Taster session visit)
Pat Munro
Aquascot
Skibo Castle
The Torridon Hotel
Balfour Beatty
Fire Service

Police
RAF
Navy
Fuel 10k
Am Bothan Community Café
Emma Roddick MSP (internship)
Robertson's Northern
Macgregors Industrial Supplies
Revitalise Beauty
SSE
Specsavers
Harper Macleod
SR Cleaning Services
Johnston Carmichael Accountancy
Highlife Highland
Mull Care Home
Scotrail
Cap Gemini
Morgan Sindall
Alness Pharmacy
Morrisons
Dalmore Farm
Station Hotel
Platform PA Services
Highland Food and Drink Club
Care and Learning Alliance
BT

Despite the disruption caused by Covid we feel aspects of this project have moved successfully forward.

Next steps:

The school will continue to work closely with our DYW coordinator to build on success in school year 22/23

GME Project: ASG Gaelic Outreach

Primary focus: Teacher and practitioner professionalism

Year of Project: 4

Purpose: To promote GME and to build engagement with Alness Academy and to provide a transition bridge through languages

Progress and impact:

Our Gaelic teacher visits P7 students in Ardross, Bridgend, Coulhill and Kiltearn once a month to deliver a Gaelic taster session. This has been in place for the past 4 years and helps to build a positive relationship with the

school and ASG primary students which supports confidence during their transition to secondary school.

Next steps:

Further development of GME projects both within the curriculum and as part of the wider life of the school.

Evaluation of Progress

We believe we have made the following progress this session:

Quality Indicator	School self-evaluation
Leadership of Change	1.3 Good
Learning, teaching and assessment	2.3 Satisfactory
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	3.1 Good
Raising attainment and achievement	3.2 Satisfactory

Our children and young people believe we have made the following progress this session:

Our relationships	Theme 1 Good
Our learning and teaching	Theme 2 Satisfactory
Our school and community	Theme 3 Good
Our health and wellbeing	Theme 4 Satisfactory
Our successes and achievements	Theme 5 Satisfactory

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Our overall evaluation of our school's capacity for continuous improvement is:

We are confident in our capacity for continuous improvement.

Planning Ahead

Full details of the school's 2022/23 improvement priorities and actions are detailed on the school improvement plan, which can be accessed on our website www.alnessacademy.co.uk or by contacting the school office.