

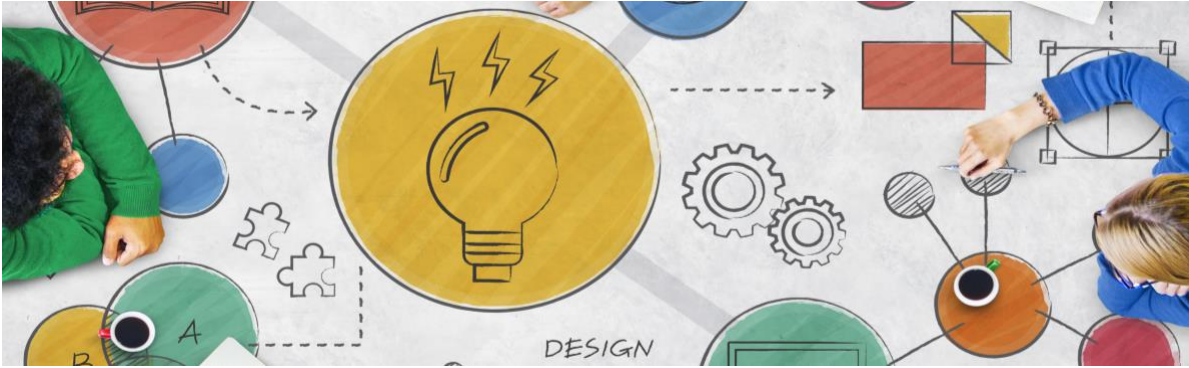
School
Improvement
Plan
2023-24



Ardfern School

Unit 1 block 1, Lomond Industrial Estate, Duncryne Road,
Alexandria, G83 0TL

Introduction



About Us

Ardfern School is an independent day school provision for young people with additional support needs. We are now based solely in Alexandria, after amalgamating with our Johnstone Campus in January 2022. Our school is focused on delivering quality education and opportunities for pupils that may have found a mainstream school setting overwhelming or were unable to access the level of support that they may have required on a regular basis.

We provide a safe, nurturing environment for pupils to engage in learning and social activities with the support of a skilled and experienced staff. Our practice is based on building relationships and trust with our pupils in order to work together towards the common goal of improving outcomes of all our pupils and encouraging them to fulfil their true potential.

In addition to the work done within school, staff at Ardferrn School strive to provide support to the parents and carers of our young people by maintaining consistent lines of contact. This is done through regular phone communication, our school Learning Journals profiles, and our regularly updated Facebook page.

Improvement Rationale

Following the success of our previous Improvement Plan, the decision was taken to approach this year's plan in the same collaborative manner. The success of our previous plan was underpinned by the fact that all members of staff were involved in the formulation, development and implementation of the work done towards improving our school. This allowed all staff to have input and oversight of the plan that was created, in a move that encouraged the staff to take full ownership of the changes that were made.

This year we intend to follow this structure:

- The involvement of all staff in the school should be just as integral to the process of implementation of the plan as to its development. The implementation process should involve staff in a number of ways and at a number of stages.
- There should be continuing consultation about the human, material and financial resources and support needed in order to take forward the implementation of the Plan.
- There should be regular monitoring of the Improvement Plan involving all staff, through previously agreed mechanisms. Dates for undertaking the monitoring should be agreed and indicated in the annual school calendar for staff. This will be detailed in each project's Microsoft Teams Group.
- Staff in the school have the right to be fully involved in discussion about any need for significant revisions to the Plan during the course of the year. Such changes should not be a common occurrence.
- Workload issues, whether emanating from the plan or from any other source, should be discussed regularly and frequently, involving all staff, at staff meetings, the dates of which have been previously agreed.

This document will outline our Improvement plan journey over the course of the year and give insight into the processes we used to arrive at the two 'actions for change' detailed within the 2023-24 Ardfern School Improvement plan.

Our Focus

This year's School Improvement Plan will focus on the following areas:

| Improve our Professional Learning Culture |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve CPD systems around staff training and provide more internal opportunities for professional learning• Improve the quality of the CPD that Ardfern School offers to our staff team• Improve teaching practice by focusing on pedagogy as a core area for professional development |
| Increasing Parental Engagement with the school |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the ways in which parents engage with pupil learning• Improve parent engagement in whole school issues• Improve parental engagement with school improvement |

This document will go on to show how the staff at Ardfern School arrived at these targets and how they set about meeting them. Once complete, this document will show the impact of these projects on our learners and the school as a whole.

Our Improvement Plan Journey



Starting Point

Our previous Improvement Plan primarily focused on issues that we were being presented after our school amalgamated in January 2022. Firstly, an issue we faced was implementing effective communication of the school day between both of our campuses. We were able to address this by creating by using a Whatsapp group that staff could use to raise issues that were being presented during the school day.

In addition, communicating of Health and Wellbeing targets and progress for pupils was also an issue that we sought to improve on. This was carried out through the introduction of a process of re-evaluating pupil progress in relation to our social and emotional target setting resource FAGUS. We are now able to reflect on how pupils are progressing in relation to their own individual area of developmental focus.

Positive destinations were also another area of focus in our previous improvement plan and through partnership with SDS, Ardfern was able to introduce engagement with this service for pupils at a younger age to minimise any potential anxiety about future transitions. Furthermore, check ins with pupils who have left the school were introduced in order to offer assistance should it be required for our school leavers. This process was able to help us identify whether our pupils achieve positive destinations after they leave school and if they are able to maintain these opportunities.



First Staff Meeting

During the in-service training in August 2023, staff were invited to initiate parts of this year's Improvement Plan.

As a group, staff discussed what tasks and activities that they must carry out thorough the academic year. Staff wrote these down in on a document and categorized whether it "Works Well", "Could Use Improvement" or "Needs Work".

After devising this list, staff were tasked to assess which elements impact the school the most and could be improved over the coming months to benefit the school as a whole.

The following areas were decided upon:

- Improving the Professional Learning Culture of the school
- Increasing Parental Engagement with pupil learning

Improving the Professional Learning Culture of the school

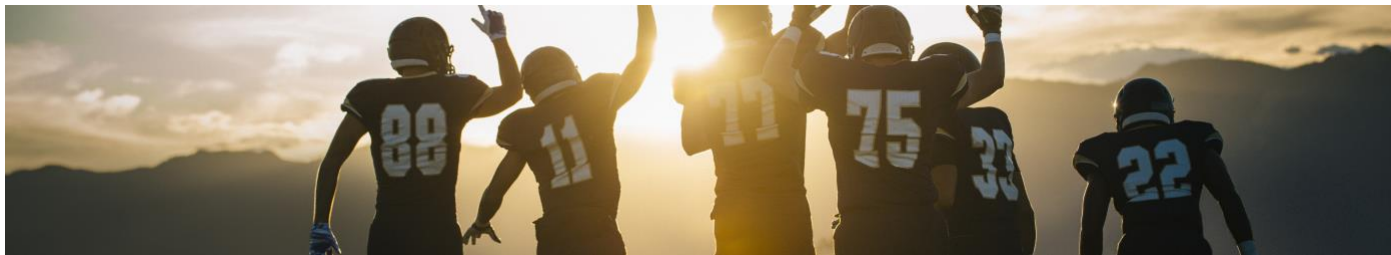
Our staff team have recently completed our HGIOS questionnaire in relation to school leadership and management. Through this process it became clear that a creating better systems for CPD would help develop teacher's professional development. This is something that was also echoed throughout PRD's this last year. Therefore, a new project for our school improvement plan is:

- Improving the Professional learning Culture within Ardfern School

Increasing Parental Engagement with the school

Our staff team completed another HGIOS questionnaire in relation to Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Through this process it was identified that parental engagement with social or emotional issues worked well within the school. However, an area that needed work was being able to engage parents/carers with pupil learning. In particular, this was reflected in the poor parental engagement in our online resource 'Learning Journals' where only around 15% of guardians regularly participate. Therefore, a new project for our school improvement plan is:

- Increase Parental Engagement with pupil learning



Teaming Up

After uncovering the school's improvement needs in the first session, work groups were created to refine these needs down to manageable projects that can be completed by the end of the academic year. Staff were group based upon areas of interest, expertise and position within the organization. It was important that these projects continue to be led by the staff as a team, rather than by management or individuals.

Two work groups were created on Microsoft Teams. Each Team consists of the relevant members of each group, along with the Operations Manager and Head Teacher. This allows all discussions and notes to be held within the Teams environment. It also allows for Senior Management to have oversight on both projects where necessary. All files and documents are uploaded to the Files section of each Team.

Group 1 tasked with focusing on the **Improving the Professional Learning Culture** element of the plan.

Group 2 was tasked with focusing on the **Increasing Parental Engagement with pupil learning** elements of the plan.

Group 1 since August 2023 have meeting fortnightly and have been working through learning lessons in 'Power Up Your Pedagogy' as a basis to begin building a 'lesson toolkit' to implement to learners after the October break.

Group 2 have been assessing the aspects of parental engagement that are not currently working and have been discussing ways to increase engagement. So far, they have discussed the potential re-introduction of parent's night, exploring ways to increase engagement with 'Learning Journals', establishing a parents council and improving communication.

Project Overviews

Below outlines the main goals of each project, the impact they may have on learners, and what steps the groups would like to take to get to the intended outcomes.

Improving our Professional Learning Culture Project Overview

Target Improvement Areas

- Create a culture within the school that encourages reflective practice and advances professional learning and expertise
- Provide high quality professional development opportunities within Ardfern School
- Creation of a professional learning group and learning library that focuses on engaging with latest literature and research

Reasons for Focus

- Throughout the PRD process this past year it was identified that professional learning opportunities were sporadic and staff felt that this could be made clearer from senior leaders
- Feedback from our HGIOS questionnaire on leadership and management identified that professional learning and collegiate working was an area that could be improved in relation to learning and teaching.

Potential Impact on Learners

- Higher quality professional learning will enable our pupils to become better learners in the classroom
- Through focusing on the latest literature and research in relation to learning and teaching this will support the quality of teaching that learners experience

Initial Assessment Details

- On a recent in service day, the staff team assessed the quality of our current learning culture. The questionnaire used was taken from 'Teaching Delusion' (Robertson, 2020) after our Head of School attended the Teacher Centred Leadership seminar by Education Scotland. The findings detailed that teacher feedback, observations professional learning were areas of focus.
- Our staff team also discussed logistical issues surrounding the creation of a learning groups in relation to appropriate space, choice of resources and time. These are all areas that will be reviewed as the group begins to practice.

Actions Required

- Professional learning team to complete learning lessons details in 'Power Up Your Pedagogy' and then begin to implement chosen aspects of 'lesson toolkit' they feel will be most beneficial to pupils – Currently in progress and to be completed by November 2023
- Purchasing of resources for our learning library and creation of an appropriate space to meet within the school – Completed
- Creation of feedback format that can be used by professional learning group to help provide high quality feedback to colleagues outside of professional learning group – To be completed by January 2024

Measurements of Success

- Staff team are able to improve current systems in relation to teacher feedback, observation and professional update
- Staff team can implement professional learning quickly to their own practice and that of others

Resources Required

- Purchasing of identified book and article recommendations cited from the Excellence in Headship Induction and Seminars
- Creation of an appropriate space within school where teaching staff can meet in a relaxed manner and engage with the learning library

Desired Outcomes for Project

- Improve the learning culture within the staff team
- Improve professional engagement with current research and literature
- Improve quality of learning and teaching processes within the school

Links to HGIOS (List and detail Qis)

- 1.2 Leadership of Learning
 - Impact of career long professional learning
 - Professional learning and collegiate working
- 1.3 Leadership of Change
 - Strategic Planning for continuous improvement
- 2.2 Learning, Teaching and Assessment
 - Learning and Engagement
 - Quality of Teaching

Increasing Parental Engagement with the School Project Overview

Target Improvement Areas

- Improving parent engagement with our online learning resources 'Learning Journals' by increasing the amount of parents/carers who regularly login and engage
- Increase parent engagement with whole school issues that are experiences throughout the school year
- Establish better networking between parents and school in relation to improvement planning and school objectives
- Assisting families in supporting pupils with social or emotional issues that they may be facing through engaging in family learning where appropriate

Reasons for Focus

- Poor engagement with 'Learning Journals' where currently around 15% of parents/carers login and keep up to date with pupil learning outcomes and experience.
- Strong links between parents/carers and school are essential to address issues that the school is faced with throughout the year. In particular, it would be useful for guardians to have input in relation to the school's approach to issues such as vaping, vandalism, being safe online etc
- The creation of a parent council would be of significant use to the school and would provide parents with a voice to contribute to the direction of the school in relation to school improvement planning.

Potential Impact on Learners

- Stronger engagement with pupil learning outcomes would be of great benefit to our pupils. It would assist pupils in taking more control over their learning as they move through the curriculum.
- Pupils would have more opportunities to share successes with their family and this would serve to build our pupils sense of achievement

Initial Assessment Details

- Our team explored engagement with learning journals and assessed that this was not being taken up by parents/carers. It was felt that this may be due to lack of awareness or lack of training to set up the accounts etc
- Our team highlighted that the school is very strong in building relationships with parents and guardians but that we could be improve in relation to helping them engage with pupil learning

Actions Required

- Explore ways to re-deliver 'Learning Journals' training and push to engage as many parents/carers as possible – to be completed by October 2023
- Re-introduce of parents evening to the school programme and explore the best format for this to take place – to be completed by November 2023
- Through increased engagement with parents/guardians begin to explore the creation of a parent council – To be completed by August 2024
- Explore more efficient ways to communicate with parents – To be completed by August 2024

Measurements of Success

- Learning journals engagement to exceed 70% compared to the current 15%
- Parents evening to be carried out before Christmas 2023
- Parent council to be created and meet with senior leaders before the end of the school year

- A better communication format to be created to speak to parents about projects, school dates, events etc by August 2024
- Increased levels of attainment amongst pupils

Resources Required

- Review of 'Learning Journals' training and creation of format to deliver training to parents/guardians.
- Creation of a new format for parents evening
- Creation of a presentation to encourage engagement in parent council.
- Our team will need to explore formats that are useful to increase whole school communication with parents/guardians.

Desired Outcomes for Project

- That there is a noticeable improvement in parent/guardian engagement with pupil learning experiences, this should be reflected in increased 'Learning Journals' logins and parents evening attendance.
- Pupils feel more engaged in their learning as there is increased parental involvement.

Links to HGIOS
(List and detail Qis)

3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement

- Attainment in literacy and numeracy
- Attainment over time
- Overall quality of learners' achievement
- Equity for all learners

2.5 Family Learning

- Engaging families in learning
- Creative approaches to engage families
- Almost all the children and their parents are included, participating, achieving and progressing well in their learning

2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Learning and engagement
- Planning, tracking and monitoring