



Northern
Alliance
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Northern Alliance

**Raising Attainment in Literacy, Language
and Communication**

Interim Report: March 2017



Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Northern Alliance

Raising Attainment in Literacy, Language and Communication Interim Report: March 2017

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Northern Alliance

Raising Attainment in Literacy, Language and Communication Interim Report: March 2017

This report summarises the interim progress made in the Northern Alliance Raising Attainment in Literacy, Language and Communication project between December 2016 and March 2017.

Interim Report Summary – Key Points:

- From feedback at networks within local authorities it would be reasonable to summarise:
 - ❖ Practitioners have been addressing the gaps in foundational skills for reading and writing through direct instruction, planning for learners based on their identified gaps in learning and tracking their mastery across foundational skills for reading and writing.
 - ❖ Ongoing support through networks within local authorities has allowed for education practitioners, educational psychologists and Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) to work collaboratively to develop teacher subject knowledge to support learners through creating a practitioner learning environment in which strategies can be reflected upon, successes can be celebrated and problems can be shared and solved across classrooms and schools.
- From the data collection of a sample of Primary 1 pupils across the Northern Alliance, (665 entries in Phonological Awareness and 513 entries in Pre Handwriting) it would be reasonable to summarise:
 - ❖ By the end of January 2017, the particular pattern of gaps remains different for each child, regardless of their local authority or background factors external to school; however, there are some aspects of foundational skills for reading and writing in which gaps remain more and less prominent.
 - ❖ By the end of January 2017 more than half (51.18%) of Primary 1 children had fully secure phoneme discrimination, phoneme segmentation and phoneme blending which are crucial foundational skills for reading and writing which support automaticity of reading and spelling words using phonics. This is an increase of 36.4% from September 2016 (15.4%).
 - ❖ By January 2017 almost all of the Primary 1 children assessed (93.18%) had a secure tripod grasp which is required to manipulate writing implements with sufficient precision and ease to allow for effective learning of handwriting. There has been an increase of 9.62% since September 2016 (83.56%).

Interim Report Summary – Future Recommendations:

- 1.** The gaps in foundational skills for reading and writing in Primary 1 are being addressed through direct teaching. Taking a developmental approach has allowed for practitioners to target learning and teaching to directly address the gaps identified in initial assessments. The gaps which have been addressed have been tracked between September 2016 and January 2017. It is recommended that practitioners continue to address gaps for the remainder of the 2016/2017 session through their planning and assessment of learning.
- 2.** On-going support for practitioners in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy has indicated that the model supports practice change through collaborative support. It is recommended that the local authorities across the Northern Alliance should identify the support mechanisms available for both the current and new cohorts of practitioners during 2017/2018 session to ensure that learners can be promptly assessed, planned for and supported appropriately following P1 entry in August 2017.
- 3.** Whilst early progress has been made in taking a strategic approach to Emerging Literacy throughout Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) and school years, it is recommended that a collective strategy should be developed to support centres and schools during the 2017/2018 session, including whole Northern Alliance and specific Local Authority opportunities.
- 4.** The Northern Alliance project is demonstrating early success through the partnerships which have been developed with ELCC centres and schools across local authorities and beyond ELCC centres and schools with Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and educational psychologists across local authorities and health boards. This should be a priority for the remainder of the 2016/2017 session and remain a key driver for the 2017/2018 session.

James Cook –

**Project Co-ordinator: Raising Attainment in Literacy, Language and
Communication, Northern Alliance
March 2017**

Background to Interim Report – March 2017

This report follows the interim report which was published on Thursday 1st December 2016.

The December 2016 interim report detailed:

- ❖ the project background, rationale and implementation
- ❖ the support available to Local Authorities during the 2016/ 2017 session
- ❖ the P1 pupil data from September 2016 for Phonological Awareness and Pre-Handwriting
- ❖ the practitioner feedback data following the initial Northern Alliance Raising Attainment in Literacy, Language and Communication launch in September 2016
- ❖ feedback from practitioners following local authority support networks
- ❖ the bespoke training and support made available to individual local authorities between August 2016 and December 2016 based on their 2016/2017 priorities
- ❖ the recommendations for the remainder of the 2016/2017 session.

The December 2016 interim report can be accessed on:

<https://highlandliteracy.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/northern-alliance-literacy-interim-report-december-20162.pdf>

The purpose of this update report (March 2017) is to:

- provide an update on the pupil data for Phonological Awareness and Pre-Handwriting, sharing comparison data between September 2016 and January 2017
- provide an overview of the input made available to practitioners across the Northern Alliance between December 2016 and March 2017
- make recommendations as to the continued partnership of the Northern Alliance in taking forward Raising Attainment in Literacy, Language and Communication.

Support Programme (December 2016 – March 2017)

The December 2016 report detailed the overview of support for the 2016/2017 session. This report details the specific information between December 2016 and March 2017.

- 1) Data collection and analysis**
 - 2) On-going support**
 - 3) Bespoke input**
-

1. Data collection and analysis:

There have been two sets of data collected for Primary 1 children from the schools involved in the data sample across the Northern Alliance. The first submission was the 30th September 2016 to acquire an initial baseline of foundational reading and writing skills. The second was collected on the 27th January 2017 to acquire midyear comparison data.

In September 2016, Primary 1 practitioners from each of the schools used the Phonological Awareness Assessment and Continuum and the Pre-Handwriting Continuum to identify a baseline of their children's foundational skills in reading and writing. There were 683 entries of Phonological Awareness in English and 16 for Gaelic. Due to the sample size no statistical conclusions can be published for Gaelic Phonological Awareness. There were 523 entries for Pre-Handwriting.

Following the identification of gaps within Phonological Awareness and Pre-Handwriting in September 2016, practitioners used the data to plan universal and targeted learning opportunities to address foundational reading and writing skill gaps. The [Emerging Literacy](#) assessment tools and trackers were used between September 2016 and January 2017 to monitor progress.

In January 2017, Primary 1 practitioners from each of the schools again provided their data sets for Phonological Awareness and Pre-Handwriting. There were 665 entries of Phonological Awareness in English and 14 for Gaelic. Due to the sample size no statistical conclusions can be published for Gaelic Phonological Awareness. There were 513 entries in January for Pre-Handwriting.

The data collection and analysis in this report details the individual data sets from September 2016 and January 2017 as well as the comparison of data between September 2016 and January 2017 following classroom instruction to address the gaps in foundational reading and writing skills.

Phonological Awareness

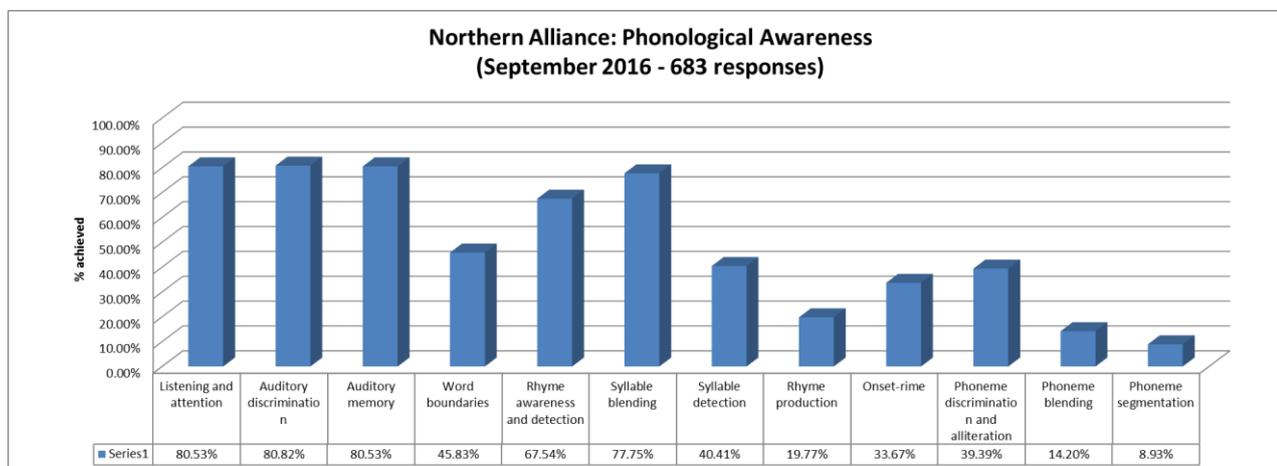


Figure 1: Phonological Awareness (September 2016 – 683 responses)

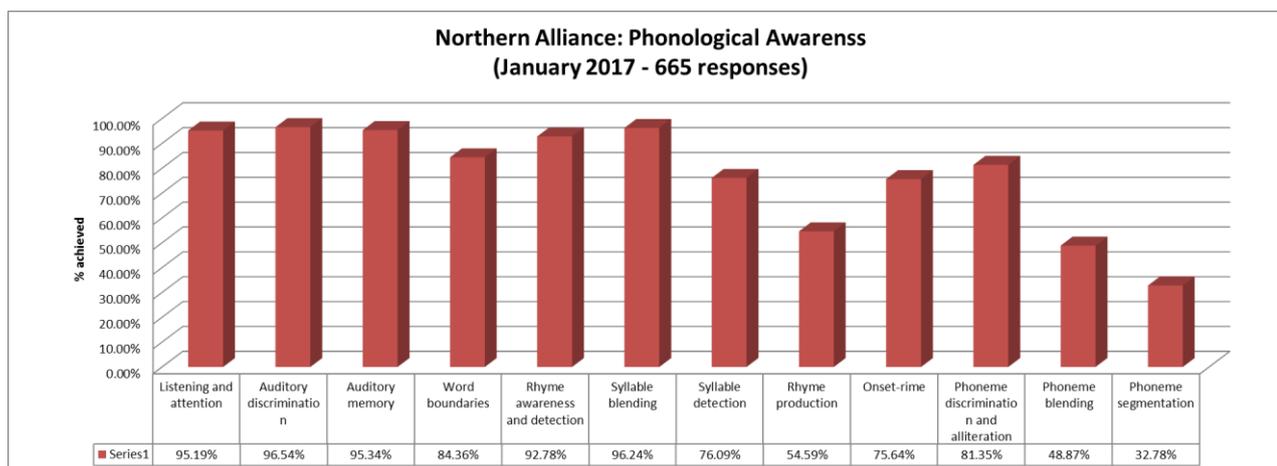


Figure 2: Phonological Awareness (January 2017 – 665 responses)

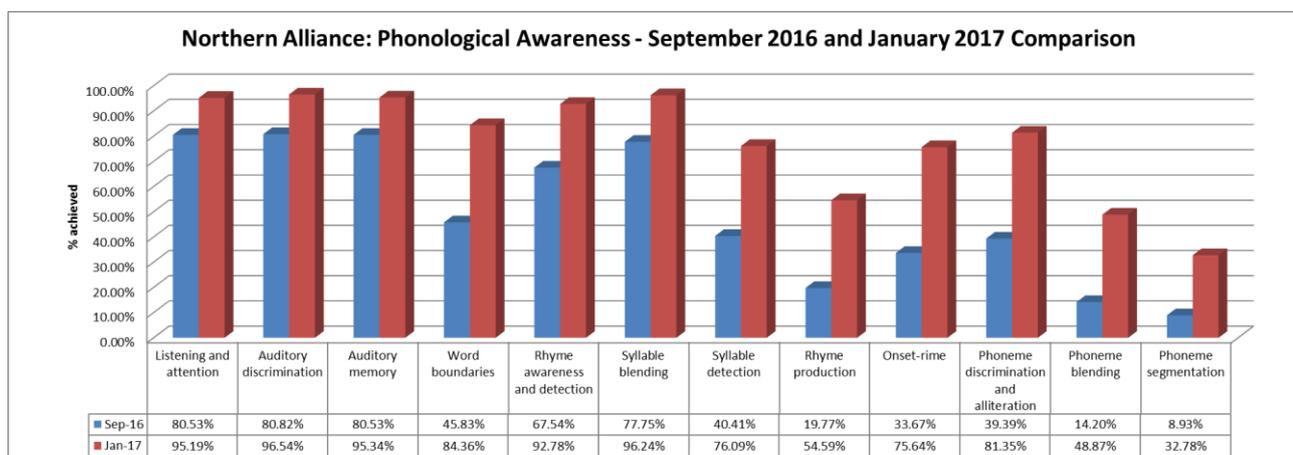


Figure 3: Phonological Awareness (September 2016 and January 2017 Comparison)

The collated phonological awareness data (**Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3**) has indicated that:

- ❖ 84.36% of those Primary 1 children assessed are now (January 2017) secure with Word Boundaries, a rise of 38.53% since September 2016 (45.83%). There is a similar percentage rise in Syllable Detection with 76.09% of those Primary 1 children assessed secure as of January, a rise of 35.68% since September (40.41%).
- ❖ In September 2016 less than one fifth of the Primary 1 children assessed had secure Rhyme Production (19.77%). There has been a rise of 34.82% since September 2016 with over half of the Primary 1 children assessed secure by January 2017 (54.59%).
- ❖ In September 2016, with a score of a possible twelve, less than two in ten children in Primary 1 (19.62%) scored nine or more. This has increased by 49.56% to almost seven in ten children in Primary 1 (69.18%) scoring nine or more out of a possible twelve by January 2017.
- ❖ In September 2016 almost half of the children 45.24% scored less than six out of a possible twelve. Of those 45.24% of Primary 1 children, the average increase in their Phonological Awareness score is 4.5 points between September 2016 and January 2017. By January 2017 only 7.67% of children scored less than six with 92.33% of children in Primary 1 assessed scoring six or more out of a possible twelve.
- ❖ There has been an increase of 36.4% between September 2016 (15.4%) and January 2017 with more than half of the Primary 1 children assessed having fully secure phoneme discrimination, phoneme segmentation and phoneme blending by January 2017 (51.8%) which are crucial foundational skills for reading and writing, supporting automaticity of reading and spelling words using phonics.

It is evident that the gaps in foundational reading skills with regards to Phonological Awareness are closing. The data is supporting practitioners to identify, plan for and address the gaps in phonological awareness in order to build solid foundational reading skills.

Pre-Handwriting – Fine Motor Skills

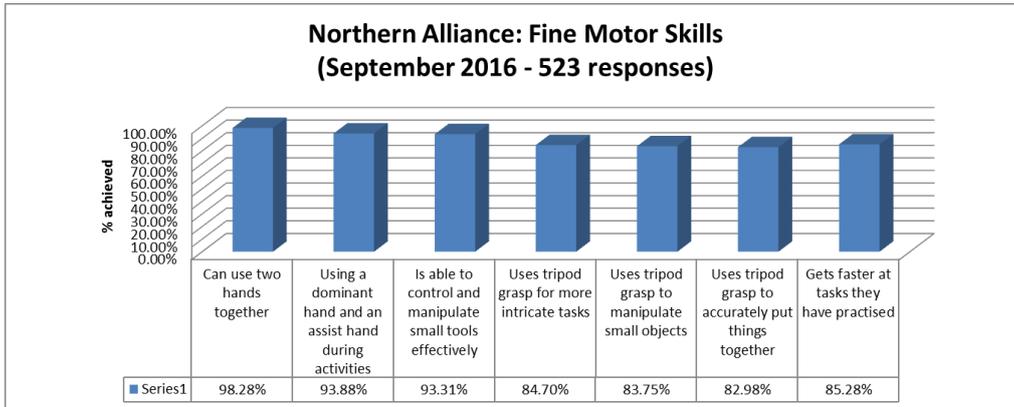


Figure 4: Pre-Handwriting – Fine Motor Skills (September 2016 – 523 responses)

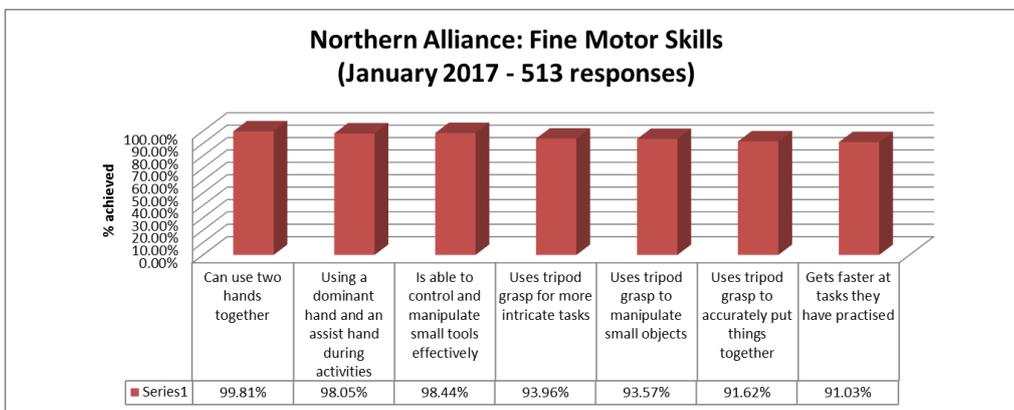


Figure 5: Pre-Handwriting – Fine Motor Skills (January 2017 – 513 responses)

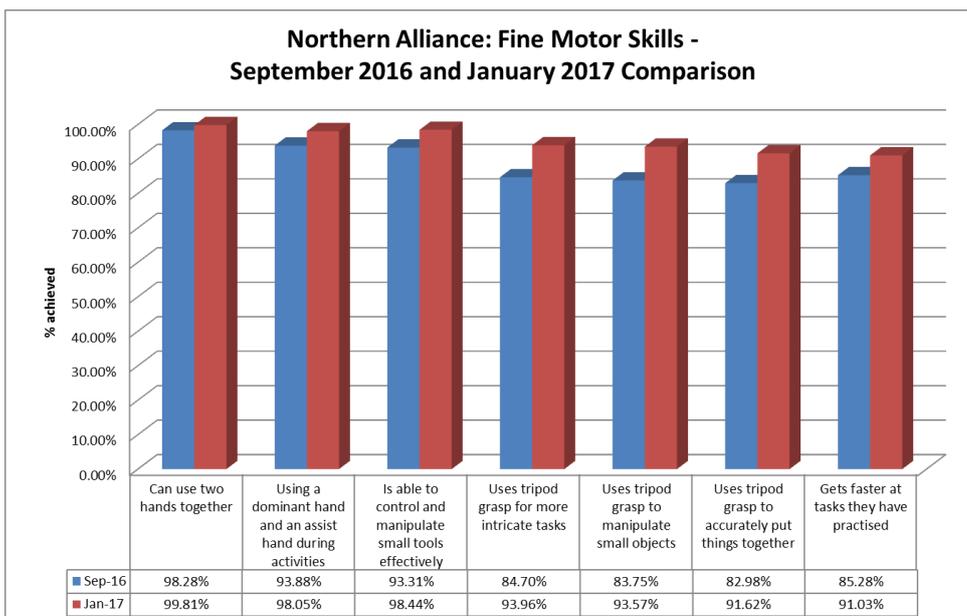


Figure 6: Pre-Handwriting – Fine Motor Skills (September 2016/ January 2017 Comparison)

Pre-Handwriting – Scissor Skills

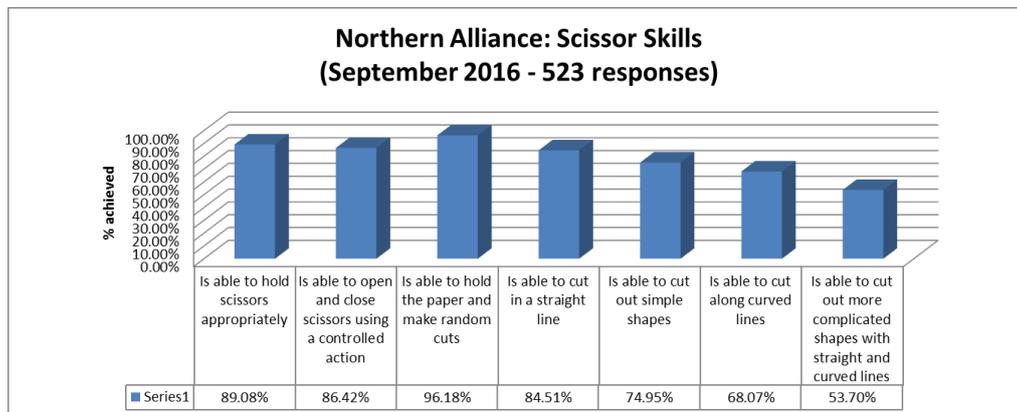


Figure 7: Pre-Handwriting – Scissor Skills (September 2016 – 523 responses)

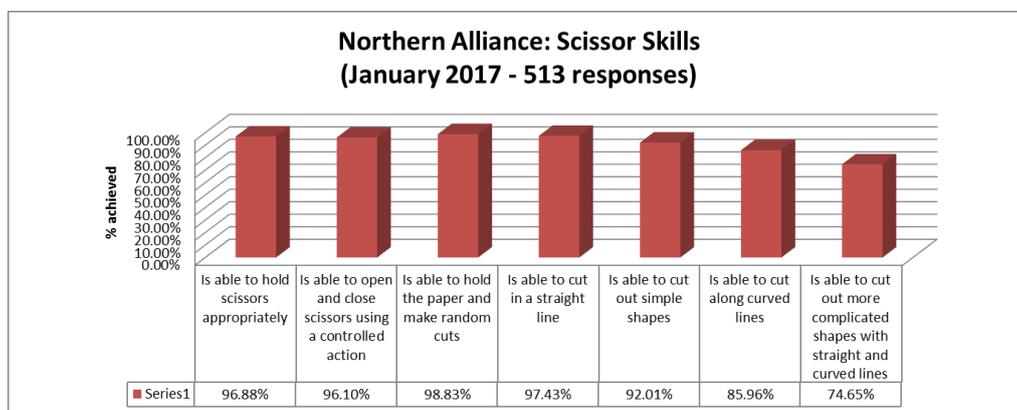


Figure 8: Pre-Handwriting – Scissor Skills (January 2017 – 513 responses)

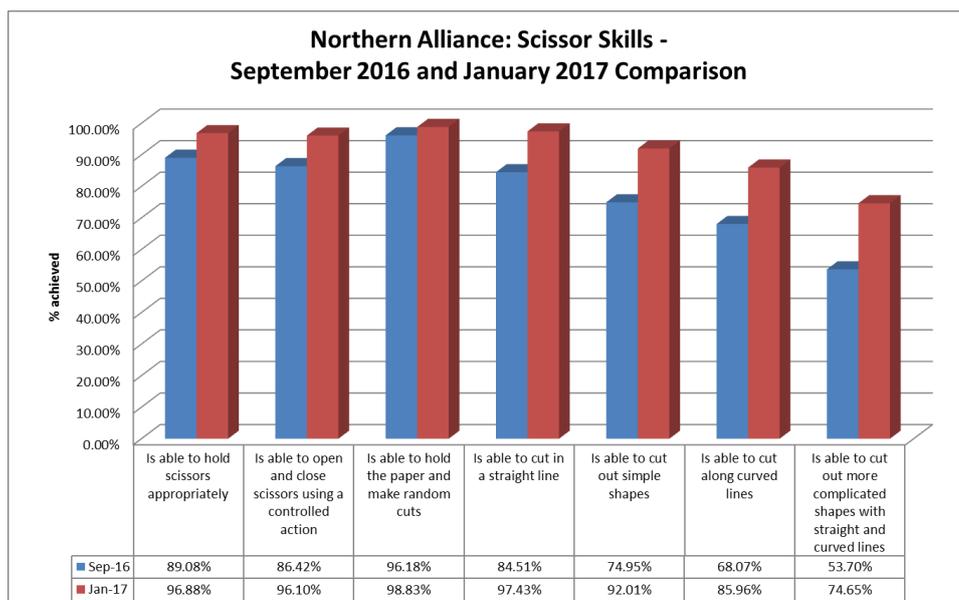


Figure 9: Pre-Handwriting – Scissor Skills (September 2016/ January 2017 Comparison)

Pre-Handwriting – Pre-writing Skills

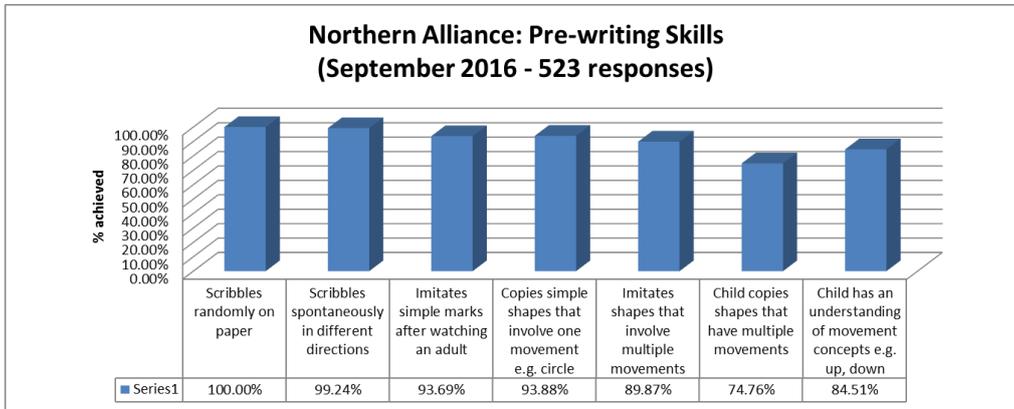


Figure 10: Pre-Handwriting – Pre-writing Skills (September 2016 – 523 responses)

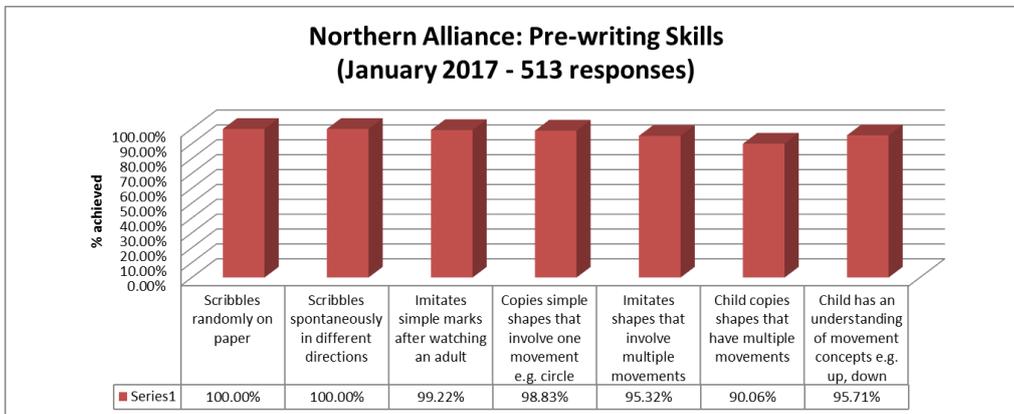


Figure 11: Pre-Handwriting – Pre-writing Skills (January 2017 – 513 responses)

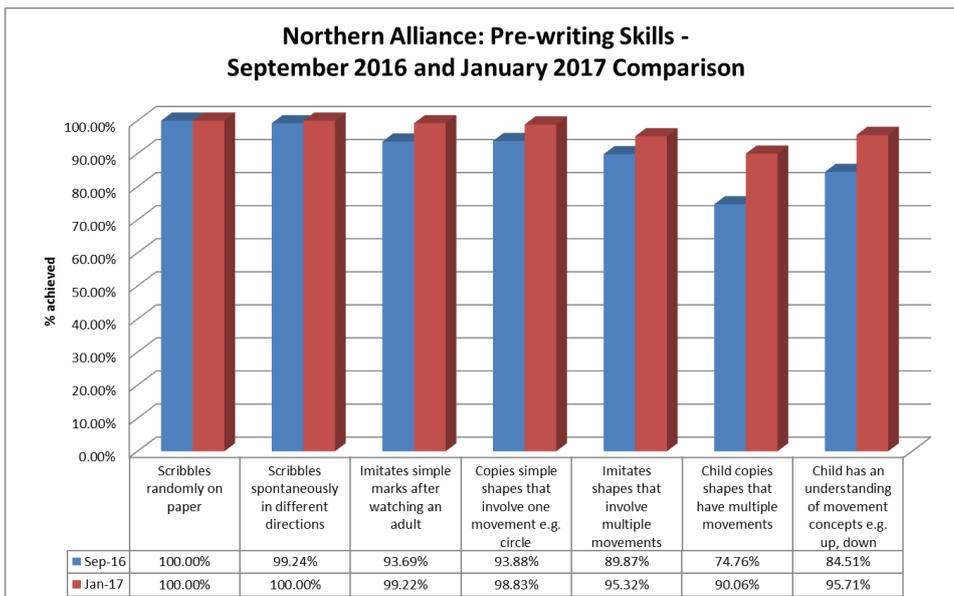


Figure 12: Pre-Handwriting – Pre-writing Skills (September 2016/ January 2017 Comparison)

The collation of pre-handwriting data – Fine Motor Skills (**Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6**), Scissor Skills (**Figure 7, Figure 8 and Figure 9**) and Pre-writing Skills (**Figure 10, Figure 11 and Figure 12**) – has indicated that:

- ❖ By the end of January 2017 more than nine in ten children in Primary 1 assessed (90.84%) scored six or seven out of a possible seven in fine motor skills. This is an increase of 13.98% from September 2016 (76.86%).
- ❖ By the end of January 2017 more than four in five children in Primary 1 assessed (84.99%) scored six or seven out of a possible seven in scissor skills. This is an increase of 22.47% from September 2016 (62.52%).
- ❖ By the end of January 2017 almost all Primary 1 children assessed (93.37%) scored six or seven out of a possible seven for pre-writing skills. There has been an increase of 10.58% from September 2016 (82.79%).
- ❖ By January 2017 almost all of the Primary 1 children assessed (93.18%) had a secure tripod grasp which is required for children to manipulate writing implements with sufficient precision and ease to allow for effective learning of handwriting. There has been an increase of 9.62% since September 2016 (83.56%).
- ❖ By January 2017 almost all of the Primary 1 children assessed (94.93%) demonstrated security in the pre-writing skills of ‘*copying shapes which involved one movement, e.g. a circle*’, and ‘*copying shapes which involved multiple movements, e.g. an x*’, these being foundational to the formation of letters. This is an increase of 5.83% since September 2016 (89.10%).

It is evident that the gaps in pre-handwriting skills with regards to fine motor, scissor and pre-writing skills are closing. The data is supporting practitioners to identify, plan for and address the gaps in fine motor, scissor and pre-writing in order to build solid pre-handwriting skills.

Comparison between Phonological Awareness and Pre-Handwriting

There is no statistical correlation between phonological awareness and pre-handwriting data. By the end of January some of the learners who had gaps in phonological awareness had relatively few or no gaps in their pre-handwriting, and vice versa, some of the learners who had gaps in their pre-handwriting had relatively few or no gaps in phonological awareness. By January some children had relatively low or no gaps in both phonological awareness and pre-handwriting. A minority had some or a high number of gaps in both phonological awareness and pre-handwriting.

It should be noted that some of these individual differences can arise from natural variation in development as well as from environmental factors. Children vary in the rate at which they develop, and this can be different across domains. Thus gaps are not exclusively to be expected for children in relatively deprived areas nor assumed to be absent for those children in less deprived areas. For all children, the appropriate intervention is to become aware of, and cater for their foundational skills, both by providing environments that support the natural pace of development, and by adapting explicit literacy instruction to the presenting skill level.

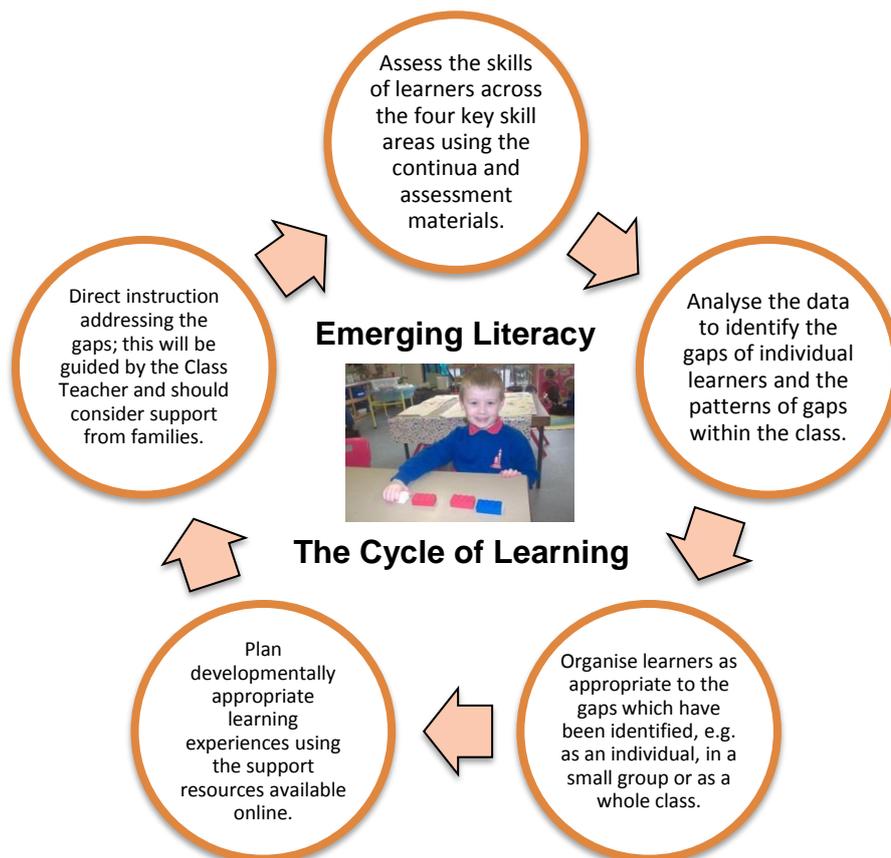


Figure 13 – Emerging Literacy – Cycle of Learning

Practitioners are encouraged to engage with the ‘Emerging Literacy – Cycle of Learning’ above (Figure 13) to support effective literacy instruction.

2. On-going support:

The second cycle of networks across the Northern Alliance took place in January and February.

Local Authority	Date	Time
Aberdeen City	Tuesday 31/01/2017	4pm – 6.30pm
Aberdeenshire	Tuesday 31/01/2017	4pm – 6.30pm
Eilean Siar (The Western Isles)	Friday 27/01/2017	10.30am – 1pm
Highland	Access via Highland ASG and Area Networks	
Moray	Monday 30/01/2017	4pm – 6pm
Orkney	Thursday 02/02/2017	9am – 12pm
Shetland	Friday 03/02/2017	10.30am – 1.30pm

It was evident through the data collected from the October/ November 2016 networks, and reported in the December interim report, that the Local Authority Networks have promoted:

- partnership working between education and Allied Health Professionals, e.g. Speech and Language Therapists, to provide universal services for children and young people
- promoted dialogue between practitioners to support the implementation of taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy to get it right for every child
- professional learning for classroom practitioners which is having a positive impact on practice.

Practitioners involved in this year's support programme will come together again on Tuesday 6th June 2017 which will provide opportunities for ongoing support prior to the 2017/2018 session.

In addition to the local networks the Project Co-ordinator is working universally with practitioners across the Northern Alliance to support the development of shared Phonics Principles. It is evident that there is a variation in terms of the existing phonics guidance within each of the local authorities. The Key Links within the Northern Alliance aim to have collective principles which will complement the developmental approach taken through Emerging Literacy to get it right for every child. These will be launched as part of the ongoing support package provided in 2017/2018.

The Northern Alliance website was launched in February 2017 and has a dedicated section for Emerging Literacy updates across the Northern Alliance:

<http://northernalliance.scot/category/emerging-literacy/>

The work of Emerging Literacy within Highland Council and across the Northern Alliance was showcased at the Aberdeen Learning Festival through delivering a workshop on 'An introduction to taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy' to 100 practitioners.

It has been confirmed that support will continue into the 2017/2018 session.

3. Bespoke input:

As part of the project funding, in addition to the strategic roll-out within the identified pilot schools, the project co-ordinator is working alongside each of the local authorities to support a wider cascade based on the priorities of each authority.

As detailed in the December 2016 report, many support opportunities were provided between August 2016 and December 2016. The following details the bespoke support which has been provided between December 2016 and March 2017 across the Northern Alliance local authorities.

Aberdeen City Council

The project co-ordinator has worked with staff within Aberdeen City Council between December 2016 and March 2017 to:

- develop Emerging Literacy within and across the Early Level through delivering training to 48 practitioners within 31 Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) and primary school settings to support them in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy through developmental pedagogical knowledge and practical strategies. This event also had attendance from the Early Years Team, the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service and the Quality Improvement Team. A second event for a second cohort has been planned for March 2017.
 - pilot the use of Highland's '[Developmental Overviews](#)' and '[Bumps to Bairns](#)' materials in Early Learning and Childcare establishments in order to take a developmental approach within and across the Early Level.
 - deliver 'An introduction to taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy' to the four Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) schools to 117 practitioners including Additional Support Needs Teachers, Class Teachers, Early Years Practitioners, Pupil Support Assistants and Senior Managers.
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Aberdeenshire Council

The project co-ordinator has worked with staff within Aberdeenshire Council between December 2016 and March 2017 to:

- support the work of the 'Early Literacy Federation' to support the development of Literacy, Language and Communication across the Early Level within the Local Authority.
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Eilean Siar (The Western Isles)

The project co-ordinator has worked with staff within Eilean Siar (The Western Isles) between December 2016 and March 2017 to:

- develop Emerging Literacy within and across the Early Level through delivering training to 130 Early Learning and Childcare, school and support staff across 28 centres and schools within the Authority to support them in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy through developmental pedagogical knowledge and practical strategies. This training also had attendance from central Additional Support and Speech and Language staff. Part one of the training took part in January 2017 and part two will take place in March 2017.

Highland Council

Emerging Literacy is a development which has been grown in Highland. The project co-ordinator continues to work predominantly within Highland to further develop their Authority-wide roll-out of Emerging Literacy. Emerging Literacy sits within the Authority's Care and Learning Improvement Plan. The project co-ordinator has worked alongside the Early Years Educational Psychologist, Early Years Education Support Officers, a Paediatric Occupational Therapist, the Speech and Language Therapist Development Officer and a Quality Improvement Officer to:

- continue the support for practitioners across 50 schools in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy through the development of seven local networks which meet regularly throughout the 2016/ 2017 session
- create practical training for Early Learning and Childcare settings to support the development of Emerging Literacy within and through the Early Level which will be delivered through 16 training events across the Authority between March 2017 and May 2017.
- continue to publish materials to support the development of Emerging Literacy on www.highlandliteracy.com/emerging-literacy – resources are updated regularly on the Highland Literacy site and directed to staff within Highland and across the Northern Alliance.
- develop draft Emerging Literacy Practice guidance which has been reviewed by each of the Highland Local Networks – estimated release August 2017.
- develop videos to support the Words Up Key Messages which are used to support adult/child interactions to promote oral language development: <https://highlandliteracy.com/words-up-videos/>. These will be developed further throughout the 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 sessions.

Moray Council

The project co-ordinator has worked with staff within Moray Council between December 2016 and March 2017 to:

- work with the Early Years Network in January 2017 through the delivery of a workshop to 15 ELCC, school, support and Speech and Language practitioners who represent the group for the Local Authority.
 - further develop Emerging Literacy within and across the Early Level through delivering training to 40 Early Learning and Childcare, school and support staff across 25 centres and schools within the Authority to support them in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy through developmental pedagogical knowledge and practical strategies. This training also had attendance from central support and Speech and Language staff. This was part two of the training following part one in November 2016. Further opportunities to develop this across the Local Authority are being planned for to ensure that school nurseries can also benefit.
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Orkney Islands Council

The project co-ordinator has worked with staff within Orkney Islands Council between December 2016 and March 2017 to:

- discuss further bespoke input to support Local Authority spread across Orkney – further arrangements to be confirmed.
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Shetland Islands Council

The project co-ordinator has worked with staff within Shetland Islands Council between December 2016 and March 2017 to:

- confirm arrangements for the second part of Emerging Literacy across the Early Level training which will take place in March 2017.
 - identify links which can be made between Emerging Literacy development and the 'Vocabulary Project' developed through the Scottish Attainment Challenge – further arrangements to be made in March 2017.
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Interim Report Summary – Future Recommendations:

1. The gaps in foundational skills for reading and writing in Primary 1 are being addressed through direct teaching. Taking a developmental approach has allowed for practitioners to target learning and teaching to directly address the gaps identified in initial assessments. The gaps which have been addressed have been tracked between September 2016 and January 2017. It is recommended that practitioners continue to address gaps for the remainder of the 2016/2017 session through their planning and assessment of learning.
2. On-going support for practitioners in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy has indicated that the model supports practice change through collaborative support. It is recommended that the local authorities across the Northern Alliance should identify the support mechanisms available for both the current and new cohorts of practitioners during 2017/2018 session to ensure that learners can be promptly assessed, planned for and supported appropriately following P1 entry in August 2017.
3. Whilst early progress has been made in taking a strategic approach to Emerging Literacy throughout Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) and school years, it is recommended that a collective strategy should be developed to support centres and schools during the 2017/2018 session, including whole Northern Alliance and specific Local Authority opportunities.
4. The Northern Alliance project is demonstrating early success through the partnerships which have been developed with ELCC centres and schools across local authorities and beyond ELCC centres and schools with Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and educational psychologists across local authorities and health boards. This should be a priority for the remainder of the 2016/2017 session and remain a key driver for the 2017/2018 session.