

INSPECTION OF THE EDUCATION FUNCTIONS OF ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL (INEA)

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise Community Services Committee of the further planned inspection of the Education functions of Argyll and Bute Council and to confirm the submission of the self-evaluation profile which outlines the progress made by the Authority in addressing the main points for action contained within the initial inspection report of 21 March 2017.
- 1.2 Education Scotland notified the Chief Executive of the Council that HM Inspectors will undertake a further strategic level inspection of the Education functions of Argyll and Bute Council during the period Tuesday 26 September to Friday 29 September 2017.
- 1.3 Section 9 of the 'Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000' charges Education Scotland (formerly HM Inspectorate of Education) on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, to provide an external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local authority in its quality assurance of educational provision within the Council and of its support to schools in improving the quality of Education.
- 1.4 The further inspection was indicated at the conclusion of the initial inspection, conducted in September 2016 and outlined within the formal inspection report published by Education Scotland on 21 March 2017. Specifically the report noted that *"Education Scotland will provide support and monitor the council's progress towards improvement. Education Scotland will carry out a further inspection visit within three months of the publication of this report to monitor progress. We will also carry out a further visit within six months and we will then publish a further report that outlines progress that has been made"*.
- 1.5 The further inspection will focus on the progress that has been made in addressing the main points for action identified in the original inspection. The report at the conclusion of the inspection will not include evaluations based on the six-point scale.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- Note the further inspection of the Education Functions of Argyll and Bute Council scheduled to commence on 26 September 2017;
- Note the timetable associated with the inspection;
- Agree the summary self-evaluation being prepared by Education Services in conjunction with Head Teacher representatives, as required by Education Scotland, outlining progress in addressing the main points for action contained within the published inspection report of 21 March 2017, and
- Request the Executive Director of Community Service brings a report confirming the outcome of the inspection to a future meeting of the Community Services Committee.

INSPECTION OF THE EDUCATION FUNCTIONS OF ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL (INEA)

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise the Community Services Committee of the further inspection of the Education functions of the Council.
- 3.2 Education Scotland notified the Chief Executive of the Council that HM Inspectors will undertake a further strategic level inspection of the Education functions of Argyll and Bute Council during the period Tuesday 26 September to Friday 29 September 2017.
- 3.3 The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* places a duty on Education Authority's to provide children and young people with school education and (in terms of raising standards) requires authorities to endeavor to secure improvement in the quality of that school education. The Act also places a duty on HM Inspectors to provide external evaluation of the effectiveness and performance of education authorities in relation to their education functions.
- 3.4 The further inspection was indicated at the conclusion of the initial inspection, conducted in September 2016 and outlined within the formal inspection report published by Education Scotland on 21 March 2017. Specifically the report noted that *"Education Scotland will provide support and monitor the council's progress towards improvement. Education Scotland will carry out a further inspection visit within three months of the publication of this report to monitor progress. We will also carry out a further visit within six months and we will then publish a further report that outlines progress that has been made"*.
- 3.5 The further inspection will focus on the progress that has been made in addressing the main points for action identified in the original inspection. It will not include evaluations based on the six-point scale.

The main points for action are:

1. Significantly improve young people's attainment across the authority;
2. Improve the use of data, ensuring greater rigour;

3. Continue to improve the quality of educational provision with consistently higher levels of support and challenge from central officers and elected members;
4. Improve relationships and communication, promoting a more positive ethos amongst all stakeholders; and
5. Improve the quality of strategic leadership and direction at all levels within the Education Authority.

The final published report will address the following:

- The aims, nature and scope of the inspection.
- How successfully has the Education Authority improved its provision?
- What is the Education Authority's capacity for further improvement?

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- Note the further inspection of the Education Functions of Argyll and Bute Council scheduled to commence on 26 September 2017;
- Note the timetable associated with the inspection;
- Agree the summary self-evaluation being prepared by Education Services in conjunction with Head Teacher representatives, as required by Education Scotland, outlining progress in addressing the main points for action contained within the published inspection report of 21 March 2017, and
- Request the Executive Director of Community Service brings a report confirming the outcome of the inspection to a future meeting of the Community Services Committee.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 Education Scotland have allocated a team of four Inspectors to undertake the further inspection. The team will be led by a Managing Inspector, Mr. Alastair Brown.
- 5.2 The Managing Inspector, supported by a member of the inspection team and the Area Lead Officer (ALO) met to discuss the plan for the forthcoming inspection with the Acting Executive Director of Community Services and Acting Head of Education.
- 5.3 The planned inspection footprint will take place over the course of four days: 26th - 29th September and during the course of the inspection week all of the inspectors will engage in a range of inspection activities including:

- Individual interviews with the Chief Executive, Council Leader, the Policy Lead for Education, Elected Members, the Acting Executive Director, Community Services and the Acting Head of Education;
- Focus groups of staff, partners, parents and learners, and
- A review of inspection evidence.

The timetable for the inspection is currently being finalised and agreed with the Managing Inspector.

5.4 A range of preparatory work is currently being concluded to support the impending inspection. These include:

- The preparation of the self-evaluation position statement, in conjunction with Head Teacher representatives, for submission to Education Scotland by 15th September 2017;
- Identification of relevant supporting evidence;
- Preparation of various communications, e.g. Committee reports, notification and advice for Head Teachers, Teachers/Staff, Members, Partners, Parent Council Chairs;
- Preparation of the inspection timetable, including co-ordination of meetings, focus groups, visits, and
- Scheduling diary arrangements for Chief Officers and Elected Members.

5.5 The current timetable is as follows (this however may be subject to change):

- Pre inspection notification from Education Scotland 7th August 2017;
- Planning meeting with members of the inspection team, Acting Executive Director and Acting Head of Education held on 15th August 2017;
- Issue of Education Scotland inspection questionnaires by Education Services w/c 21st August 2017;
- Submission of self-evaluation summary by Education Services to Education Scotland – 15th September 2017;
- Inspection 26th – 29rd September 2017;
- Inspection discussion to Chief Executive, Policy Lead for Education, Executive Director and Head of Service week 4th October 2017;
- Draft inspection report issued to Argyll & Bute (Chief Executive) late November 2017. Comments from the Council to Education Scotland within seven days of issue draft report and
- Inspection report publication date mid to late January 2018.

6.0 Self-evaluation profile

6.1 Education Services is required to provide a summary self-evaluation report outlining the progress made by the Authority in responding to the inspection main points for action. This is being prepared in conjunction with representatives of the Head Teacher Advisory Group and is due for submission to Education Scotland on 15th September. The following paragraphs provide an overview of a number of actions/interventions put in place by Education Services to secure

improvement against the main points for action from the time when the initial inspection concluded. These and a further range of improvement actions are currently being merged into the Education Scotland template for submission to Education Scotland by the 15th of September.

Main point for action 1: Significantly improve young people's attainment across the authority.

- Initial Authority examination outcomes for 2017 indicate improvement in the overall percentage of A-C awards in National 4, National 5 and marginally in Advanced Higher examinations. Education Services, in consultation with Secondary Head Teachers have put in place an improved, increasingly rigorous and consistent approach to SQA professional discussion meetings with Head Teachers. This process will continue to be developed to ensure greater consistency, challenge and support with schools, subject departments and subject leaders to support further improvement and increasingly positive outcomes for learners' attainment.
- Improving outcomes for pupils across nationally agreed levels in literacy and Numeracy: early level, third level and fourth level have shown an improvement in all measures. At first level all measures have improved since 2016. Further development is required to ensure improvement meets National Expectations.
- The range of support for assessment and moderation delivered within establishments and clusters have improved over the course of the last year. This is an area of increasing improvement. Head Teachers are now reporting a higher level of confidence amongst their staff in making assessment judgements. Appropriate progress is being made across the Service in meeting the required National Standard in relation to Professional Judgement.
- Staff at all levels of the Service are demonstrating increasing clarity of the overall attainment in literacy and numeracy for learners as a result of the range of support, resources and training offered. This includes learning pathways to support children and young people in their learning.
- Improved access to resources for teachers through the use of digital technologies.
- The Educational Psychology Services has maintained high quality contact with the most vulnerable children in schools and communities to ensure that they receive the right support at the right time.
- An increasing range of appropriate actions have been taken to improve the positive destinations for identified groups of young people including Looked After and Looked After and Accommodated Children (LAAC).

Main point for action 2: Improve the use of data, ensuring greater rigour.

- The Education Service has extended the range of statistical data used to inform decision making, provide challenge and support to schools and report performance to elected members, nationally and for pupils and parents.
- All schools, supported by Education Services, provided more rigorous evidence across levels of CFE literacy and Numeracy. These are being recorded in SEEMIS providing the authority with comprehensive overview of progress of learners in key areas of their learning. This information is being used to identify and target support priorities for the Service.
- A more rigorous approach to the evaluation of the use of data within School Reviews is leading to appropriate improvements in the use of data by schools to plan and track interventions supporting improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Establishments have submitted standardised Standards and Quality /School Improvement Plans (S&Q/SIP) containing targets reflecting Our Children Their Future (OCTF), National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) enabling the authority to gather evidence and report progress on outcomes within the Annual Plan in 2017/2018. This information also contributes to the identification of improvement priorities for session 2017/2018.

Further areas of work/Future programmes

- Continue to improve the use of data to plan and implement effective interventions to secure further improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Continue to improve the recording of whole school data on achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels using SEEMIS to improve the range of Authority data on children and young people's progress.
- Evaluate the impact of assessment, monitoring and tracking of young people's progress through the Broad General Education (BGE) to ensure the overall improvement in outcomes for all young people.
- Continue to provide development and information programmes to Elected Members on performance information to support them to undertake their scrutiny roles.

Main point for action 3: Continue to improve the quality of educational provision with consistently higher levels of support and challenge from central officers and elected members.

- The provision of professional development opportunities for all centrally based staff to develop and enhance their knowledge and skills to

effectively support and challenge schools, staff and learners.

- Schools visit programmes by centrally-based officers are increasingly consistent and robust. Visits now have a clearly identified purpose, leading to constructive and challenging improvement dialogue.
- The appointment and engagement of Principal Teachers for Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing and Assessment and Moderation: key service priorities, leading to greater level of support and challenge with establishments and clusters.
- Approach to support, challenge, monitoring and tracking of school improvement planning process is increasingly consistent and rigorous. These revised approaches are supporting change and improvement.
- An increasingly systematic and robust programme of School Reviews is leading to more regular and challenging engagement with school focusing on key areas of educational provision and school improvement.
- Consistent and equitable engagement with schools by centrally based officers leading to the provision of relevant and accurate information to support policy decisions and areas of priority by Elected Members.

Further areas of work/Future programmes

- Continue to provide professional development opportunities for centrally deployed staff, focusing on key areas of school improvement, to ensure all team members provide high quality support and challenge to all Authority schools.
- Continue work with schools on key areas including curriculum principles, entitlements and expectations, in line with national guidance to ensure high quality of curriculum provision for all pupils in each of the Authority schools.
- Undertake an analysis of the impact and positive outcomes for children and young people arising from the changes to support and challenge approaches with schools and clusters.

Main point for action 4: Improve relationships and communication, promoting a more positive ethos amongst all stakeholders.

- A Head Teacher Advisory Group was established early in 2017 following discussion and agreement with all Head Teachers. A formal work plan is in place for the HT Advisory incorporating targets specifically aimed at improving communication, promoting an increasingly positive ethos and strengthening strategic leadership across the service. A number of meetings have been held since January 2017.

- An increasing range of communication methods have been deployed by Education Services to improve communication, provide timely and routine inform and updates to staff, parents, elected members and wider stakeholders. These have included: Education Newsletters, Bulletins, the Head of Education Blog and regular email communications.
- An increased schools visit programmes, informal drop-in visits and courtesy telephone calls to HTs by members of Education SMT. These contacts are providing opportunities for one-to-one discussions, awareness raising and information sharing.
- Information sessions provided for all Elected Members following the outcome of the elections in May 2017. Initial member induction programmes provided the opportunity for Members to be provided with a summary outline of the work of Education Services. Further follow-up sessions are scheduled over the period August 2017 to March 2018, specifically designed to support members undertake to effectively undertake their scrutiny and challenge functions.

Further areas of work/Future programmes:

- Further update and implement the Authority Parental Involvement Strategy reflecting national guidance.
- Initial progress has been made in ensuring that young people have opportunities to meaningfully contribute to decision making, self-evaluation and performance improvement processes. However continued and sustained effort is required to support all young people to contribute to capacity building initiatives and ensure they are supported to influence decision making processes at both school and Local Authority levels.

Main point for action 5: Improve the quality of strategic leadership and direction at all levels within the Education Authority.

- Good progress has been made in publishing, launching and implementing Our Children Their Future, the vision and strategy document for Education Service. The strategy provides a clear link to both National and Council policy imperatives, with clearly defined objectives, aims and outcomes.

The document provides clear expectation for all strategic leaders, and staff at all levels. The implementation of OCTF is contributing to a greater common purpose and providing a stronger focus for the agreed areas of improvement at all levels of the service.

Service and school improvement planning processes, including all supporting documentation is now clearly aligned to the six key objectives of OCTF.

- Further development of the education leadership development programmes are contributing to an increasing ethos of strategic leadership across the service. The outcome of which is beginning to

impact on the school improvement agenda. A number of staff have successfully completed courses and, as a consequence have secured promoted posts within the Authority. These programme are integral to supporting our Growing Our Own strategy.

- A formal revision of Head Teacher appointment processes is providing greater rigour, improving consistency and is impacting on the quality of strategic leadership. These revised approaches are being used by the Service to ensure posts are suitably recruited to. Further support for newly appointed Head Teachers and other senior posts have also been put in place.
- A review of the process of reporting to and training offered to Elected Members is beginning to impact on the quality of scrutiny and support to the Education Service by Elected Members.

Further areas of work/Future programmes

- Revised guidance, including clear expectations of PRD completion requirements are now in place. Guidance materials issued to schools at the commencement of the new 2017/2018 academic session. Initial evidence of this impacting on the quality of PRD's being carried out. Further scrutiny and sampling of PRD processes, completion rates and quality of PRD experiences planned for session 17/18.
- The newly established Head Teacher Advisory Group is beginning to make a positive contribution to the development of strategic leadership and improved communication throughout Education Services.

Further work is required by all members of the Advisory Group to ensure their work significantly impacts on leadership at all levels within the Education Authority.

- Revised and new approaches for leadership of learning are now in place. Further work on embedding approaches are planned in session 17/18 and will include impact assessments.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Education Scotland will carry out a further inspection of the Education functions of the Council commencing week beginning 26th September 2017. Education Services are preparing the self-evaluation summary of progress against the main points for action for submission to Education Scotland on 15th September 2017.
- 7.2 A report will be published by Education Scotland of the progress made by the Authority in addressing the main points for action published in the initial inspection report. At this stage the publication date is proposed as the end of January 2018.

7.3 An update on the outcome of the further inspection will be provided at a future Community Services Committee meeting.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Policy The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* places a duty on education authorities to provide children and young people with school education and (in terms of raising standards) requires authorities to endeavor to secure improvement in the quality of that school education.
- 8.2 Financial None.
- 8.3 Legal None.
- 8.4 HR Resourcing of the planned inspection presents additional, short term resource implications for the Council.
- 8.5 Equalities None.
- 8.6 Risk The outcome of the further inspection of the education provision by Argyll and Bute may significantly enhance or detract from the Council's reputation and attractiveness as an area to work and live in.
- 8.7 Customer Service This report provides elected members with an overview of the planned evaluation of Service performance.

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