

26 November 2018

Update on Strategic Inspection of the education functions of Argyll and Bute Council

In March 2017, HM Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) published a report on the education functions of Argyll and Bute Council. The report set out a number of areas for improvement, which we had agreed with the council. We made further visits to the council in June 2017, September 2017 and May 2018 to monitor and report on the progress which the council was making in addressing the agreed areas for improvement. In July 2018, we reported that the council had made positive and continued progress since the original inspection. We indicated that a further visit later in 2018 would consider and report on how well the council is improving the quality of young people's attainment. Our visit took place in October 2018 and this is a summary of what we found.

At the broad general education stages, data provided by the authority indicates that attainment has improved from 2016 to 2018 in several important measures. The attainment of children and young people in reading, writing, listening and talking has improved at almost every stage which is measured (P1, P4, P7 and S3). There are important improvements in numeracy too, particularly at the primary stages. Across the authority, staff have worked well together to ensure that teachers are making more confident and accurate judgements of pupils' progress.

Over recent years, the attendance of pupils at primary, secondary and special schools has been higher than the national average. The proportion of children and young people being excluded from school is well below the national average.

Over the last five years, the attainment of young people in literacy and numeracy in Argyll and Bute Council's secondary schools has often been lower than in other Scottish schools which serve pupils with similar needs and backgrounds (the Virtual Comparator). There are positive signs of improvement in 2017 and 2018 and staff are working hard to achieve consistently higher levels of attainment across all schools.

There are some very positive improvements in the attainment of young people in National Qualifications, particularly between 2016 and 2018. For example, at S4, the proportion of young people achieving awards at National 5 (SCQF level 5) has improved and in 2018 is above the Virtual Comparator and national averages. At S5 and S6, more young people now succeed at Higher level (SCQF level 6) and attainment at this level has risen to be in line with or above the Virtual Comparator and national averages. The authority recognises that there is scope to increase the proportion of young people achieving five or more Higher awards.

The inspection report published in March 2017 identified a number of areas for improvement which had been agreed with Argyll and Bute Council. Three further

published inspection reports have confirmed that the council has taken appropriate action to address these areas. The council has now demonstrated that it has made positive and continued progress since the original inspection in September 2016. It has strengthened its arrangements for educational leadership, and central officers and school-based staff continue to work with commitment to bring about a wide range of improvements. The authority now has greater capacity to continue to drive improvement in the quality of its provision.

The authority is now making significant improvements to the quality of young people's attainment in several important measures, for example, in literacy and numeracy and in the proportion of young people achieving awards at National 5 and Higher level.

As a result of the improvements outlined above, HM Inspectors will make no further visits to Argyll and Bute Council in connection with the original inspection.

HM Inspectors of Education