

**INSPECTION OF THE EDUCATION FUNCTIONS OF ARGYLL AND BUTE
COUNCIL (INEA):
RESPONSE TO THE INSPECTION**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise Community Services Committee of the outcome of planned inspection of the Education functions of Argyll and Bute Council. The report presents an overview of the inspection process, the final inspection outcomes and, importantly the action being taken by the Authority to address the main recommendations contained within the report.
- 1.2 Education Scotland notified the Chief Executive of the Council that an announced inspection of the Education functions of the Council by Education Scotland would take place week commencing the 19th September 2016, with an anticipated conclusion with the publication of a public report by the end of November 2016.
- 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 Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Education functions of the Council were based on a framework of quality indicators (published in Quality Management in Education 2), which embody the Government's policy on Best Value. The framework is based on six high level questions which can be answered by evaluating the quality of education across ten Key areas. A selected number of revised quality indicators contained within QMIE 2 (revised June 2016) were used throughout the inspection.
- 1.5 Education Scotland published the final inspection report on 21 March 2017, six month after the commencement of the inspection. Whilst the report presents a number of strengths of the core education functions of the Council there are a number of highly negative aspects to the report.
- 1.6 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- a) Note the inspection report published by Education Scotland on 21 March 2017 following their inspection of the Education functions of the Council;
- b) Note the content of the inspection report which highlights the key strengths and main points for action for the Education Authority;
- c) Note the action taken by the Authority in responding to the main points for actions following the conclusion of the inspection in September 2016;
- d) Agree the development and implementation of a significant action plan by Education Services in response to the main points for action arising from the report, and
- e) Request the Executive Director, Community Service to bring further reports on the progress in addressing the main points for action to future meetings of the Committee.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise Community Services Committee of the outcome of planned inspection of the Education functions of Argyll and Bute Council. The report presents an overview of the inspection process, the final inspection outcomes and, importantly the action being taken by the Authority to address the main recommendations contained within the report.
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- 2.5 Education Scotland published the final inspection report on 21 March 2017 (Appendix 1), six month after the commencement of the inspection. Whilst the report presents a number of strengths of the core Education functions of the Council there are a number of highly negative aspects to the report.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- a) Note the inspection report published by Education Scotland on 21 March 2017 following their inspection of the Education functions of the Council;
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- c) Note the action taken by the Authority in responding to the main points for actions following the conclusion of the inspection in September 2016;
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- e) Request the Executive Director, Community Service to bring further reports on the progress in addressing the main points for action to future meetings of the Committee

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The inspection footprint was conducted by Education Scotland over the course of five days: 19th - 23rd September 2016.

The inspection set out to answer the following questions:

- What key outcomes has the education authority achieved?
- How well are the needs of stakeholders being met?
- How well does the Education Authority deliver and improve the quality of its education services?
- How good is the quality of strategic leadership and direction?, and
- What is the Education Authority's capacity for improvement?

4.2 A number of selected updated quality indicators were evaluated against the six-point scale. As a core part of the inspection the Authority submitted their self-evaluation against these five quality indicators.

The following table illustrates the evaluations made by the Authority, compared with the Education Scotland evaluations.

Quality Indicator	Argyll and Bute Evaluation	Education Scotland Evaluation
QI 1.1: Improvements in performance	Satisfactory	Weak
QI 2.1: Impact on children, young people, adult learners and families	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
QI 5.1: Delivering and improving the quality of services	Satisfactory	Weak

QI 9.2: Leadership and direction	Satisfactory	Weak
QI 9.4 Leadership of change and improvement	Satisfactory	Weak

4.3 Main findings of the inspection report.
The main findings of the inspection included an assessment of the key strengths and main points for action for the Authority arising from the inspection. These are:

4.4 **Key Strengths:**

- The proportion of young people who move on from school to a positive destination;
- The contributions of the Early Years Team and the Educational Psychology Service in delivering a strong foundation and support for children's learning, and
- The positive and wide range of partnerships which help staff to meet learners' needs, particularly those of MOD families and refugees.

4.5 In addition to the main strengths the published report confirms a range of good or effective practice across areas of the Education Service including:

- The achievement of children and young people across Argyll and Bute reflects a broad range of national awards and award bearing wider achievement qualifications;
- Over 1500 young people last session achieved across a broad range of awards including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, John Muir, Saltire and Youth Achievement Awards;
- In almost all early learning and childcare (ELC) settings, most children achieve their expected developmental milestones;
- The number of young people securing a positive destination on leaving school has increased over the period 2011-2016;
- Argyll and Bute has implemented all aspects of the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) practice model and is continuing to develop and improve it... the Education Service plays a key role on leading the development of GIRFEC across Argyll and Bute and through its contribution to the national *Well-Being Application* working group;
- A significant amount of work has been carried out to support Looked After Children;
- There are good examples of the Early Years Strategy policy being embedded in practice;
- Important changes have been made across the Education Service to engage head teachers and senior staff in improvement activities. This includes the Secondary Performance Reporting group (now called the Achievement and Attainment Group), and

- A number of internal forums and working groups have been set up to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence

4.6 **Main points for action:**

- Significantly improve young people's attainment across the authority;
- Improve the use of data, ensuring greater rigour;
- Continue to improve the quality of educational provision with consistently higher levels of support and challenge from central officers and elected members;
- Improve relationships and communication, promoting a more positive ethos amongst all stakeholders; and
- Improve the quality of strategic leadership and direction at all levels within the Education Authority.

4.7 In addressing the main points for action Education Services will take full account of further comments contained within the published report responding through a range of strategic interventions. These are incorporated into an initial draft action plan (as noted within section 4.10 of this report). The identified interventions include:

- Developing the remit and focus of the Head Teacher Advisory Group to support improved communication, engagement and relationships between the Authority and Schools;
- Taking further steps to increase the overall proportion of children and young people who achieve in line with national expectation in Literacy and Numeracy;
- Taking further steps to increase the overall proportion of children and young people who achieve in line with national expectation in Gaelic Medium education;
- Implementing revised approaches to ensure overall improvement in levels of attainment for Senior Phase pupils across all SQA examination levels;
- Monitoring curriculum models across each of the ten secondary schools to ensure the average tariff scores for all Argyll and Bute young people are increased, as appropriate;
- Prepare, in consultation with schools, a curriculum principals, entitlements and expectations paper for use by all schools;
- Ensure staff at all levels are sufficiently clear about the Authority's expectation for measuring and closing the poverty related attainment gap;
- Providing increasingly effective support to schools in the use of data to improve achievement and attainment for all children and young people;
- Further refine the approach to support and challenge visits to all authority schools to ensure the needs of all pupils are being effectively met;
- Further refining the Authority Standards and Quality Report to ensure better and more consistent use of all available data and to make more accurate benchmarks of progress and improvement;

- Reviewing and updating the Authority Parental Involvement Strategy to ensure greater engagement and communication with parents and carers, and
 - Further improving the effectiveness of school support visits to ensure greater consistency and challenge to all schools.
- 4.8 The priority for the Education Service will be to retain our focus on delivering high quality services that improve outcomes for all of our children and young people. The Education Vision and Strategy: “Our Children, Their Future” is a key part of this. We note and welcome that the main points for action recommended in the Education Scotland report are in line with the aims of the new Education Vision and Strategy.
- 4.9 Since the inspection visit in September 2016 a number of improvements actions have been taken forward by Education Services. These include:
- The significant work of the Service in preparing and publishing the revised Education Vision and Strategy: Our Children, Their Future, with a clear focus on ambition, excellence and equality reflecting local and national priorities;
 - A conclusion of the “tackling bureaucracy workload review” undertaken by Education Scotland in August 2016 identified the “Impact of assessment and moderation facilitators” as a key strength of the Authority;
 - The role of centrally employed officers have been revised to provide increased support for schools and early years settings. This includes advice in curriculum areas such as literacy, numeracy and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM);
 - The appointment of two additional Principal Teachers, to support the development and improvement of Literacy and Numeracy of pupils across all schools in the Authority;
 - A Head Teacher Advisory Group has been introduced with the main purpose of improving communication and engagement between schools and the Authority;
 - Further improvements have been made to communication with schools and services through the publication of regular education bulletins;
 - Curriculum guidance materials have been updated and made accessible to all staff through the Sharing Argyll Learning (SAL) site. These are designed to support staff in taking forward learning and teaching;
 - A new approach to reviewing school examination results was introduced in September 2016. This is focused on increasing the use data to improve outcomes for learners;
 - Improvement planning materials for use by schools in session 17/18 are currently being revised in consultation with Head Teachers, and
 - Further development of collaborative working arrangements

with other Local Authorities which focus on improvement and sharing of practice to support the raising of standards across services and schools.

- 4.10 Further work has been undertaken in preparing an initial action plan which outlines the range of actions undertaken by Education Services to date (Appendix 1) to respond to the range of improvement priorities arising from the inspection report.
- 4.11 Following consideration and agreement of Community Services Committee the action plan will be further revised and updated. It is important to note that all improvement actions currently included in the plan will be developed in full consultation with Service Managers, Central Officers and Head Teachers to ensure the final plan fully reflects the expectations outlined within the published inspection report.
- 4.12 In addition, further regular progress/evaluation meetings will be offered to the Education Scotland Area Lead Officer as part of our commitment to securing improvement and in responding to the findings of the inspection report.
- 4.13 Regular progress updates on all areas contained within the Action Plan will be presented to future meetings of the Councils Strategic Management Team and Community Services Committee.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The report presents an overview of the INEA inspection by Education Scotland in September 2016, the final inspection outcomes as outlined in the inspection report published on 21 March 2017 and, importantly the action being taken by the Authority to address the main recommendations contained within the report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 6.1 | Policy | The <i>Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000</i> 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. |
| 6.2 | Financial | None |
| 6.3 | Legal | None |
| 6.4 | HR | None |
| 6.5 | Equalities | None |

6.6	Risk	The outcome of the strategic inspection report on the effectiveness of the Education functions of the authority presents a significant reputational risk for the Council.
6.7	Customer Service	None

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25 March 2017

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APPENDICES

Argyll and Bute INEA initial Action plan

Appendix 1