

APPENDIX 2

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES

AUDIT COMMITTEE
27 MAY 2004

HMI REPORT - 2002/2003

1. INTRODUCTION

An HMI Report was issued by Audit Scotland in 2002/03, an action was placed upon Community Services, to the progress and achievement of recommendations identified within the Summary and Main report. It was decided to address the Summary report recommendations first and good progress has been made with regard to implementation. The Audit Committee has requested an update as to progress and this is set out below.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Audit Committee note the content of this report and follow up by Internal Audit.

3. DETAILS

3.1 The presumption of mainstream schooling has been the position in Argyll and Bute since before the introduction of the 2000 Act. Parental preference for local school placement led, for example, to the closure of the two hostels associated with Drummore and Whitegates whose role became limited to supporting local pupils. This policy on local placement continues to inform development in NPDO where substantial new provision for addressing special education needs is being incorporated into building design. Active consideration is also being given to the incorporation of Drummore and Whitegates schools into mainstream campuses. In addition a detailed audit of disabled access needs has been carried out in the residual schools estate and the post of Disability Access Coordinator has been established to provide effective links between education and property services staff.

3.2 Revenue budget resources and additional monies from the National Priorities Action Fund for Inclusion have been directed towards the provision of additional specialist teaching staff and special needs assistants. These staff are based in teams and are deployed to support pupils and staff in local schools on the basis of an annual formal analysis of support need. These staffing levels have been increased incrementally in response to the increasing presentation of need in schools. In addition funds allocated to Fusions (Fuller Services in our Neighbourhoods and Schools) are directed towards securing multi-agency support for children and families on a local basis to help wrap support around local school placements.

3.3 In the annual review of Records of Needs for individual pupils, school placement is formally considered and whether placement in a special school or shared between a special and mainstream school should continue. A formal note is taken of the review meeting and is acted upon.

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- 3.4 Although much is being achieved in responding to the prescription of main stream agenda, the council is likely to continue to require access to national resources of expertise and provision for children and young people with profound and highly demanding needs. These resources can and do, in terms of quality of support and cost effectiveness, provide a valuable service in conjunction with the continuum of support provision within Argyll and Bute.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Moving to Mainstream agenda is fully consistent with the well-established inclusion policy which continues to operate within Argyll and Bute. The endorsement of this approach at national policy level is welcomed.

5. IMPLICATIONS

None

For further information please contact Ronald Gould, Head of Secondary Education (01360 708528)

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