
ELECTED MEMBERS BRIEFING

COMMUNITY SERVICES

20 MARCH 2017

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

1.0 BRIEFING

1.1 This summary briefing is provided to update Elected Members on the current position in relation to the inspection of the Education functions of Argyll and Bute Council. The briefing presents an initial summary of the key information for Elected Members, followed by further detailed information on all aspects of the strategic inspection which took place in September 2016.

2.0 SUMMARY ISSUES

2.1 Elected Members are advised of the imminent publication of the Inspection report by Education Scotland on 21 March 2017. The published report will be made public, with the potential inclusion of a national press release.

2.2 The inspection process and the conduct of the inspection team have been the subject of serious and significant concerns which have been raised formally with Education Scotland. Despite a period of 6 months having elapsed since the inspection week, it is the view of officers that these have not been responded to and we are disappointed that Education Scotland have chosen to publish this contested report without having done so.

2.3 In summary the issues raised with Education Scotland include:

- The inspection team applied a revised set of quality indicators (updated QMIE2) during the inspection of Argyll and Bute Council. These were not tested, consulted on or even published prior to their engagement with Argyll and Bute (it is still not published at this time). We understand it is now to be dropped and not used with any other authority inspection;
- The notification of inspection timetable was given the day before the start of the school summer holidays which limited the engagement of school based staff in the preparation for inspection;
- The programme for inspection was changed the week prior to commencement requiring a substantial rearrangement and limited the engagement of stakeholders then involved in the inspection;
- Significant evidence of a lack of checking of statements made in focus groups or through questionnaires or triangulation of evidence to verify the accuracy of statements made. In particular this has meant that the

published report continues to feature inaccurate statements and conclusions;

- There appears to have been limited reference to the significant volume of information prepared by the council in its self-evaluation submission. That evidence would have been a source for checking a number of the statements and conclusions made in the inspection report;
- The inspection process and production of the report did not follow Education Scotland's own PRAISE framework which establishes guidelines for inspection activity;
- The inspection team featured 8 Education Scotland Area Lead Officers without any Associate Inspectors from other authority areas who are routinely used to moderate inspection from the perspective of current practitioners;
- The conduct of members of the inspection team has been raised – statements made suggest a pre judgment on outcome; adversarial approach to inspection activities; inappropriate focus on individual officers; the agenda pursued in a number of interviews/ focus groups and not relaying a very serious allegation to the Chief Executive until the conclusion of the inspection week. The allegation was able to be evidenced as false but was used by inspectors during the inspection week;
- The report has been written to support inspection gradings rather than being based on verified evidence, and
- Timescales for the inspection engagement with the Council and production of the inspection report have consistently not been met.

2.4 Council staff received an initial draft of the inspection report on the 9th December 2016, some three months after the inspection. Following the submission of a comprehensive response (14 pages) on the 24th January, the agreed submission date, we requested an urgent meeting with a senior member of staff from Education Scotland and set out the extensive concerns with the accuracy of the report, underlying conclusions and the process. This meeting took place on 1st February 2017. In addition to these extensive comments, officers supplied further information to support the concerns raised about the accuracy of the report. Education Scotland advised it would engage the members of the inspection team and arrange to meet with council staff to respond to the concerns raised.

2.5 No contact was received after that meeting prior to a telephone call to the Chief Executive on Friday 10th March 2017 advising the report would be published on 21st March 2017 and that a copy of the updated draft would be sent to him on 14th March 2017. It was advised that no follow up meeting would take place to address the concerns submitted by the council.

2.6 The Chief Executive successively spoke with the senior Education Scotland Officer with whom the council staff met in February, their Depute Director and finally the Chief Executive of Education Scotland to protest at this approach and to request that the committed to meeting took place. He highlighted that the report was still inaccurate and incorrect. He was

initially advised he had four hours to send through comments and ultimately following a hastily arranged discussion on Wednesday evening, until Friday to submit information on “factual inaccuracies” only. Education Scotland refused to delay publication of the report and to date have not given a reason for refusing to do so.

2.7 On Friday 17th March 2017 a formal complaint was submitted to Education Scotland on the process and conduct of the inspection.

2.8 The published report presents very negative evaluations of the Council’s Education provision, these are set out below alongside the self-evaluation gradings as presented to the Community Services Committee on 8 December 2016 as follows:

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

3. NEXT STEPS

3.1 The Council will arrange a special Community Services Committee to review the report received and the concerns expressed to Education Scotland at the process and outcome of the inspection. Education Scotland will also be invited to attend once a date is identified.

3.2 In response to the outcome of the inspection a range of improvement activities have been taken forward by Education Services over the last six months. The following are examples of that work which may assist members who may receive enquiries from constituents:

- 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);
- A Head Teacher Advisory Group has been introduced with the main purpose of improving communication and engagement;
- 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.

3.3 The report should correctly be considered in conjunction with the latest Quality and Standards report considered by the Community Services Committee on 8 December 2016. Within this document, the following may be helpful to note:

- All fifty four local authority and twenty two partner providers of Early Learning and Childcare have achieved the delivery of six hundred hours of Early Learning and Childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds;
- The Early Years team has targeted all settings which are graded below good, providing more regular support and challenge. As a result, Care Inspectorate grades have increased to 93% of settings reaching “good” or above as of the end of June 2016;
- Improved attendance and reduced exclusions across primary and secondary schools;
- Improved results overall in National 4 and Higher qualification awards, with an increase of 2.97% for National 4 to 96.17% compared with a national figure of 93.20% and an increase of 1.09% for Higher to 78.29% compared with a national figure of 77.20%;
- Continued implementation of the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, including the provision of a series of curriculum design days focusing on raising attainment;
- Over 56 skills for work courses delivered in partnership with Argyll College UHI, West College Scotland, local employers and local secondary schools. This provided opportunities for 535 young people to access the 56 courses which included amongst others Automotive Engineering, Health and Social Care, Sport and Recreation and Rural Skills.

- Delivery of a broader range of wider achievement qualifications accessed by 1,535 pupils across all 10 Secondary schools;
- 92.7% of young people entered a positive destination (education, employment or training) post school. Looked after Young People who leave school are increasingly entering positive destinations for example: 88.24% in 2015, compared with 77.8% in 2014, and
- Youth Service Events were attended by 9,311 young people.

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20 March 2017

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