

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

19 OCTOBER 2011

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE: EFFICIENCY REVIEW

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to advise the Education Committee of the main outcomes of a review of the operation and scope of current arrangements for supporting and quality assuring the work of schools and pre-school establishments.

**1 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (i) note the terms of this report
- (ii) note the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of this efficiency review
- (iii) note that the [full review report](#), which is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge, is attached.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 This review is set within the context of a corporate commitment to improve the efficiency and quality of the services delivered by Angus Council with due regard to the terms of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.2 The Educational Development Service (EDS) is located in Ravenswood, Forfar, with the Educational Resources (School Library) Service based in Bruce House, Arbroath. EDS has a total staff of 33.8 FTE including 11 seconded teachers in the current session.
- 2.3 EDS provides a range of advice, guidance and support to assist schools to secure continuous improvement in their work. EDS responsibilities include:
  - supporting strategic planning at authority level through the annual Education Service Plan and the Integrated Children's Services Plan
  - monitoring and supporting school self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures
  - supporting schools before, during and after HMIE inspections
  - providing advice and guidance on curriculum development, notably, at present, in respect of Curriculum for Excellence
  - the management of the Instrumental Tuition Service, the Active Schools Programme, and a range of Arts and Cultural programmes
  - providing support to schools in respect of key national initiatives including Active Schools, Youth Music, Determined to Succeed, Enterprise in Education, 16+ Learning Choices
  - developing, delivering and facilitating a broad range of CPD activities to improve learning and teaching (including co-operative learning and peer coaching)
  - supporting leadership and management development and training
  - providing advice about the recruitment and selection of school and centrally-based staff
  - developing and sustaining a wide range of partnerships with other Services of the Council, with other

education support services, with voluntary and private providers of pre-school education, with Children's Services partners, Angus College, other education authorities and external agencies

- the provision of a school library/educational resources service.

### 3 CONSULTATION AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

3.1 Between February and May 2011, the EDS Review Group gathered evidence about the value and impact of the work of EDS through direct consultation with a broad range of education service staff and other significant partners.

3.2 The following Angus staff and partners were consulted:

- all Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers of Angus primary and secondary schools
- all primary Principal Teachers and a sample of secondary Principal Teachers (Curriculum and Pupil Care and Support) (approximately 50%)
- a representative sample of Angus class teachers (approximately 10%)
- current and former EDS staff (both permanent and seconded)
- a range of key partner agencies and services (see Appendix 2).

3.3 In addition, a range of further sources of information were explored, namely:

- the EDS support and intervention database which holds detailed records of support provided to individual schools in response to requests by schools or decisions made by me or one of my senior colleagues
- school quality assurance reports
- records of CPD activity and evaluations of related events
- the 2010/11 Standards and Quality report for EDS and related evidence.

### 4 KEY FINDINGS

4.1 The main findings of this review have been grouped under **four** headings:

- Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement
- Curriculum Support, Development and Delivery
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Partnerships

The following paragraphs highlight the relevant findings under each heading.

#### **Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement**

4.2 Most primary and a majority of secondary respondents offered a positive response to the management and delivery of well-established EDS quality assurance functions and *"welcome the opportunity for professional dialogue which encourages focused, reflective thinking in relation to self evaluation"*.

4.3 The provision by EDS of key advice documents and reports relating to continuous improvement was valued by a majority of staff in both primary and secondary schools. The role of EDS in *"supporting schools with quality assurance and continuous improvement is crucial."* Most schools recognised that the *"discussions with the Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) were invaluable prior to the HMIE visit"* and that the *"QIO's support and guidance were key to a successful inspection"*.

4.4 The involvement of Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) in responding to parental queries and complaints was seen as *"giving reassurance and guidance on how to deal with difficult situations"*. Head Teachers *"felt very supported and listened to when a QIO was involved in a parental complaint"*. One head teacher of a small school felt that *"having a trusted member of EDS was a huge support in advising and guiding me"*.

- 4.5 Current and former EDS staff consulted were proud of the level of support the service provided and provides to Angus schools, a level which compares very favourably with that provided by similar services in other authorities.

### **Curriculum Support, Development and Delivery**

- 4.6 The majority of respondents reported that the role of EDS in the development of resources to support curriculum development had a high impact. In particular, "*excellent work on pedagogy and (Curriculum for Excellence) repacked outcomes*" was highlighted consistently. Also highlighted by practitioners as being "*of enormous help*" and "*extremely beneficial within the classroom*" was the extensive support and training in respect of co-operative learning, which EDS has been instrumental in promoting within Angus.
- 4.7 The contribution of visiting teachers was reported on positively by most primary school respondents, with a majority viewing their contribution as having a high impact. The work of Active School Co-ordinators was also found by the majority of respondents as having a high impact. The Educational Resource Service (ERS), managed by EDS, was considered by almost all primary respondents as a high impact service which added value to their work.
- 4.8 Senior managers of both primary and secondary schools reported through focus group discussions that major strengths of EDS related to: support offered in relation to Curriculum for Excellence, the provision of and support for CPD, and networking made possible through EDS organised activities and events.

### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

- 4.9 Most respondents viewed access to an annual CPD directory (via Angus CPD Online) as having a positive impact. The directory was found by practitioners to be "*very helpful in planning a balanced and meaningful CPD plan*". Indeed, comments about the range and quality of CPD on offer in Angus were consistently positive. That feedback is supported by the collated evaluations of CPD activities delivered by EDS staff.
- 4.10 The majority of primary respondents reported the provision of CPD relating to leadership and management as having a high impact. In particular, access to the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) and courses such as 'Keys to Management' were valued. Such opportunities were reported as having a positive impact on practice and leadership within Angus schools.
- 4.11 While centrally provided CPD is evaluated positively, it is recognised that a great deal of school-based CPD takes place within schools and school clusters. It was understandably felt that more cluster co-operation in the provision of CPD should be encouraged in order to secure greater efficiency, facilitated, as appropriate, by EDS.
- 4.12 EDS staff were proud of the diversity and quality of CPD provided by their service. The role of EDS in identifying and sharing good practice and providing practical ideas for immediate classroom application was considered a further key strength of the Angus Educational Development Service.

### **Partnerships**

- 4.13 EDS collaborates with a wide range of partners. However, only those partners with the closest sense of the services offered by EDS were directly consulted, including support services within Angus Council and key partners such as Angus College, Skills Development Scotland and NHS Tayside.
- 4.14 EDS was rated by partners, including school partners, as being good at delivering on all agreed partnership activities, with building and maintaining trust considered to be a particularly strong feature of the service's partnership working. It is clear that partners recognise and value the strong contributions of EDS to joint working. Particularly advantageous is EDS knowledge of the curriculum, classroom practice and the ability of officers to communicate effectively with schools to influence and effect change.
- 4.15 Pleasingly, working in partnership with EDS was reported by NHS colleagues as bringing added value to their work, given the knowledge which EDS staff have of the curriculum and their excellent knowledge of school issues and processes, and competing demands on teachers. "*Without the ongoing leadership of colleagues in EDS, NHS staff would be unable to implement health promoting programmes of work*".
- 4.16 Overall, partners, who were surveyed, were positive about the strong contributions of EDS to each partnership and to their pivotal role within the education service.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The work of EDS is well regarded by schools and partners. Functions reported as having high impact include:

- its management of quality assurance arrangements in terms of the support **and** constructive challenge offered to schools
- the provision of high quality and well received resources to support curriculum development
- support from specialist staff such as the Educational Resource Service, visiting teachers and Active School co-ordinators
- the provision of a wide range of positively evaluated training/CPD activities.

5.2 Next steps and areas for improvement relate to the need to:

- raise awareness among classroom teachers of the range of work which EDS undertakes
- work closely with secondary school management teams to improve the quality and consistency of school self-evaluation processes
- strengthen the operation of key network groups including secondary school Subject Network Groups (SNGS) and Curriculum Advisory Groups (CAGs)
- develop further guidance on the management of collaborative school/cluster-based CPD activities/events
- involve partners more fully in decision-making
- improve collaborative working between EDS and other support services, especially in relation to Additional Support Needs and Early Years provision

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the key recommendations arising from the review:

### 6.1 EDS functions and core business

- disseminate information about core functions more widely in order to increase awareness of the service beyond school management teams
- communicate the role of the Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) in order to provide clarity and consistency across the work of schools
- revise the model for the allocation of support to schools in order to increase consistency and responsiveness to sector-specific needs
- promote better use of performance information in both primary and secondary schools, through increased rigour and consistency during formal school engagement activities, including quality assurance visits.

### 6.2 Professional networking opportunities and procedures

- amend the role of EDS staff within CAGs and SNGs to promote greater school ownership of these networks
- make greater use of GLOW to facilitate cost-effective information sharing and professional learning among practitioners
- consider how to engage classroom teachers in collaborative research likely to impact on learning and teaching
- consider how EDS can best promote and support extended school and cluster-based CPD programmes.

### 6.3 Partnership working/shared services

- promote greater collaboration with other services and partners in order to improve service efficiency and the effectiveness of support to schools
- strengthen links with other authorities, including neighbouring authorities, with a view to exploring options for sharing services and reducing costs.

## **7 RISK**

- 7.1 The staff complement of the Educational Development Service will reduce steadily over the next three financial years. The outcomes of the EDS efficiency review will inform and support arrangements to implement commitments already in place to reduce on a phased basis the establishment of the service. In August 2008 the staffing complement of EDS was 38.6 FTE. In August 2011 that complement had reduced to 33.8 FTE. It is anticipated that, as a result of the non-filling of certain vacancies and the gradual reduction in secondments of teaching staff, the complement will reduce by a further 12 FTE between April 2012 and April 2015.
- 7.2 While these reductions pose a degree of risk in relation to the education authority's statutory duty to secure improvement in the quality of school education, the outcomes of this review, in particular, the major focus on strengthening and supporting networks within and across schools, will serve to enhance the capacity of schools to self-evaluate effectively and minimise related risks.

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no *direct* financial implications arising from this report.

## **9 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising directly from this report.

## **10 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An [equalities impact assessment](#) is not required.

## **11 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT**

- 11.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2011-2014:
- our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
  - individuals and families are involved in decisions which affect them.

## **12 CONSULTATION**

- 12.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**NEIL LOGUE  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**NOTE:** No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.