

ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

24 NOVEMBER 2011

NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR INSPECTING SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report advises the Education Committee of new arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland published by Education Scotland on 12 August 2011.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended the Education Committee:
- (a) note the terms of this report
 - (b) note that the new arrangements for inspecting schools have been established in the light of a national consultation exercise carried out in Autumn 2010
 - (c) note the details of the summary of school inspection procedures provided in section 3 of this Committee Report.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 23 September 2010 the then scrutiny agency, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), launched a public consultation on proposals for changing the school inspection framework, with effect from August 2011.
- 2.2 The proposals, which reflected key messages from the Crerar Report and Scottish Government's related commitment to a more streamlined and less burdensome approach to external scrutiny, were noted by the Education Committee at its meeting on 25 November 2010 (article 9 refers).
- 2.3 The Education Committee was advised at that time that, in my view, the proposals were likely to result in a more manageable and a less costly approach to school inspections. They were, moreover, likely to align external school inspection activity more closely to a school's self-evaluation activity, in particular, through the active involvement of school staff in carrying out aspects of the school inspection exercise.
- 2.4 On 14 October 2010, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning announced that HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) would merge into a new executive agency. It was subsequently decided that the agency would be known as "**Education Scotland**". The role of this new national body is to support quality improvement in Scottish education by:
- leading and supporting the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence
 - increasing the capacity for self-evaluation and self-improvement among education providers and practitioners
 - promoting high quality professional learning and leadership
 - identifying and stimulating innovation and sharing successful approaches widely with others
 - providing independent external evaluations of quality of the educational provision at individual providers, local authority (and partners), and national levels; and

- supporting development of the policy at a national level.

Dr Bill Maxwell, currently Senior Chief Inspector of Education Scotland, was appointed as the transitional Chief Executive of the new national body for a period of one year from 2 May 2011.

2.5 On 12 August 2011, Education Scotland published a new school inspection framework, entitled, 'Arrangements for Inspecting Schools in Scotland'. The framework document indicates that the purpose of school inspection is fourfold, namely to:

- promote improvement by supporting the school to continue to improve
- evaluate and report on the school's capacity to improve
- provide assurances to users of quality of education; and
- provide evidence for Education Scotland's national overview of Scottish Education.

2.6 The following section of this report provides an overview of the key changes to school inspection procedures, effective from the start of school session 2011-2012.

2.7 The attention of Members is drawn, in particular, to the terms of paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8 below which describe entirely new arrangements for reporting the outcomes and findings of a school inspection exercise.

3 OVERVIEW OF NEW SCHOOL INSPECTION PROCEDURES INTRODUCED IN AUGUST 2011

3.1 Education Scotland have moved school inspection commitments from a generational cycle of inspection, where a school is inspected every 6 or 7 years, to a sampling model. This means that they will sample a range of schools in an authority on an annual basis. The Director of Education and the District Inspector will agree the annual programme of inspection. It should be noted that schools may be chosen for inspection because they are believed to offer examples of very good practice or because they may need additional support or guidance to take forward planned improvements.

3.2 Primary schools will receive 2 weeks notice of an inspection; secondary schools will receive 3 weeks. The difference is due to the need to align the inspection of a secondary school with the Community Learning and Development inspection of the wider learning community.

3.3 The inspection will focus on gathering evidence in order to answer 3 **key questions** which relate to five quality indicators which feed into Scottish Government's National Performance Framework. The key questions and quality indicators are as follows:

- **How well do children learn and achieve?**
 - 1.1 Improvements in performance
 - 2.1 Learners' experiences
- **How well does the school support children to develop and learn?**
 - 5.1 Curriculum
 - 5.3 Meeting learning needs
- **How well does the school improve the quality of its work?**
 - 5.9 Improvement through self-evaluation

3.4 There is no longer a Head Teacher presentation to the inspection team at the start of the inspection. The Head Teacher, in close collaboration with the school's Link Quality Improvement Officer (QIO), will prepare a self-evaluation summary of no more than 3 A4 pages. This self-evaluation will be structured around the 3 key questions above. The Head Teacher will also be expected to identify 3 or 4 'areas of strength' for the team to explore further during the inspection. This information is sent to Education Scotland in advance of the inspection. There are helpful exemplar self-evaluations on Education Scotland's website.

3.5 A **scoping meeting** is held on the afternoon of day 1 of the inspection, chaired by the Managing Inspector. This is attended by **all** members of the inspection team as well as by the Head Teacher and the Link QIO. At this meeting, the Head Teacher has the opportunity to speak to and discuss the self-evaluation

summary. The inspection team will want to find out about the school's priorities for improvement and how these came about through self-evaluation processes. They will also want information about any progress made with specific reference to **impacts on pupils**. At this meeting, the focused areas for inspection (which the school will have outlined in the self-evaluation) will be agreed. In essence, this meeting is intended to be an opportunity for the Head Teacher and the Managing Inspector to collaborate in planning and scoping the specific activities to be undertaken during the course of the inspection.

- 3.6 The Managing Inspector can decide when the inspection should finish. As soon as he/she is confident that there is enough evidence they can decide to end the inspection. An early end does not signify anything other than the inspection team have enough evidence. As well as the Head Teacher, the Link QIO will attend the 'findings' or feedback meeting as he/she does at present. This meeting will provide feedback about the school's performance in relation to the 5 key Quality Indicators identified in paragraph 3.3 above. The Managing Inspector will highlight the school's areas for development/improvement and indicate the proposed evaluation ratings.
- 3.7 The report to parents is now in letter format based around the 3 key questions listed in paragraph 3.3 above. There will be no reference to Quality Indicator levels in that letter. The letter will, however, state '**expressions of confidence**' in the school's ability to further improve its work, using the following gradations:
- **Confident** - the school has a track record of continuous improvement and is likely to continue to improve.
 - **Partially confident** - the school has some strengths but also has some important weaknesses. Its previous track record of identifying and improving weaknesses may not be consistent and the school might need support to improve from the local Authority or Education Scotland.
 - **Not confident** – the school has major weaknesses in key areas and does not have the capacity to improve the quality of its provision. It needs sustained and comprehensive action to help address issues.
- 3.8 The formal '**Record of Inspection Findings**' (RIF) will be sent to the Director of Education and to the Chairperson of the Parent Council (read only copy). This record will include the self-evaluation levels in relation to the key quality indicators.
- 3.9 Follow-through inspection commitments will change. Continuing engagement by Education Scotland will depend on the levels of confidence expressed. It should be noted that they may continue to engage with a school to acquire more information about practice they have considered to be innovative and worthy of further exploration and not simply with a school which requires further scrutiny or support from the new national agency.
- 3.10 The provision of follow-up support to a school in relation to the findings of an inspection exercise will be the subject of detailed discussion between the education authority and Education Scotland. Such discussions could result in support provided jointly by the authority and Education Scotland or, individually, by either body.

4 RISK

- 4.1 This report does not require any specific risk issues to be addressed.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the terms of this report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from the consideration of this report.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

8.1 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 citizen
- individuals and families are involved in decisions which affect them
- individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law & Administration.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 Angus Head Teachers have already broadly welcomed these new streamlined arrangements to school inspection procedures.

10.2 The new arrangements have been clearly influenced by feedback from the 2010 consultation exercise about the importance of involving schools more directly in shaping and managing the inspection exercise.

10.3 It is likely that the 'co-production' approach to school inspections will enhance the capacity of schools to self-evaluate more confidently and more effectively, thereby improving outcomes for children and young people.

10.4 I very much welcome these much improved arrangements for inspecting schools. They represent a well considered response to the Crerar reforms of public scrutiny and to a growing expectation across public services that inspection activity should focus on self-evaluation and be based on an evidence-based dialogue between the inspection team and members of the school/service inspected.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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 any material extent in preparing the above report.