

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

16 OCTOBER 2001

INSPECTION OF THE EDUCATION FUNCTIONS OF ANGUS COUNCIL

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report draws the attention of the Committee to the forthcoming inspection of the education functions of Angus Council by HM Inspectorate of Education.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Education Committee notes the contents of this report.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Reference is made firstly to the meeting of the Education Committee on 23 November 1999 when the Committee considered a draft framework within which the education functions of Scottish Councils could be self evaluated, and inspected (Article 6 of the minute of the meeting refers). The framework is entitled Quality Management in Education (QMIE).

2.2 Reference is made also to the meeting of the Education Committee on 10 October 2000 when the Committee noted the commencement dates of the various sections of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 (Article 2 of the minute of meeting refers). Section 9 of this Act places a duty on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education to inspect Scottish education authorities on any occasion on which they are requested to do so by Scottish Ministers, or at such intervals as appear to Scottish Ministers to be appropriate. Ministers indicated in 2000 their expectation that HMI Education would, under the terms of this particular legislation, inspect every Scottish education authority in the 5 year period from August 2000 to August 2005.

2.3 Finally, reference is made to the meeting of the Education Committee on 22 August 2000 when the Committee approved the contents of "Standards & Quality in the Angus Education Service – 1999/2000." (Article 16 of the minute of the meeting refers). This publication was a self-evaluation of the education functions of Angus Council undertaken by officers of the Council.

3 PUBLISHED INSPECTIONS OF OTHER SCOTTISH EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

3.1 HM Inspectors formally launched QMIE in August 2000.

3.2 Since then, a number of Scottish education authorities have been or are being inspected. These include:

- East Dunbartonshire (report published February 2001)
- Highland (report published February 2001)

- Dundee City (report published May 2001)
 - Midlothian (report published May 2001)
 - East Lothian (report published September 2001)
 - Inverclyde (report published September 2001)
 - Shetland (report anticipated probably around December 2001)
 - Fife (inspection commencing October 2001)
- 3.3 There may be other Councils being inspected or about to be inspected, and clearly the commitment to inspect all 32 Scottish education authorities within a five year period is a major one.
- 3.4 Copies of all published HMI reports are available on the HMIE website:

www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie

- 3.5 Each report contains a detailed analysis of the Inspectorate's findings on the work of the education authority, analysed in terms of the QMIE indicators. Each report also contains sections describing:
- operational context
 - political and organisational context
 - educational provision and performance
 - staying on rate and school leaver destinations
 - 5-14 performance
 - SQA examination performance
 - attendance and absence
 - an overview of the authority's performance
 - a summary of key strengths
 - a list of main points for action
 - a classification of each of the 11 QMIE quality indicators into one of four levels

4 NOTIFICATION OF HMI INTENTION TO INSPECT THE EDUCATION FUNCTIONS OF ANGUS COUNCIL

- 4.1 On 30 August 2001, the Senior Chief Inspector of Schools wrote to the Council's Chief Executive to inform him of HMIE's intention to inspect the education functions of Angus Council during the period **12 November 2001 to 18 January 2002**.
- 4.2 The inspection team is composed of three HMI staff members, one staff member from Audit Scotland and an Associate Assessor from another Scottish Council.
- 4.3 Since receiving notification of the forthcoming inspection, contact has been made with the Inspection Team's Reporting Officer – Ms Annette Bruton, HMI. Ms Bruton has already made a personal visit to Angus (on 17 September 2001) which has been of great assistance in alerting key stakeholders to the detailed arrangements for the inspection. Ms Bruton has been anxious to offer as much information as possible about the nature of the inspection, its aims and the detailed procedures which are to be followed in undertaking it. The procedures are those which have been the subject of discussions now for some time as outlined above in Section 2. Two initial aspects of these procedures may be worth drawing to the Committee's attention:
- A Management Profile and Self-Evaluation Pro Forma have been prepared and submitted to HMIE within the timescale set by HMIE (namely before 1 October 2001). Copies of these documents are available in the Members' Lounge, and individual copies can be made available to individual members of the Committee on request (to me). Members of the Committee should be aware that the self

evaluation submitted has been based very largely on the work undertaken to prepare our published Standards & Quality Report in August 2000, although considerable work has been undertaken in attempting to ensure that the contents of that document have been updated to reflect the immense range of developments which have been undertaken by the Council since then.

- A questionnaire has been sent to all Head Teachers and to the Chairpersons of all School Boards (or Parents' Associations as appropriate). The results of these questionnaires will be analysed as part of the inspection process and my understanding is that this analysis will be made available to the Council.

5 COMMENTS

- 5.1 Angus Council has prided itself on its achievements to date and has welcomed external scrutiny to ensure that complacency does not set in. This inspection offers us a further opportunity to open up our activities to external scrutiny with a view to further improving our services in whatever ways we can.
- 5.2 Clearly a public inspection can generate a fair degree of anxiety for those most critically involved. Every effort is being made (by officers of the Council and by HMIE) to ensure that the process is fair, just and transparent, thereby alleviating any unnecessary anxiety.
- 5.3 One significant drawback to any major inspection of this type is the enormous additional workload which it creates, and already we have now had some experience of that from our efforts to prepare the Management Profile and Self Evaluation Pro Forma. In these circumstances, it will be all the more important to ensure that the additional work expended is used to best effect in identifying the most appropriate areas for improvement and in taking these areas forward.
- 5.4 Although the inspection itself is scheduled to be completed on 18 January 2002, the report on the inspection is likely to be available only some weeks or months after that (possibly March or April 2002). However, prior to publication, informal feedback will be provided by HMIE thereby allowing the Council to begin to put together a follow-up Action Plan which we will be expected to publish within 8 weeks of the publication of the HMIE Report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS

- 6.1 There are no Human Rights issues arising as a direct result of approving the recommendations contained within this report.

7 CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this Report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive and the Directors of Finance and Law & Administration. The Director of Social Work has also been consulted as one of the Chief Officers of the Council who will be interviewed by HMIE.

Jim Anderson
Director of Education

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.

JAA/CJ