

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 28 SEPTEMBER 2011

CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1** To inform Elected Members of significant changes in the arrangements for the evaluation of educational provision that has taken place at national level. It is also the intention of the report to describe how these will affect the inspection of educational establishments and services.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** One of the consistent features of Scottish Education has been the presence of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) who were present as an organisation in the 19th Century. Over the years, there have been many changes in the way school inspectors have carried out their work, although the gravitas attached to the role of school inspector has remained consistent in one and half centuries. Until 1990, when inspectors carried out a school inspection, the resultant report was absolutely confidential to the head teacher and the education authority. These reports were highly detailed and technical. During this time, it was possible for certain schools to go many decades without being inspected. From 1990, the system changed significantly, with the HMI reports becoming public documents. At this stage they remained detailed and technical. The advent of the Quality Assurance Unit in Strathclyde Regional Council however, although not a statutory body, forced a reappraisal of the way inspectors carried out their work. The result was a change to more accessible public reporting with concise documents written in plain English and easily understood, at least in intention, by parents, young people and teachers alike.
- 2.2** The statutory authority of inspectors to evaluate the work of schools lies in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended. This role was later developed to include the inspection of education authorities under The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000. As a consequence of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000 and the impetus for self evaluation, inspection and audit, activity has been intense over the last 10 years with the introduction of "generational cycles" of inspections by which schools and education authorities expect to be inspected on a cycle of 6 or 7 years.
- 2.3** Following the Crerar report, the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act of 2010 placed a duty on scrutiny bodies to co-operate and co-ordinate with each other. This was to reduce the burden of inspection and audit on practitioners. This change together with the resource implications associated

with the present economic climate has driven Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) and the Scottish Government to review the national arrangements for inspection.

3. EDUCATION SCOTLAND

3.1 In October 2010, the Cabinet Secretary announced the intention to merge Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) with Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE). By so doing, the organisational landscape of Scottish Education was simplified by the merging of the body with general responsibility for supporting curriculum development and initiatives such as GLOW (LTS) with the organisation responsible for evaluating provision (HMIE). Since it might reasonably be assumed that the product of evaluation activity should inform the next generation of plans, including strategic plans, this merger has certain logic. However, it has always been the case that inspection activity remained separate from developmental activity in the education service. It is certainly considered by many professionals that if the same body which creates policies and plans then evaluates them, there is a perceived lack of independence in the evaluations, which may be devalued as a consequence. This debate has emerged in the educational press and remains a concern for a number of educationalists.

3.2 This notwithstanding, the merger of LTS with HMIE which took place in June 2011 has enabled substantial financial efficiencies to be made from both organisations. The resulting body, Education Scotland, has fewer staff and resources at its disposal than the former separate bodies. It also has reduced capacity. The management has been unified under an Acting Chief Executive, Dr Bill Maxwell, the former Senior Chief Inspector HMIE.

4. CHANGES TO INSPECTION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 In August 2011, Education Scotland published a document explaining the new arrangements for the inspection of educational services including schools, stand-alone pre-school centres, nursery classes, community learning and development, special education, independent education and all-through schools. This document seeks to recognise the changes in the organisational environment and continues the trends in inspection that had been recently established, particularly to capitalise on the self evaluation processes conducted by educational establishments and services. It aims to achieve this with no loss of public accountability and reporting. The aim however is also to try and work with practitioners and establishments rather than to impose inspection activity upon them. To this end, the framework highlights that the purpose of inspection is to:

- promote improvement by supporting the schools to continue to improve
- evaluate and report on a schools capacity to improve
- provide assurance to users on the quality of education
- provide evidence for our national overview of Scottish Education

4.2 A significant change will be that the evaluation of a school's capacity to improve will be set out as an expression of confidence. These are:

Confident – this indicates that the school has a track record of continuous improvement and a strategy to maintain current levels of provision is likely to continue to improve.

Partially Confident – this indicates that the school while having some strengths about which inspectors have confidence, also has important weaknesses in one or more key areas. By addressing these weaknesses, there will be a positive impact on learners. The previous track record of identifying and addressing weaknesses effectively and of improving quality may not be consistently strong, but is sufficient that it is likely the school will continue to improve. Initially, it may need support from the Education Authority or Education Scotland to do so.

Not Confident – in extreme cases where there are major weaknesses in key areas, it may be necessary to state that inspectors are not confident that the school has the capacity to improve the quality of its provision. In such circumstances, a school is likely to require sustained and comprehensive action to help address the issues.

In coming to a judgement, the inspectors will address three questions:

- How well did children, young people learn and achieve?
- How well does the school support children / young people to develop and learn?
- How does the school improve the quality of its work?

The inspection team will also evaluate specific aspects of provision using quality indicators, three of which feed into the Government's National Performance Framework (NPF):

- 1.1 Improvements in performance (NPF).
- 2.1 Learners' experiences (NPF)
- 5.1 The curriculum
- 5.3 Meeting learning needs (NPF)
- 5.9 Improvement through self evaluation

4.3 From 2011/12, inspectors will move from the generational cycle of inspection where a school is inspected every 6 to 7 years to a sampling model where around 240 inspections will take place each year across all sectors. This will allow Education Scotland to report to the Scottish Government for the national performance framework. Inspectors will also inspect about 90 pre-school stand-alone centres each year. It is envisaged that local authorities and district inspectors will continue to undertake dialogue around the annual programme. A consequence of this change is that Elected Members who currently receive copies of the inspection reports relating to the establishments within their area, circulated from the office of the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, can no longer expect to see all of

the establishments in their area covered by inspection activity within 6 or 7 years. As before, Education Scotland will co-ordinate activity with the former Care Commission inspectors, now SCSWIS , in relation to nurseries. It is also planned to review, jointly, the framework for the more general inspection of children's services.

- 4.4** HMIE aim to publish a letter on their website within 8 working weeks following the end of the inspection. This marks a significant change in procedures since there will no longer be publication by the wholesale issuing of a printed document. Instead, the schools will be sent a small number of paper copies of the letter and evaluations for those parents who do not have online access. The current policy of providing a more detailed record of inspection findings (RIF) will continue in the case of schools, or record of visit (ROV) in the case of early years establishments.

A full copy of the new arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland is available on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk.

5. IMPLEMENTING THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR INSPECTING SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND

- 5.1** Chief Officers of the Department of Educational and Social Services have regular meetings with the District Inspector (DI) to discuss all aspects of the inspection programme including the results from school inspections and identifying factors relating to future inspections. These meetings are productive and helpful and will continue into the foreseeable future. It has been arranged that the DI will address Heads of Educational Establishments in September 2011 regarding the implementation of the new inspection arrangements.
- 5.2** A separate report is being submitted to Cabinet regarding management structures in the Department of Educational and Social Services particularly as they relate to the schools, additional support needs and early years functions. In suggesting these new arrangements, officers have taken account of the types of change outlined in this report. In particular, it is recognised that educational establishments and services will continue to require advice on inspection arrangements, support with their own self evaluation and improvement planning processes, and direct management challenge, in terms of the outcomes being secured for young people. The new arrangements will allow an increased focus on this type of activity while at the same time securing efficiencies in service delivery.

6. LEGAL / POLICY / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Nil.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** As with the previous set of arrangements, the outcome from establishment based inspections will feed into Audit Scotland's arrangements for shared risk

assessment on the education function of the Council. The change in arrangements therefore in no way diminishes the imperative for schools and educational services to be securing the best possible evaluations from Education Scotland.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) note that this report will be considered by the Governance & Scrutiny Committee; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

GS/JP
29 August 2011

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Anyone wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: 01563 576017 or Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: Schools on Tel: (01563) 576126.

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