

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2003

REVISED ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise Elected Members of changes to the arrangements for school inspections and to seek approval for proposals to meet the new requirements of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Presently, a report published by HMIE has, as its final section, a list of some half dozen recommendations. These recommendations are intended to form the basis of an action plan by the school and the education authority. Approximately one to two years after the publication of the report, a small team of inspectors from HMIE revisit the school to check the progress that has been made in overtaking the action plan resulting from the recommendations. A summary report is then issued by HMIE in the format of a letter that is circulated to parents, school board, staff and elected members.
- 2.2 While efficient and systematic this arrangement has for some time been regarded as not being completely satisfactory. All schools, irrespective of the quality of their provision, have been allocated similar amounts of HMIE resources in the follow-up. Secondly, educational improvement is fundamentally about a continuous process and the two "snap shots" provided by an inspection and its follow-up report are a poor way of evaluating what should be a continuing evolution. In recognition of these issues, HMIE have revised their post-inspection arrangements into a new process. As a consequence the term "follow-up" will disappear to be replaced by "follow-through" from August 2003.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 A spectrum of "follow-through" arrangements will be undertaken by HMIE. These will range from complete disengagement in some cases to more active involvement with those schools requiring a higher level of improvement. These will include:
- Disengagement by HMIE with follow-through and a report to parents directly from the education authority.
 - Follow-through by Education Authority with final report by HMIE.
 - Follow-through and report by HMIE.
- 3.2 At the end of each initial inspection, a decision will be made by HMIE on which follow-through arrangements will apply to the school from the range of

options available. This information will be included in the report to the Education Committee.

- 3.3** Which follow-through procedure to be adopted will be decided on the basis both of the school's performance and of the education authority's capacity as assessed through the inspection of the education authority.
- 3.4** At the end of each inspection, the managing inspector and the team will form a view on:
- the school's performance
 - the school's capacity to improve (leadership, improvement planning and self evaluation)
 - the capacity of the education authority to support and challenge school improvement

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR EAST AYRSHIRE

- 4.1** The revised arrangements for follow-through have implications for the Quality Improvement Team. In addition to their current role in providing an evaluative pre-inspection briefing to HMIE, the designated Quality Improvement Officer for the school will join the head teacher for feedback at the end of the initial inspection.
- 4.2** Education Authority staff will work with the school (and HMIE where appropriate) in planning further improvements, maintaining high standards and reporting to parents, elected members and HMIE on the outcomes.
- 4.3** All schools which fall due for follow-through from August 2003 to March 2005 have had their cases reviewed by the District Inspector and have been retrospectively allocated to the new follow-through arrangements. The authority has already been informed of the arrangements for follow-through for East Ayrshire schools.
- 4.4** There have already been full discussions with HMIE on these arrangements, and a detailed presentation has been made to head teachers. The already well established procedures for monitoring the general progress of schools and their fulfilment of the action plan will be further developed. This will be done in full consultation with head teachers and the teachers' unions.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1** This is a very welcome development since it recognises explicitly the capacity of East Ayrshire and individual schools to support a challenging improvement agenda. These arrangements are very much more in tune with the ideas lying behind "continuous improvement" than those that went before. Therefore the opportunity to provide a better service to children and parents is ensured.

6. FINANCIAL/LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Nil

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) approve these Authority based proposals for the follow through of HMIE inspections; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/DL
11 August 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service : Quality Improvement (01563 576089)

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