

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 DECEMBER 2016

SCHOOL EDUCATION – REVIEW AND IMPACT (A FOLLOW-UP REPORT BY AUDIT SCOTLAND)

Report by Depute Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer Economy and Skills

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Governance and Scrutiny Committee the key findings of the 'School Education – Review and Impact' report published by Audit Scotland on 20 October 2016, and to set out the progress that has been made in East Ayrshire since the original report was published in 2014.

BACKGROUND

2. Audit Scotland published its original School Education Report in June 2014. The findings of this report were presented to the Governance and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 October 2014.
3. The audit assessed how efficiently and effectively councils were using their resources to maximise pupil achievement in schools. It found that councils in Scotland spent £4.8 billion on education services in 2012/13, a fall of 5% since 2010/11. This was mainly as a result of employing fewer staff. Over the same time period, the amount spent on education in East Ayrshire reduced by 6%.
4. The report also found that levels of deprivation have a large influence on attainment. Some schools have achieved better attainment results than their levels of deprivation indicated, suggesting that the gap between the lowest and highest performing schools cannot be wholly attributed to different levels of deprivation. Closing the gap in performance between schools is likely to be critical to improving overall attainment levels.
5. In terms of performance, councils that made the most improvements during this period were found to have focused on areas such as developing leadership skills and improving both teacher quality and systems for monitoring and tracking pupil data. At this time, it was noted that councils were beginning to target resources to improve attainment and wider achievement, but that scope remained to improve strategic planning and strengthen the role of elected members in holding education services to account.
6. Following the publication of the original report in 2014, an internal review was carried out to measure the Council's position against the findings of the report. It found that the Council was well placed in terms of the key recommendations.
7. School education has remained high on the national policy agenda since the report's publication and many significant policy initiatives and developments have been introduced in the last two years. These include the establishment of an Attainment Scotland Fund and a National Improvement Framework that was designed to close the gap in attainment.

AUDIT SCOTLAND FOLLOW-UP REPORT

8. The follow-up report summarises the impact of the earlier School Education report, explaining how it has been used by stakeholders, including the Scottish Parliament and local authorities. The audit team has undertaken a number of pieces of work with Education Scotland and, most notably, contributed to the development of a new national performance framework for school education.
9. This report provides a number of examples of work which the audit team has been involved in, much of which is a direct consequence of the 2014 report. Some examples are set out below:
 - Involvement in the Education and Culture Committee's enquiry into the Education Attainment Gap in Scotland.
 - Council engagement programme. The audit team has engaged with councils to promote the key messages from the report and provide them with more detailed information at local authority level. A number of events have been organised across Scotland, which have involved both elected members and officers.
 - Contribution to national policy and legislative developments. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning stated that the report had helped to inform the Scottish Government's work on raising attainment. This includes the new Education (Scotland) Bill, the Scottish Attainment Challenge, the National Improvement Framework and the Delivery Plan for Scottish Education.
 - The checklist of issues provided for elected members to consider when scrutinising education services accompanied the report. This has proved a useful reference tool and is being built into future training and induction programmes.
10. The report also makes reference to the progress which has been made in terms of the nine key recommendations, which cover a broad range of activity, as set out in the original 2014 report. Among the recommendations include the following: development of strategies to reduce the attainment gap; establishment of performance frameworks; enhanced scrutiny from elected members; and greater use of benchmarking information.
11. Positively, it states that much good progress has been made via the Council's own priorities and strategies for improving education, such as 'Raising Educational Attainment', one of the Council's three strategic priorities.
12. The audit team is also aware that the report's findings have provided a helpful position statement to support existing plans and actions (for example, the need across Scotland to develop leadership skills and improve teacher quality).
13. The Appendix to this covering report sets out each of these nine recommendations in detail, together with a progress report for East Ayrshire. The progress report demonstrates that the Council is well placed and, indeed, has made significant progress in the last two years in areas such as workforce planning, resource allocation, performance management and elected member scrutiny.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. It is recommended that the Governance and Scrutiny Committee:
- (i) notes the contents, findings and key messages arising from the School Education Follow-up Report;
 - (ii) notes East Ayrshire's position statement relative to the nine recommendations as set out in the original 2014 report; and
 - (iii) otherwise, notes the content of the report.

Alex McPhee

Depute Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer: Economy and Skills

2 December 2016

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. School Education, Audit Scotland, June 2014
2. School Education – Review and Impact, October 2016

Any person wishing to inspect the above background papers or seeking further information should contact:

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Implementation Officer: Alan Ward, Head of Education

AUDIT SCOTLAND SCHOOL EDUCATION REPORT: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS IN EAST AYRSHIRE AGAINST KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation - Councils should:	East Ayrshire position
<p>Fully assess the potential long-term impact on attainment and wider achievement of budget reductions.</p>	<p>In its Transformation Strategy 2012-17, the Council identified three strategic priorities. One of these is 'raise educational attainment and equip our young people for the world of work'. This priority remains a key area of focus for the Education service and attainment is monitored closely, including SQA results and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) attainment levels for literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Reports on each of the Council's 3 strategic priorities are considered annually. The latest report was submitted and considered by Cabinet on 25 November 2015.</p> <p>In delivering on planned efficiencies, the Council seeks, where possible, to ensure that educational standards for all young people are safeguarded. The budget reductions which have taken place to date have focused on areas such as transport commissioning, the school estate and management and staffing, rather than front line service delivery. In employing such an approach, the Council seeks to ensure that alterations to provision are implemented without a detrimental impact on the Council's strategic aims and priorities.</p> <p>A new structure at Senior Manager level has been introduced within East Ayrshire's Education service. The end result is a structure which provides a true community of practice, which provides opportunities to share staff, resources, expertise and peer support, which will speed change and improvement, and focus on closing the attainment gap and raising attainment and achievement for all through an enhanced unit of scale. Individual establishments will retain their distinctive ethos but the six key</p>

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	<p>priorities of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) will form the focus of combined efforts of defined cluster of schools, led and managed as follows to provide a coherent 0-18 pupil experience.</p>
<p>Monitor and act on the impact of revised working practices and staff reductions across all affected groups (teachers, administrative staff, classroom assistants) on staff wellbeing by, for example, monitoring sickness absence levels, and through specific questions in staff surveys.</p>	<p>Workforce Planning is an integral part of the Council's service planning and service re-design processes and must be clearly aligned with the current and future needs of each service and the Council as a whole.</p> <p>The Education Service Improvement Plan provides the mechanism to deliver our workforce planning commitments by identifying future demand for services and establishing where there are gaps between future requirements and current arrangements, taking account of service demand, demographics, policy, and legislative changes and budgetary requirements.</p> <p>Sickness absence levels are monitored closely across all staff groups and all levels. Reports are submitted and considered at monthly meetings of the Economy and Skills Management Team and actions taken, as appropriate.</p> <p>Sickness absence is also a key metric within the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) and 2014/15 marked the first year that this measure was split between teaching and non-teaching staff. Our performance here can be compared with all other Councils in Scotland.</p>
<p>Ensure they fully understand why attainment levels vary between their schools and different groups of pupils.</p>	<p>Detailed analysis of data at the national level demonstrates that looked after children continue to have lower attainment than children and young people who are not looked after. To address the attainment challenge of our looked after children, we will be working in conjunction with The Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), based at the University of</p>

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	<p>Strathclyde in Glasgow. This body works in partnership with carers, social workers, teachers, nurses, charities, and councils to improve outcomes for looked after children.</p> <p>The new management structure, which has recently been introduced within the Education service, has resulted in more decisions being taken at a local (establishment) level, whilst enhancing the capacity of management to oversee changes. Whilst individual heads continue to be responsible for an establishment, there is now a greater commitment to raising attainment and achieving and addressing barriers to learning through collaborative effort.</p>
<p>Develop and implement strategies to reduce the gaps in performance between the lowest and highest performing schools.</p>	<p>On 9 June 2016, East Ayrshire Council was invited to become a Challenge Authority. This invitation coincided with the launch of the Attainment Scotland Fund Secondary Programme. The authority was asked to prepare a plan detailing what interventions would be taken forward over the next five years to address the poverty related attainment gap.</p> <p>An Improvement Plan for the <i>Scottish Attainment Challenge in East Ayrshire</i> has been developed which sets out all components, including costs associated with staff, resources and professional learning. The development of the plan involved significant consultation and working with head teachers and officers, and close analysis of data and our specific authority context. The plan reflects the work already underway in the Schools Programme and the successful initiatives already ongoing across East Ayrshire involving East Ayrshire Support Team (EAST) and ongoing development of literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>The draft plan identifies the aim of the Attainment Challenge in East Ayrshire. That is to close the poverty related attainment and achievement gap between children and young people from the</p>

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	<p>most and least advantaged backgrounds. To do this the plan has 4 strands which will be developed into focused action plans. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy: We aim to build on the work already underway to create literacy and numeracy rich learning environments. • Leadership for All: We aim to create a culture of positive empowering leadership for staff, parents/carers and children and young people. • Positive Health and Well-being for Life and Learning: We aim to promote and embed the information and skills needed to enable children and young people to make positive life choices. • Families Working Together: We aim to help empower families and communities to have the information and skills to make the choices that help families and communities to flourish.
<p>Continue to work with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland to develop a suite of agreed performance measures which would provide an overall picture of educational attainment and achievement across Scotland.</p>	<p>Under the revised management structure within the Education Service, the Performance Manager supports the Head of Education by establishing a Performance Framework, which includes key benchmarking on establishments/group performance linked to NIF drivers and other associated measures, including attendance and exclusion.</p> <p>In developing these performance measures, the Council works closely with all the main stakeholders, including the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.</p>
<p>Develop more co-ordinated approaches to gathering and recording information on the range of wider achievement activities offered in schools, and the levels of pupil participation and the outcomes they achieve. This will help councils to scrutinise</p>	<p>Wider Achievement in and beyond schools is providing a huge number and range of young people with fulfilling and motivational experiences. In particular, non-SQA certification is proving to be a vital route back into education and formal attainment for</p>

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<p>performance and ensure resources are used as efficiently as possible.</p>	<p>disengaged young people.</p> <p>The Education service has implemented a Wider Achievement Strategy. Electronic pupil profiles, which are based on the Learner Journey Platform, have been developed and refined.</p> <p>East Ayrshire has been recognised by the National Music Council (NMC) of Great Britain and, again, has been awarded the prestigious Major Trophy. This award recognises that the Council has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to music education provision.</p> <p>Over the last two years, we have worked with a range of partners, including the Council's Vibrant Communities Service, to develop our Wider Achievement Awards. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is now undertaken at Bronze and Silver levels. The award is being offered in 7 academies, 2 special schools and 2 community based open groups linked to the two remaining Academies.</p>
<p>Ensure education strategic documents contain clear priorities and actions that set out what is to be achieved in the short, medium and long term. Performance management arrangements should monitor outcomes and report regularly on delivery against strategic objectives, such as raising attainment among the lowest performing pupils.</p>	<p>The Education Service Improvement Plan, under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, also acts as the East Ayrshire Education Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The work of this Service contributes directly or indirectly to delivery of the three key themes of the Community Plan and, in particular, Economy and Skills and Wellbeing. The following priorities are identified within the Economy and Skills and Wellbeing Delivery Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our children have the best start in life; • Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens; • We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure residents in East Ayrshire, particularly our young people, have the relevant skills and qualifications and positive attitude needed for the world of work; and • Increase innovation and entrepreneurship. <p>In addition, the following strategic priority identified in the Transformation Strategy 2012-2017 is a key area of focus for this Service and contributes to the Vision of the Community Plan, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise educational attainment and equip our young people for the world of work. <p>Reports on each of the Council's three strategic priorities are considered annually. The latest one was submitted and considered by Cabinet on 25 November 2015.</p>
<p>Review the sufficiency of information provided to education committees on attainment at S4-S6, pupil performance between P1-S3 and wider achievement. They should also ensure committees have the time and support to adequately challenge and hold to account education services.</p>	<p>The Council produces an annual Standards and Quality report to reflect progress in a number of key areas, including SQA examination results, attainment data, leaver destinations and wider achievements.</p> <p>SQA results are reported to Cabinet annually and updates on attainment are provided periodically throughout the school session. The latest report on S5 and S6 SQA results for 2016 was submitted and considered by Cabinet on 16 November 2016. The Strategic Priorities report is provided to Cabinet annually and addresses all strategic priorities, including attainment.</p> <p>Leaver Destinations will have an increasing level of significance under the Development of Scotland's Young Workforce initiative and will in the future be included within the SQA attainment reporting via the new Insight tool.</p>

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	<p>Other reports to Cabinet include periodical updates on Business Enterprise and the annual report on wider achievement in the schools' summer term.</p>
<p>Consistently use the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework to benchmark their performance against other councils and share good practice to improve educational attainment and wider achievement.</p>	<p>The Education service is committed to measuring comparative performance through the following routine and systematic benchmarking activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool (INSIGHT); and • Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). <p>A range of measures from the LGBF is used to gauge the Council's performance against those in our benchmarking group (Inverclyde, Western Isles, West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire and Dundee City). These measures include the cost per primary and secondary school pupil, attendance and exclusions, literacy and numeracy and attainment data.</p> <p>The LGBF, together with the Council's Statutory Performance Indicators, is reported via the Council's committee structure on an annual basis. The 2014/15 combined LGBF/SPI report was submitted and considered by the Governance and Scrutiny Committee on 24 March 2016. Data for the last four financial years was provided within that report.</p>