

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	18 February 2025
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Inspection Reporting
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/25/029
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne/Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Shona Milne/Graeme Simpson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.6

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details the outcome of inspection reports published by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) and The Care Inspectorate since the last meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Notes the content of this report;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to implement continuous improvement in keeping with agreed Quality Improvement Frameworks approved at committee in July 2024; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to utilise learning from the National Thematic Report: Local authority approaches to support school improvement to inform the development of the Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Plan and Quality Improvement Framework for 2025/26.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Education Service utilises a Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) to support schools and ELC settings to achieve the standards expected by external inspection agencies. The QIF categorises schools/ELC settings as needing different levels of support based on internal self-evaluation and external scrutiny from the central team:
- Category 1/Universal includes schools/settings who have self and external evaluation identifying all core Quality Indicators (QIs) as good or better.

- Category 2 /Targeted includes schools/settings with external and or self-evaluation which has identified one or more of the core QIs as *satisfactory* or *below*.
- Category 3/Intensive includes schools/settings with external and or self-evaluation which has identified one or more of the core Quality Indicators as *weak* or *unsatisfactory*.

### 3.2 Education Scotland Inspection of Cornhill School and Nursery Class

In September 2024, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate visited Cornhill School and Nursery Class to undertake a short model inspection. During the visit they talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The very effective leadership team who provide strong direction to the school and nursery. They have created a very warm, inclusive, and nurturing ethos where all children feel genuinely included and enjoy their learning.
- The highly skilled staff team who work well together to provide motivating learning experiences across a range of environments. As a result, children engage very enthusiastically in their learning and make very good progress.
- Staff plan very effectively to meet the learning needs of all children across the school. Very effective partnership working ensures that all children benefit from a wide range of enhanced interventions to support their progress in learning.
- Children who are kind and courteous and thrive in their school community. They are proud of their school and demonstrate a very strong commitment to achieve the best that they can.
- The strong approach to tracking children's progress across the school and nursery.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Aberdeen City Council.

- Staff should continue with plans to develop progression pathways and tracking of progress across all curricular areas.
- In the primary school, senior leaders should review approaches to planning for children with part-time timetables.
- In the nursery, practitioners should review the use of space and resources to reflect the changing needs of the children.

Cornhill School was evaluated as Very Good across the quality indicators

Primary School Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Very Good (5)
Raising attainment and achievement	Very Good (5)

Cornhill staff are delighted that their hard work to develop an inclusive ethos has been recognised. Inspectors were particularly impressed with the multi-agency work in place to ensure the needs of all learners are met.

The school was in Category 2 prior to the Inspection and will now move into Category 1. The team will be given the opportunity to share their practice with others through Headteacher meetings and the ongoing work of the quality improvement trios.

Cornhill ELC was evaluated as Good across the quality indicators by the Education Scotland Team.

<b>Nursery Class Quality Indicators</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Learning, teaching and assessment	Good (4)
Securing children's progress	Good (4)

Care Inspectorate evaluations of Cornhill ELC Provision were also positive.

<b>Aspect being inspected</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good(4)
How good is our leadership?	Very Good (5)

Staff in the ELC were happy with the Inspectors findings and particularly pleased that the nurturing approaches were highlighted as a positive by both inspecting bodies. Inspectors reported that the setting was well led, and parents and children were involved in identifying and evaluation improvements.

The ELC was in Category 1 prior to the inspection and will remain in Category 1. The good practice highlighted will be shared with other settings across the city through planned ELC update sessions and offering opportunities for other practitioners to visit and talk to the team.

The full report can be found [here](#)

### **3.4 Education Scotland Further Inspection of Dyce Academy**

A team of HMIE inspectors first inspected Dyce Academy in January 2023, with a letter published in April 2023. The key priorities identified during the first inspection were to improve attainment; develop robust monitoring and tracking systems and work to improve the quality and challenge within learning and teaching.

A return visit by HMIE inspectors to Dyce Academy took place in October 2024, with the letter published on 4th February 2025. During this return visit, inspectors found a stronger culture of aspiration across the school, more effective systems to monitor progress and improve outcomes for young people and, with leadership from the headteacher, saw a significant drive to improve the quality and consistency of learners' experiences. The recognition of the progress made by the school is really pleasing, and that the priority areas

relating to monitoring and tracking and learning and teaching have been overtaken.

The final priority area focused on raising attainment. Inspectors found that the whole school strategy to monitor attainment of young people is well understood across the school and that staff are using data more effectively to target strategies to improve young people's attainment. However, it is recognised that although young people's attainment is beginning to improve in a few areas, more time is needed for the school's work to impact positively on improving the attainment of all young people.

The headteacher has created an action plan to drive further gains in attainment for young people at Dyce Academy. In summary, these include:

- Continue to improve the reliability of data in S1-S3
- Improving Literacy at Level 6 and Numeracy at Levels 5 and 6 within the senior phase
- Sustain the improvements in attainment at level 5 in S4
- Improving attainment in S5 and S6 with more young people gaining level 6 qualifications (breadth and depth measures)
- Targeting improvement for identified groups of learners in S4, S5 and S6

HMIE inspectors acknowledge that progress has been made and have confirmed that they will ask for a report on progress for Dyce Academy from the local authority within twenty-three months of the inspection. This is to allow the school time to demonstrate further attainment gains for young people.

The action plan can be found in Appendix A

The letter to parents following the visit can be found [here](#).

### **3.5 Education Scotland Inspection of Mile End School and Nursery Class**

In November 2024, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Mile End Primary School and Nursery Class to undertake a short model inspection. During the visit Inspectors talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The positive relationships evident between children and between children and staff across the school and nursery. This supports them to engage well in their learning.
- Teachers across the school ensure children experience effectively planned learning across the curriculum. All staff work well together to improve learning outcomes for children, including those with who require additional support with their learning.
- The effective approaches to tracking and monitoring children's attainment and achievements across the school.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Aberdeen City Council.

- Staff across the school and nursery should continue to improve the consistency of approaches to high-quality learning and teaching.
- Staff should increase opportunities for children across the school and nursery to extend and apply their learning in a broader range of real-life contexts
- Staff in the nursery should continue to develop newly introduced approaches to tracking children's progress across early level.

Mile End School was evaluated Good for both quality indicators

Primary School Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Good (4)
Raising attainment and achievement	Good (4)

Mile End staff are pleased inspectors could see the impact of work taken forward through their improvement plan and that effective tracking systems were recognised.

The school was in **Category 2** prior to the inspection and will now move into **Category 1**. Staff will be given the opportunity to share the positives highlighted by the inspection team through ongoing quality improvement activity.

Mile End ELC was evaluated as satisfactory across the quality indicators by the Education Scotland Team.

Nursery Class Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Satisfactory (3)
Securing children's progress	Satisfactory (3)

Staff feel that the report accurately reflects where they are on their improvement journey. Changes to key staff, both seniors and DHT, over the last 2 years has impacted on progress made. Although clear systems for planning and assessment are in place, they are not yet fully embedded and so just beginning to support staff to have a greater understanding of children's attainment and next steps. Inspectors noted their confidence that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so will make no more visits in connection with this inspection.

The ELC was in **Category 2** of the Quality Improvement Framework and will remain there following the inspection. The locality lead will work closely with the Senior Leadership Team and ELC team to support the implementation of the action plans already in place. ELC staff will be given the opportunity to visit settings with grades of good or better in order to support improvement.

The ELC action plan is at Appendix B  
The full report can be found [here](#)

### 3.6 Harlaw Academy Update

Harlaw Academy have made positive progress on addressing the three priorities from the recent HMle letter relating to leadership and improvement, learning and teaching and raising attainment. A full self-evaluation and improvement plan has now been created to build upon the *Plan on a Page* work by the school community.

Stakeholders including young people and staff are now regularly involved in working and focus groups to agree how best to take forward improvement activity. Appointments have been made to key middle and senior leadership team vacancies and roles and responsibilities have been clarified.

Staff continue to work on individual action plans related to their own professional development and a programme of quality professional learning from HMle Associate Assessors has been developed and will be delivered from January 2025.

The new tracking system to monitor progress and intervene to support young people is embedding, with improved access to quality data. The planned changes to the curriculum structure in S4 are being implemented through consultation with stakeholders and will be introduced when the timetable changes in June 2025.

A [service update](#) with further detail, as requested by Committee in November, was published in mid-January 2025.

### 3.7 Care Inspectorate Inspections

Where a setting has been subject to a return visit from the Care Inspectorate, we have included the date of their previous visit and the gradings for reference.

- 3.8 **Great Western @ Broomhill**, a funded provider setting in the Broomhill area of Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024. Inspectors noted that children were cared for by nurturing, supportive staff, who knew them well, in a welcoming, secure environment. Children were happy and enjoyed varied play opportunities. Staff supported children in their play and were being supported to further develop their skills in planning for, and extending, learning opportunities for children. Continuous improvement helped promote developmentally appropriate play spaces for children. Quality assurance practices effectively identified areas for improvement. These were actioned and evaluated for effectiveness. Children were cared for by a consistent staff team who worked well together. The Care Inspectors evaluated the service as follows:

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Very Good (5)
How good is our leadership?	Very Good (5)
How good is our staff team?	Very Good (5)

The team are delighted with the inspection feedback and have clear plans in place outlining how they will continue to develop the setting. The Locality Lead

will continue to offer universal support, as the setting will remain in **Category 1** of the Quality Improvement Framework.

The link to the full report can be found [here](#)

- 3.9 **Hanover Street ELC**, a Local Authority setting in Hanover Street School, received an unannounced inspection on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2024. Inspectors reported that children were settled and happily engaged in play and learning. They received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well. Children mostly led their own play through a well-balanced mix of activities and play experiences. The staff team were very motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to continue to take on training to develop their practice. Inspectors noted that the setting should continue to reflect on the environment both indoors and outside to ensure the children are accessing a very good range of resources to support their play and learning and offer challenge where appropriate and consider how they collate their self-evaluation information to allow the team to successfully measure the impact of developments. The Care Inspectorate evaluated the service as follows:

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation Nov'23	Recent Evaluation Nov 24
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)	Very Good (5)

The team at Hanover Street are delighted with the very positive report and will continue to work together to provide high quality experiences for children and their families.

Hanover Street ELC will move from **Category 2 to Category 1** of the Quality Improvement Framework and be given the opportunity share their practice with others through ELC manager meetings.

The full report can be found [here](#)

- 3.10 **Kingswellies Nursery**, a Funded Provider setting located in the Kingswells area of Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection from the Care Inspectorate which took place between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Inspectors noted that staff knew children well and generally used caring, nurturing approaches in their interactions with children. The children were supported well during mealtimes and personal care routines. Most children were happy and engaged in their play. Staff supported children in their play. however, it was noted that some opportunities to support children to extend their learning were missed. Children were cared for in a welcoming environment, with age-appropriate play spaces. Most quality assurance practices were effective in supporting positive outcomes for children. These could be developed further to more consistently identify areas for improvement.

The staff team were well-supported and worked effectively together. The Care Inspectorate evaluated the service as follows:

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Very Good (5)

The team are pleased with the feedback and will continue to work on their established plan to realise further improvements. The Locality Lead will continue to offer universal support, as the setting will remain in **Category 1** of the Quality Improvement Framework.

A copy of the full report can be found [here](#)

- 3.11 **Little Clouds Nursery**, a Funded Provider setting in the Nigg area of Aberdeen, received an unannounced inspection between 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Inspectors noted that children were cared for by staff who knew them well. and they experienced positive, caring relationships with the adults caring for them. All staff were dedicated and keen to improve outcomes for children.

However, inspectors noted that children's play experiences were not supported sufficiently to encourage them to follow their interests and promote suitable learning. Play activities were too often adult led and some were not age or stage appropriate. Infection prevention and control practices were identified which could affect the health and safety of children. Quality assurance practices were not effectively identifying areas for improvement. The Care Inspectorate evaluated the service as follows:

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Weak (2)
How good is our setting?	Weak (2)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)

The Locality Lead will support the service to improve, and a detailed action plan will be created to ensure all areas are addressed. The setting will be issued a Service Improvement Period (SIP) letter and will take part in the Care Inspectorate Improvement Programme. The service will move from **Category 2** to **Category 3** of the Quality Improvement Framework.

An action plan can be found at Appendix C.

A copy of the full report can be found [here](#)

- 3.12 **Kaimhill ELC**, a Local Authority setting in Kaimhill School, received an unannounced inspection on 4 and 5 December 2024. Inspectors noted that children were very well supported by staff who were consistently responsive to their needs. Good quality child led play, learning and development

opportunities were available to children throughout the day. Children enjoyed regular outdoor play which supported both their physical and mental positive wellbeing. There was a clear commitment across the team to continual improvement which helped to ensure consistent high-quality care, support and learning. Children were supported by a motivated and skilled staff team who worked together to provide high quality, inclusive experiences for all children. The Care Inspectorate evaluated the service as follows:

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Good (4)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Very Good (5)
How good is our staff team?	Very Good (5)

The staff team were delighted that their strengths had been recognised and will continue to drive improvement plans to ensure positive outcomes for the children and families. Kaimhill will move from **Category 2** to **Category 1** of the Quality Improvement Framework.

The full report can be found [here](#)

- 3.13 **Greyhope ELC**, a Local Authority setting in Greyhope School, received an unannounced inspection between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024. Inspectors noted that overall, children were settled, happy and enjoyed their time at nursery. Many had made good friendships and enjoyed laughing and playing together. Children enjoyed playing outdoors in all weathers and were supported to dress suitably for the weather conditions. Play and learning opportunities should now continue to be developed to promote children with challenge and develop their skills. Strong leadership within the service promoted a culture of continuous improvement. Staff were committed to developing their skills and knowledge.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation Oct23	Recent Evaluation Oct 24
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)	Adequate(3)
How good is our setting?	Adequate(3)	Adequate (3)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Adequate (3)	Adequate (3)

This was the first inspection since moving to a new setting and inspectors noted that staff and children are settling well into the new building and are looking forward to further developing the service. There had been a number of changes to the staff team between the inspections with 5 members moving on to other settings including one of the senior EYPs. The senior leaders attended the pedagogical leadership training from Education Scotland, and this will be followed up with support from the locality leads. Self-evaluation had improved since the last visit and families and children are now more routinely involved in providing feedback. Although there was evidence of increased challenge to extend and deepen learning this was not yet consistent with all practitioners,

and this continues to be an area for improvement. During feedback inspectors shared that they had confidence in the leadership and the plan in place to realise further improvements.

Greyhope ELC will remain in Category 3 of the Quality Improvement Framework to support the changes required to develop the service.

The full report can be found [here](#)

The updated action plan can be found at Appendix D.

- 3.14 Kittybrewster ELC, a Local Authority setting in Kittybrewster School, received an unannounced inspection in January 2025. Inspectors noted that children experienced caring and loving interactions. Their care needs were met by staff who knew them well. They were cared for in a spacious and well considered environment with direct access to outdoors. Children enjoyed appetising and nutritious snacks and meals in a calm and unhurried environment. Staff worked well as a team and were committed to improving their practice and developing the service. Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes led to improved outcomes for children.

Aspect being inspected	Previous evaluation May 23	Recent Evaluation Jan 25
How good is our care, play and learning?	Weak (2)	Adequate(3)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Weak(2)	Good (4)

Staff will continue to develop their planning approaches to ensure children experience depth and challenge in their learning. Personal plans will be further developed to enable staff to fully meet the needs of all individual children. Kittybrewster ELC will remain in **Category 3** of the Quality Improvement Framework to support processes to be embedded as they continue with their improvement journey.

The full report can be found [here](#)

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No negative environmental impacts have been identified.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve. Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *Taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Risk of not improving outcomes for learners	Positive engagement with Inspection agencies and sharing learning across the system where appropriate.	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of not complying with national guidance	Positive engagement with Inspection agencies and sharing learning across the system where appropriate.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Risk that schools/ELC settings do not accurately identify the areas for improvement that will make the greatest difference to learners	Quality assurance arrangements in place to validate self-evaluation gradings	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	High levels of assurance are taken Quality Improvement and Inspection visits	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</a></u>	
Impact of Report	
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	
Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum	

choice and implement progressive choices.  Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.	External scrutiny provides helpful assurance that there is sufficient focus on helping young people recover from the pandemic and that the school self-evaluation and improvement plan is well positioned to support a closing of the poverty related attainment gap.
<b><u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></u></b>	
Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.	Engagement with inspectors provides an opportunity to learn from national best practice and validate self-evaluation evidence available. The support and challenge received by Inspectors helps to shape improvement plans for the coming sessions in keeping with the LOIP stretch aims.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b> Regional Cultural Strategy Prevention Strategy Children’s Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan	Engagement with the Inspectorate is fully aligned to the city prevention strategy. Work to address poverty and improvement in the Children’s services plan, the Child Poverty Action Plan and the National Improvement Framework Plan is also supported through external scrutiny.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this Shona Milne, Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	No DPIA is required.
<b>Other</b>	

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Dyce Academy action plan  
Appendix B – Mile End ELC action plan  
Appendix C – Little Clouds action plan  
Appendix D – Greyhope action plan

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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