

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	14 June 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Inspection Reporting
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/089
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Eleanor Sheppard
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details how Aberdeen City schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings have engaged with Her Majesties Inspectors of Education (HMIE) and The Care Inspectorate since January 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the content of this report; and
2.2 instructs the Chief Education Officer to continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to implement continuous improvement in keeping with the Quality Frameworks.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

Education Scotland

- 3.1 Education Scotland announced plans to offer 'Recovery Visits' to schools from the end of February through to the end of the summer term 2022 rather than resume the full inspection programme due to the on-going impact of the Omicron variant.
- 3.2 The visits aimed to provide HM Inspectors with an opportunity to reflect on how ELC settings and schools continued to address the impact of COVID-19 and share best practice nationally. Inspectors also planned to explore with staff the range and quality of learning children and young people are experiencing; and the work being done to meet children's and young people's learning and wellbeing needs.
- 3.3 Given the focus on recovery, these visits would not result in a published report, moreover they would provide an opportunity for schools to seek advice and guidance from the inspectorate and potentially validate the school's own self-evaluation to support the work of the school moving forward.

- 3.4 Around one third of all city schools were keen to engage with the Inspectorate. Each visit was undertaken in close collaboration with central officers who worked with the Inspectorate throughout each Recovery Visit. All schools involved have found the process invaluable and have welcomed the engagement with Inspectors. Recovery Visits will continue over the remainder of this school year.
- 3.5 **Hazlehead Primary – 9th – 10th March 2022**
The Inspection team found a warm, nurturing ethos across the school and that children feel safe and can identify who they could talk to if they had a concern. The strong focus on the wellbeing of staff, children and parents was commended as was the increased use of the outdoors as a vehicle to deliver the curriculum and the range of partners supporting delivery. Inspectors found that Parents and practitioners have worked well together to ensure that they maintain continuity in learning for children in the ELC during the pandemic.
- 3.6 **Heathryburn Primary – 21st – 23rd March 2022**
Inspectors found that collaborative partnership working and communication is a significant strength. Senior leaders, social work, psychological services and community partners work closely together to plan and create bespoke support for children and families. Senior leaders and staff use innovative approaches to engage families in children’s learning and this is welcomed by parents and carers. Staff understand children’s learning needs well and use a range of approaches to assess, track and monitor children’s participation and engagement in learning.
- 3.7 **Northfield Academy – 18th - 20th April 2022**
The Inspectors welcomed the willingness of the Northfield Academy Leadership Team to invite Education Scotland for this visit and found that the school had accurately self-evaluated their work and validated the direction of travel identified by the school and Local Authority. Advice was given on how to streamline the number of improvement priorities to ensure maximum impact from the School Improvement Planning process. The Inspection team recognised the resilience of the Senior Leadership Team in supporting the school through the considerable challenges faced due to staffing shortages as a result of the Omicron variant.
- 3.8 **St Josephs Primary – 19th – 21st April 2022**
Inspectors noted that health and wellbeing is a clear focus for the school and senior leaders promote a positive and caring ethos with a strong focus on relationships. Distributed leadership is evident across the school. Staff have collaborated effectively and support one another well, making good use of technology. Effective tracking and monitoring is in place for all curricular areas and this provides a good strategic overview of pupil needs which staff are proactive in planning to meet. In the ELC setting strengths were noted in continuity of learning, health and wellbeing, use of digital technology and partnership with parents.
- 3.9 **Lochside Academy 26th – 27th April 2022**
During this visit, the Education Scotland Team welcomed the wealth of approaches staff and partners had used to support young people during the

pandemic and post-pandemic period. Inspectors explored with staff how to build on these approaches to ensure maximum impact on young people. Inspectors validated the next steps already identified by the school, new Head Teacher and Local Authority in relation to vision, values, communication and wellbeing.

3.10 **Oldmachar Academy 9th to 12th May**

The Education Scotland Team reflected positively on the honest, open and straightforward approach taken by the school in creating a climate for a collaborative visit. There was appreciation of the operational systems in place to support young people and staff in what has been a challenging time in education. The team of Inspectors were pleased to find that the key strategic areas they identified for improvement (values and communication, learning and teaching, curriculum, partnerships and wellbeing) were already part of the planning in place from the senior leadership team.

Care Inspectorate

3.11 The Care Inspectorate resumed their inspection model in January 2022. Adaptions were made to include a mix of in person and digital engagement although the focus and approach mirrored that of standard inspection arrangements and expectations were consistent with those prior to the pandemic.

3.12 The visits coincided with the most challenging period of staffing absence felt by the service and this undoubtedly impacted as Early Learning and Childcare settings who were often operating with few regular staff in attendance, staffing challenges were most apparent in February 2022. Settings worked exceptionally hard to prioritise business continuity to help mitigate the wider harms associated with the pandemic but the lack of consistency in staffing did impact on quality. Concerns around the timing of the inspections and subsequent impact on staff morale have been raised with the Care Inspectorate.

3.13 **Heathryburn ELC 24th January – 1st February**

This was an unannounced Care Inspectorate inspection when only 40% of the core Heathryburn ELC staffing were able to attend the ELC Provision. The following evaluations were given:

- Quality of care and support – Adequate (3)
- Quality of environment – Good (4)
- Quality of staffing – Adequate (3)
- Quality of management and leadership – Good (4)

3.14 Inspectors commented that staff interactions were warm and caring towards children. Parents spoke of a warm welcome on arrival at nursery. They appreciated the time staff took to share information with them. Parents found staff were 'friendly and supportive,' which helped build positive relationships between nursery and home. Staff were well supported by the leadership team and each other. Secured permanent posts within the school leadership team along with their high expectations meant that a clear longer-term set of goals

for the nursery to achieve excellence was in place. The Care Inspectorate asked that priority be given to ensuring personal plans are up to date, to ensure mealtimes do not feel rushed and to review supervision of the toilet areas. All areas for improvement have been addressed. [Full Report](#)

3.15 **Fernielea ELC 2nd-10th February**

This was an unannounced inspection which took place during an exceptionally challenging time due to a lack of consistent staffing, again only 40% of core staffing was in place during the inspection. The following evaluations were given:

- Quality of care and support- Adequate (3)
- Quality of environment- Good (4)
- Quality of staffing – Adequate (3)
- Quality of management and leadership – Adequate (3)

3.16 Inspectors noted that children were supported by kind staff who were pleasant in their interactions with the children. Children were supported by familiar and consistent staff when helped with their personal care. This helped children feel safe and at ease. Responsive planning had been introduced to help staff support children to reach their full potential. Parents spoke confidently about the focus week for their children and felt this helped staff get to know their child really well. Some observations of children did not always contain enough information to fully support their progress. The service recognised this was an area that required development and had planned further training and support for staff. The Care Inspectorate asked that the team quality assure their approach to the administration of medicines having found information missing in one file and the team addressed this point during the inspection. The need for on-going quality assurance and professional learning for staff was noted and is being progressed in keeping with the setting Improvement Plan. [Full Report](#)

3.17 **Hanover Street ELC 17th – 25th February**

This was an unannounced inspection undertaken when a high number of regular staff were unable to attend the setting, this undoubtedly compromised the quality of experience for children on the day. The following evaluations were given:

- Quality of care and support – Adequate (3)
- Quality of environment- Weak (2)
- Quality of staffing – Adequate (3)
- Quality of management and leadership- Adequate (3)

3.18 Inspectors reported that staff had a good understanding of the needs of families and where to access help and guidance. They worked with other agencies and organisations to ensure families received help and support. This care and attention helped support children wellbeing. Several areas for improvement were identified, however, inspectors felt that the management team demonstrated a clear vision of how they planned to improve the service. A shared set of aims provided clear values and aspirations for the nursery to achieve. The Care Inspectorate asked that consideration be given to kitchen and toilet routines to ensure that areas are kept tidy, and that end of day routines be reviewed to limit the time some children spend outdoors due to them

having inappropriate clothing. Both of these areas have been addressed. The Care Inspectorate required that staff ensure that the outdoor play area is checked for litter prior to the children accessing the space and that fixed play equipment be in good working order, the climbing frame has been put out of use to address this in the short term. [Full Report](#)

3.15 **Brimmond ELC 22nd to 2nd March**

This was an unannounced Care Inspectorate inspection. The following evaluations were given:

- Quality of care and support – Good (4)
- Quality of environment - Good (4)
- Quality of staffing - Good (4)
- Quality of management and leadership – Good (4)

3.16 Inspectors highlighted that interactions between staff and children were kind and nurturing. Children with additional support needs were supported well by staff who engaged effectively with other agencies involved in children's care. Staff felt valued by the management team who were approachable and supportive. Leaders acted as role models for the development of positive and nurturing relationships. It was recognised that the management team had a good overview of staff skills and training needs. [Full Report](#)

4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no 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?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not improving outcomes for learners	Engaging with the Recovery Visits process has provided a high levels of assurance.	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not complying with	Engaging with the Recovery Visits process has provided	L	Yes

	national guidance	a high levels of assurance of compliance with national guidance.		
Operational	Risk that schools do not accurately identify the areas for improvement that will make the greatest difference to learners	Engagement in this process will allow the central team to prioritise those schools who did not engage in the process.	L	Yes
Financial	No risks identified			
Reputational	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	High levels of assurance are taken from the visits and from current quality improvement arrangements	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement UNICEF Child Friendly accreditation.</p> <p>Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of Child Friendly City accreditation as independent inspectors will have made judgements on the extent to which children’s rights inform the work of our schools.</p> <p>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.</p>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
<p>Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p>	<p>Engagement with inspectors provides an opportunity to learn from national best practice and validate self-evaluation evidence available in schools. The support and challenge received by Inspectors helps to shape improvement plans for the coming sessions in keeping with the LOIP stretch aims.</p>

<p>Mitigating the causes of immediate and acute poverty</p> <p>Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and group</p> <p>Poverty affecting those with protected characteristics and in specific communities</p> <p>90% of Children and young people will report that their experiences of mental health and wellbeing have been listened to by 2026. This is reflected in interactions, activities, supports and services</p> <p>Improving health and reducing inequalities.</p> <p>Increasing children's knowledge and understanding of their own physical and mental wellbeing and take an early intervention and prevention approach.</p>	
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p> <p>Regional Cultural Strategy</p> <p>Prevention Strategy</p> <p>Children's Services Plan</p> <p>National Improvement Framework Plan</p>	<p>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.</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. APPENDICES

None

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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