

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	8 September 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Inspection Reporting
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/155
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 Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) and The Care Inspectorate since May 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 continued to offer 'Recovery Visits' to schools through to the end of the summer term 2022. The full inspection regime is set to resume from mid-September 2022.
- 3.2 Recovery Visits provided Inspectors with an opportunity to reflect on how Early Learning and Childcare settings and schools addressed the impact of COVID-19 and share best practice nationally. They also provided an opportunity 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. Visits comprised a mix of in-person engagement, classroom visits and on-line meetings with time spent engaging with all key stakeholders.
- 3.3 Given the focus on recovery, reports from these visits have not been published, moreover they have provided 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. A high level overview of feedback has been included for each school later in this report.

- 3.4 Around one third of all city schools engaged with the Inspectorate. Each visit was undertaken in close collaboration with central officers who worked with the Inspectorate and school senior leaders throughout each Recovery Visit. All schools involved have found the process invaluable and have welcomed the engagement with Inspectors.

Further schools who have benefited from a Recovery Visit

3.5 Manor Park School 27th – 29th April

Inspectors noted that Manor Park Primary School and Early Learning and Childcare setting has a caring and inclusive ethos, where safety is prioritised by all. Staff are nurturing and respectful in their interactions with children and demonstrate patience, kindness and empathy. They are also considerate of colleagues as evidenced by their efforts to provide practical and emotional assistance for each other during the pandemic. Children benefit from observing the positive example provided by staff and show increasing understanding and tolerance towards their peers. Effective use of additional funding has enabled a whole school approach to addressing literacy gaps by using diagnostic assessments to generate specific targets for individuals and groups. The Inspectorate endorsed the school's plans to replicate this process to address gaps in numeracy.

3.6 St Josephs 19th – 21st April

The Inspectors noted that Senior leaders have ensured a high level of continuity for children by meeting each morning to arrange appropriate cover for staff absences and that as a result there has been very little disruption to children's learning as a result of staff absence. The team commended the recent work of all teachers to collaboratively agree what high quality learning and teaching in school should look like and endorsed the school's plans to revisit this. There are robust processes in place to check children's progress and identify their learning gaps and a range of bespoke interventions available to children. The inspection team endorsed the Head Teacher's plans to develop further the use of the Circle Framework to ensure that learning environments are appropriate for all.

3.7 Westpark School – 11th and 12th May 2022

Inspectors noted that the current school improvement plan takes good account of COVID-19 recovery in relation to health and wellbeing. Pupil Equity Funded health and wellbeing interventions are impacting positively on the emotional wellbeing and attendance of almost all children who receive targeted support. Relationships are positive and supportive between adults and children and between children. Staff use the school environment well to support children's wellbeing. Staff are developing their understanding of 'trauma-informed practice'. Teachers are effectively adapting classroom routines to include emotional check ins and opportunities for reflection.

3.8 Dyce Academy 16th May – 18th May

Inspectors focused on the three key areas common to Recovery Visits of Continuity of Learning, Health & Wellbeing and Child Protection and Safeguarding. During the visit, Inspectors commented on the respectful relationships evident across the school, the continued use of technology to support learning, and the way in which tracking had identified gaps in learning and experience that were being addressed through the curriculum, support and transition. The visit provided an opportunity to validate the next steps already identified by the School Leadership Team in focusing on Learning & Teaching and promoting the voice of the young person.

3.9 Kaimhill School 23rd to 25th May

Inspectors identified that positive relationships and wellbeing underpin the school's vision and values and are a strength. Staff are very respectful and nurturing and families appreciated the extensive live and recorded online learning opportunities provided during the second lockdown. The Senior Leadership Team use school data very well to identify gaps in children's learning in talking and listening and take appropriate action including through well designed targeted support. All teachers and practitioners are highly motivated and committed to professional learning to enhance their own practice. The Inspection team validated the need to reduce the number of priorities in the school improvement plan.

3.10 Kingswells School – 30th May – 1st June

The Inspection team commended the strong and committed leadership at the school and noted that staff are well supported and confident as a result. There is a positive, child-centred ethos permeating the school. Children benefit from close, trusting relationships with practitioners and staff and tracking arrangements are highly effective. Across the school, staff are building on the strong practice in play and use of the outdoors at the early level and P2 and older children report how much they enjoy outdoor learning and the opportunities they have to play with natural materials and open-ended resources. Children feel safe and are rightly very proud of their school.

3.11 Bucksburn Academy 30th May – 1st June

Inspectors commented on the inclusive and welcoming culture clearly evident within the school and the positive relationships that existed within the school community. Parents, carers and partners referenced strong communication by the leadership team as a positive aspect of school life to Inspectors, and there was a sense that the staff team had continued with their journey of professional development despite the challenges of the pandemic. Inspectors acknowledged the work that is already well under way to enhance breadth in the curriculum and skills progression whilst also validating the future plans of the school to focus on Learning & Teaching and the continuing work as part of the Excelerate Programme.

3.12 Cults Primary 30th May to 1st June

Inspectors recognised that senior leaders track and monitor children's progress very well. Teachers use a variety of strategies and targeted interventions well to support children in aspects of literacy and numeracy and targeted resources are well deployed to support learners. A well developed

literacy progression pathway supports children with a range of needs. Staff have strong relationships and feel well-supported, listened to and valued by peers and senior leaders. There is a staff wellbeing champion in school and staff are encouraged to engage in activities such as mindfulness sessions, yoga and step challenges. During periods of remote learning, the headteacher ensured there were regular opportunities for staff to stay connected virtually and checked in on individuals who lived alone.

3.13 St Peters – 1st to 3rd June

Inspectors noted that Senior leaders and staff regularly track and discuss children's progress across literacy and numeracy and effectively deploy targeted staff where required. Targeted staff support children with individual learning plans and other identified individuals who need help with their learning well and this approach is helping to enhance universal support for children. The school effectively identifies next steps for improvement and should consider ensuring that the number of improvements are restricted to key priorities only. During the visit staff described living and working through a pandemic as a 'rollercoaster' but that they feel well supported and now tackle challenges together more readily and effectively.

3.14 Mile End School 13th – 15th June

Inspectors found that the senior leadership team lead the school well in their attentiveness to children's wellbeing and that useful wellbeing questionnaires are now helping inform school next steps. Inspectors noted that tracking and monitoring arrangements help support wellbeing and learning. Colleagues from Education Scotland asked that consideration be given to limiting the extraction of pupils from class to access targeted interventions where possible to do so in order to further strengthen the universal offer. The team validated the school's own self-evaluation and agreed that a continued focus on improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school, increasing opportunities for children to contribute and benefit from a play based curriculum in Primary 1 would support school improvement.

Care Inspectorate

- 3.11 The Care Inspectorate resumed their inspection model in January 2022 on a risk basis, as result the inspection agency are currently only inspecting if complaints or issues are raised with them. Engagement includes a mix of in person and digital engagement although the focus and approach mirrors that of standard inspection arrangements and expectations were consistent with those prior to the pandemic. At the time of writing this report no further Care Inspectorate inspections have been reported.

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 level of assurance.	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not complying with national guidance	Engaging with the Recovery Visits process has provided a high level of assurance of compliance with national guidance.	L	Yes
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>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</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>

and take an early intervention and prevention approach.	
Regional and City Strategies	
Regional Cultural Strategy	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.
Prevention Strategy	
Children's Services Plan	
National Improvement Framework Plan	

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

Name	Eleanor Sheppard
Title	Chief Education Officer
Email Address	esheppard@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	01224 522707