

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	8th November 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Inspection Reporting
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/234
DIRECTOR	Angela Scott
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 His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) and The Care Inspectorate since July 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the content of this report;
- 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; and
- 2.3 instructs the Chief Education Officer to monitor progress against the action plans put in place to realise improvements at Stompers and Flexible Childcare and report progress towards achieving the actions within 2 committee cycles.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

Education Scotland

- 3.1 His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) has resumed their full inspection regime. Aberdeen City Council has been advised that the Harlaw Academy return inspection will take place in December 2022 as intimated previously and that Danestone Primary School will be inspected week beginning 31st October. Other school inspections are likely to be received over the course of the school session.

- 3.2 In planning the approach to school return inspections, HMIE proactively and positively engaged with Local Authorities to take account of learning from inspection visits to schools over the last 30 months. As a result, Local Authority Officers will continue to form part of school Inspection teams when a school is subject to a return visit. This approach is welcome and provides an opportunity to ensure that all parts of the education system have a shared understanding of standards to support improvement.
- 3.3 HMIE has also advised of their intention to undertake two thematic reviews over the 22/23 school session, both focussed on promoting positive behaviour and organised in two phases. The first phase focusses on the recording and monitoring of incidents of bullying. The second phase will focus on successful approaches taken by settings and schools to promote and develop positive relationships and behaviour. Both reviews will help shape our work to support learners and to review our Anti-bullying policy.
- 3.4 Two Aberdeen schools participated in phase 1. The School for the Deaf was visited in September 2022 and Aberdeen Grammar School visited in October. During the visits, the HM Inspector looked at the school's key documents and guidance re bullying and discussed with the headteacher and staff the approach to recording and monitoring incidents of bullying as per the Scottish Government guidance. Inspectors also spoke with groups of learners.
- 3.5 The HM Inspector who visited the School for the Deaf commended the approaches being taken and advised of their desire to record a best practice case study for publication. The considerable progress made since the appointment of the new management structure across ASN and Outreach Services was evident. The information available in the school guidance was triangulated across all focus groups of learners and staff. The inspector could see and feel all approaches discussed and felt the strong preventative approaches to bullying were appropriate for the context and took into account school values, deaf education and the health and wellbeing curriculum.
- 3.6 Inspectors commended the work being undertaken by Aberdeen Grammar School and identified it as sector leading. The range of helpful and impactful guidance available to staff was recognised. The Inspector is keen for the school to record a best practice case study to help guide work nationally. The Head Teacher of Aberdeen Grammar School is currently working with Officers to implement plans to share this sector leading practice across all secondary schools.
- 3.7 The information gleaned from all 35 visits will help shape a national report due to be published later in the year. The national reports will be shared with Members as a service update when published.
- 3.8 The Education Reform Bill will be introduced in this parliamentary year. The Bill will establish a new independent inspectorate which will remove the Inspectorate from Education Scotland and introduce a new operating model for the new Inspection agency. Members will be advised of the implications of the Bill on the inspection process when known. The Bill is wide ranging and extends beyond the Inspection agency, a report will be presented in January

2023 to ensure that Members have sufficient oversight of the progress being made to reform education.

Care Inspectorate

3.9 The Care Inspectorate continue to generally inspect on a risk basis, leading to a higher proportion of settings being inspected where complaints or issues have been raised with them. Members should be aware that this is likely to result in a higher proportion of inspections resulting in negative outcomes in the short term. Engagement includes a mix of in person and digital engagement although approach and expectations are consistent with those in place prior to the pandemic.

3.10 **Stompers Childcare Services** were inspected in June 2022. Stompers are a Funded Provider and help deliver 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare to children in the Bridge of Don area. Inspectors found that children experienced inconsistent interactions. Although some of these interactions were positive and supported them to feel relaxed, happy and settled, others were not respectful or responsive.

Children did not experience an environment which was homely, well cared for, clean and welcoming and quality assurance arrangements were not effective. Inspectors also noted that the mix of staff skills across the setting did not ensure staff in leadership roles were consistently positive role models.

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?	Unsatisfactory (1)
How good is our staff team?	Weak (2)

A link to the full report is available below. The Early Years team are working with the setting to secure the required improvements and will monitor progress against the agreed Action Plan developed by the Service contained in Appendix A. Considerable progress has been made to date.

[Inspection report](#)

3.11 **Orchard Brae Holiday Club** was inspected in July 2022. The club is operated by Aberdeen City Council and is a collaboration between education and children's social work and caters for some of those with the most complex needs over the school holiday period. Inspectors noted that children and young people experienced extremely warm, caring and nurturing support from all staff. Children and young people were all very happy, engaged and having fun taking part in various activities both indoors and outdoors.

Children and young people's choices were supported well through a balance of planned and spontaneous play experiences and resources. Positive relationships with families supported continuity of care and effective

partnerships. There were very clear personal plans in place which reflected children and young people's individual care and wellbeing needs. The indoor and outdoor environments were clean, bright and welcoming and of a high quality. Inspectors asked that quality assurance processes be further embedded to secure sustained improvements across the service but noted that staff were highly motivated to provide a service of a very high standard and were extremely flexible, supported each other and worked well as a team.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Very good (5)
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)

A link to the full report is available below. Staff should be commended for the high quality service delivered over the school holiday period.

[Inspection report](#)

- 3.12 **Loirston ELC Provision** was inspected in July 2022 and is operated by Aberdeen City Council. Inspectors found that children experienced nurturing care and support, had fun and were engaged in their play. Clear personal plans were in place which reflected children's individual care and wellbeing needs. Inspectors felt that daily communication with parents could be further improved.

Effective staff deployment within the service meant that children's individual needs were being met by the right number of staff. The management team had a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and their families.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Very good (5)
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)

A link to the full report is available below. Staff should be commended for the high quality service being delivered to children in the Cove area.

[Inspection report](#)

- 3.13 **Flexible Childcare Services Scotland** were inspected in July 2022. Inspectors who visited the Funded Provider found that staff were pleasant in their interactions with children and that children were cared for in a bright and spacious environment. Staff did not demonstrate the skills, experience, and knowledge to effectively support children's health, wellbeing, and safety. Children were not provided with resources and experiences to engage and sustain their thinking and learning. Quality assurance processes and self-

evaluation were not effective in promoting continuous improvement and good outcomes for children.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Unsatisfactory (1)
How good is our setting?	Weak (2)
How good is our leadership?	Unsatisfactory (1)
How good is our staff team?	Weak (2)

A link to the full report is available below. The Early Years team are working with the setting to secure the required improvements and will monitor progress carefully against the Action Plan developed by the Service and contained in Appendix B. The Care Inspectorate informally visited the setting in September and were assured that significant progress had been made against the recommendations.

[Inspection report](#)

- 3.14 **Walker Road ELC provision** is an Aberdeen City run provision and was inspected in early August. Inspectors found that staff had kind and caring intentions towards children and that some positive relationships had been built. There were limited opportunities for children to explore and extend their learning, solve problems and be curious about their world. Staff were not implementing effective infection prevention and control guidance or supporting children in safe hygiene practices. Inspectors also found that quality assurance processes were ineffective and did not have a positive impact on the quality of children's experiences. There were gaps in some staff skills and knowledge which meant they did not fully understand some children's needs or did not always act in a way that supported their learning.

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?	Weak (2)
How good is our staff team?	Weak (2)

A link to the full report is available below. The Early Years team are working closely with the setting to secure the required improvements and have put in place considerable additional resource to help model and structure the learning environment and practices required to delivery 1140 hours of ELC. The Early Years team will carefully monitor progress against the Action Plan contained in Appendix C.

[Inspection report](#)

3.15 The roll out of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare during the pandemic has undoubtedly impacted on the quality of provision in some Early Learning and Childcare settings. This is thought to be due to a range of factors including:

- The establishment of new ELC teams when access to Senior Leadership support was limited due to Senior Leaders being required to cover classes to ensure business continuity
- Considerable recruitment of new staff
- Some new Senior Early Learning and Childcare practitioners taking some time to adjust to the responsibilities of their new leadership post
- General adjustments to new working patterns and new delivery models
- A period of adjustment as staff implement accountability structures
- Children being more unsettled due to their limited socialisation over the last 30 months

3.16 The education service continue to support ELC settings to improve quality and have action plans in place to drive improvement where appropriate.

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 and take an early intervention and prevention approach.</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>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

Appendix A – Action Plan for Stompers
Appendix B – Action Plan for Flexible Childcare Solutions
Appendix C – Action Plan for Walker Road

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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