

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

---

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	23 May 2023
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Inspection Reporting
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CFS/23/146
<b>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>	1.1.1

---

### 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 March 2023.

### 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

#### 3.1 **Education Scotland inspection of Harlaw Academy**

Harlaw Academy was subject to a return inspection in December 2022. During the visit, Inspectors talked to parents/carers and children, worked closely with the headteacher and staff and visited classrooms to see how young people were being supported. Taking this approach enabled them to triangulate evidence to support their evaluations. Inspectors looked at particular areas which had been identified in the original inspection and other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the Head Teacher.

The inspection team found that the school had made some progress since the original inspection against the areas for improvement :

- Streamline approaches to improvement so that self-evaluation activities clearly identify priorities which will make the biggest difference to outcomes for young people.
- Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment so that young people's experiences engage them and meet their needs.

Develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.

- Strengthen approaches to monitoring young people's progress across all subject areas so that staff at all levels have a clear overview of learners' progress. Continue to raise the attainment of young people at all stages.

The local authority has been asked to complete a report on progress in the next 12 months. This report will inform any decision around further engagement from HMle at Harlaw Academy. There is a need for the school and Central Officers to carefully monitor progress at Harlaw Academy against plans already in place and Officers have established monthly progress meetings with the Head Teacher to support this. Officers will provide Committee with an update on progress before the end of 2023. The school will be asked to make use of the Logic Model to support more effective monitoring of impact as they review their Improvement Plan for 2023/24. The link to the letter to parents can be found [here](#).

### 3.2 **Education Scotland inspection of Dyce Academy**

Dyce Academy was inspected week beginning 31 January as part of a short model of inspection which looks at two of the key quality indicators over three days. During the visit, Inspectors talked to parents/carers and children, worked closely with the headteacher and staff and visited classrooms to see how children were being supported. Taking this approach enabled them to triangulate evidence to support their evaluations. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work:

- Friendly young people who enjoy positive relationships with staff across the school. They demonstrate the school values of responsibility and respect around the school and in lessons.
- Enthusiastic teachers who support learners within a welcoming environment. They provide helpful access to digital technology resources to enhance learning and teaching.

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

- Improve attainment and increase expectations for all young people.
- Develop more robust systems to monitor the attainment and progress of all young people.
- Improve the quality of learners' experiences throughout the school. This should include teachers planning more challenging and relevant learning experiences that allow learners to make better progress as they move through the school.

The school secured the following gradings against the Quality Indicators.

School Quality Indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	Satisfactory (3)
Raising attainment and achievement	Weak (2)

The link to the full report is available [here](#). HMle expressed confidence in the Head Teacher, who joined the school only 5 weeks before the inspection, to lead the improvements required, and will return to review progress within 18 months. The Logic Model developed to guide improvement at the school is available in Appendix A and good progress is already being made. An update on progress will be provided before the end of 2023.

### 3.3 **Care Inspectorate Inspections**

The Care Inspectorate continue to inspect on a risk basis, leading to a higher proportion of settings being inspected where complaints or issues have been raised with them.

- 3.4 **Broomhill ELC**, an Aberdeen City run provision, was inspected in January 2023. Inspectors noted that most staff knew children's needs and preferences well. Most children experienced nurturing care from staff. Staff were improving how they planned for children's learning and their observations of children's learning. Children enjoyed the benefits of a bright, spacious, and newly built nursery building. Most children had fun and experienced a range of interesting play activities. Inspectors concluded that improvements already identified by the setting, such as improved communication with parents, should be driven forward in a timely manner.

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?	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)

A link to the full report is available [here](#). The staff team were delighted that their nurturing approaches were highlighted and will work to drive forward the areas already identified. The Action Plan is available in Appendix B. Staff continue to make good progress in driving the improvements forward.

- 3.4 **Rocking Horse Nursery** is a Funded Provider which operates from a purpose-built building within the campus of University of Aberdeen. Care Inspectorate carried out an unannounced inspection over 2 days at the beginning of February. Inspectors noted that children experienced kind, nurturing, supportive interactions with staff. Flexible and inclusive approaches helped to ensure that children received the support they needed. Children were supported to follow their interests in their play and learning. Quality assurance

processes were having an impact but needed to be further developed to promote continuous improvement.

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?	Good (4)
How good is our staff team?	Very Good (5)

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

- 3.5 **Kirkhill ELC**, an Aberdeen City run provision, was inspected in March 2023. Inspectors noted that children benefitted from light, bright playrooms and direct access to a large outdoor area. Inspectors noted that quality assurance processes and self-evaluation were in the very early stages of promoting continuous improvement to help secure positive outcomes for learners. The Inspection team noted that some staff would benefit from developing their knowledge and skills further to enable them to better meet the needs of individual children. A detailed action plan (Appendix C) is helping to drive forward the areas for improvement. Considerable initial focus has been placed on restructuring the internal environment to support learners, establishing more robust personal plans, delivering staff training and progressing work to permanently fill senior leadership positions to ensure the capacity and capability is in place to secure the required changes.

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 can be found [here](#)

- 3.6 **Abbotswell ELC**, an Aberdeen City run provision, was inspected in March 2023. Inspectors reported that children were well supported by staff who were consistently responsive to their needs. Staff knew the children well and this showed in how each child was supported. Children benefitted from a variety of very positive play and learning opportunities supported by skilled staff and a rich learning environment. There was strong leadership at all levels and this supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children and families to reach their potential. Children benefitted from

a motivated and committed staff team who demonstrated high quality engagement with children at all times.

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 can be found [here](#).

Given the positive inspection outcomes, staff at Abbotswell Early Learning and Childcare provision will be asked to share their approaches with other Early Learning and Childcare settings.

- 3.7 **Forehill ELC**, an Aberdeen City run provision, was inspected in March 2023. Inspectors noted that a shared vision was in place that reflected the settings values, aims and objectives. All staff cared for children and were keen to provide a high-quality level of support, although the inspection team identified some variability in terms of approaches to supporting and extending the learning of individual children. The team must now give consideration to how staff are deployed to ensure that all children's learning needs are met, consider how best to utilise the internal environment to support learning and encourage children to make choices and implement consistent quality assurance and self-evaluation processes to secure further improvement.

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

A detailed action plan ( Appendix D) is attached to address the areas for improvement. Good progress is being made. A link to the full inspection report can be found [here](#)

- 3.8 **Flexible Childcare Services (Tillydrone)** is one of Aberdeen City Council's concession partnerships. The Care Inspectorate visited in February 2023. Inspectors noted that children received warm and nurturing care from staff. The environment was welcoming, bright and well maintained for children and their families. Staff were enthusiastic about their roles and provided a relaxed and happy atmosphere for children. Staff must now give consideration to further

developing quality assurance systems to ensure they become embedded in practice, to fully support improvement which is focused on positive outcomes for children.

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?	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)

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

- 3.9 **Orchard Brae ELC**, an Aberdeen City run additional needs service, operates across 2 separate sites at the Ashgrove Centre and Orchard Brae School. The service was inspected in March 2023. Inspectors noted that there was varied practice across the two settings with one of the two sites providing high quality learning opportunities; this was less evident in the other. Inspectors found that there were gaps in some staff skills and knowledge resulting in a lack of appropriate understanding of how best to support the next steps in learning. The service has begun work to address the inconsistencies through reviewing the deployment of staff, ensuring consistent routines and procedures across both sites and standardising planning and protocols. Support and challenge visits have been undertaken by Central Officers and Locality Leads as part of the Quality Improvement process and there is early evidence of progress. A detailed action plan (Appendix E) is attached to support the service to address the areas for improvement.

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 inspection report can be found [here](#)

- 3.10 **Heathryburn ELC**, an Aberdeen City run provision, was inspected in February 2023. Inspectors noted that some staff required additional training and support to ensure a consistently nurturing approach. They acknowledged the improvements to lunch arrangements made since their last visit, and suggested additional changes to ensure all children enjoy relaxed and purposeful mealtimes. The Inspection team found that the outdoor environment created

good opportunities for learners to explore their ideas and suggested that this approach could be better replicated in the indoor environment. Inspectors noted that since their last visit improvements had been made to the use of personal plans and that these now support children's overall wellbeing. Since the inspection, staff have been focussing on improving the indoor environment and implementing the recommendations to improve the lunchtime experience. A detailed action plan (Appendix F) is attached to address the areas for improvement and very good progress is being made against it.

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

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

- 3.11 **Bruce Nursery** is a Funded Provider setting. Care Inspectorate carried out an unannounced inspection in March 2023. Inspectors noted that children generally experienced kindness and warmth in their relationships with staff. Children were supported to learn in an interesting, stimulating environment. Parents reported being happy with the positive relationships staff had fostered with them and their children. Staff worked well together to meet the children's needs throughout the day. Inspectors suggest that staff need to focus on developing and embedding more robust quality assurance processes to support on-going improvement.

Aspect being inspected	Evaluation
How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate (3)
How good is our setting?	Good (4)
How good is our leadership?	Adequate (3)
How good is our staff team?	Good (4)

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

- 3.12 The education service continue to support ELC settings to improve quality and have action plans in place to drive improvement where appropriate.
- 3.13 The variation in inspection outcomes is being addressed through a revision of approaches to quality improvement and an alignment of professional learning

opportunities to the core Quality Indicators. A proposed approach will be presented to Committee in July.

#### 4.0 Children's Social Work

4.1 Aberdeen City Council Children's Social Work delivers a number of services that require to be registered with the Care Inspectorate. These services are routinely inspected by the Care Inspectorate to ensure that they are delivering high quality care to the children and young people. In addition, the inspections examine the quality of the professional support and development opportunities provided to staff.

4.2 The Care Inspectorate use a six-point scale when evaluating the quality of performance across quality indicators:

<b>6 – Excellent</b>	Outstanding or sector leading
<b>5 - Very Good</b>	Strengths
<b>4 – Good</b>	Important strengths, with some areas for improvement
<b>3 – Adequate</b>	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
<b>2 – Weak</b>	Important weaknesses – priority action required
<b>1 – Unsatisfactory</b>	Major weaknesses – urgent remedial action required

4.3 The framework is designed to support care services in self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is a core part of assuring quality and supporting improvement. The process of self-evaluation, as part of a wider quality assurance approach, requires a cycle of activity based around three questions:



4.4 The framework ensures the voice of children and young people who use the services are central to our self-evaluation. In addition, it focuses on the support and needs of the staff/ carers who deliver care. The nature of inspections

undertaken by the Care Inspectorate on our regulated care services are either “Unannounced” or “Short Notice”. In effect this means that all of these services require to be inspection ready at all times.

#### 4.5 Marchburn Children’s Home

Marchburn Children’s Home was inspected on an unannounced basis over 3 days at the end of February and beginning of March 2023. The inspection focused on two quality indicators:

- How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?
- Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life.

For both quality indicators the service was evaluated as **Very Good**. This very positive outcome was reinforced with no noted ‘Requirements’ or ‘Recommendations’, where it was felt improvement could be made.

The key messages from the inspection noted

- Young people were cared for by a highly skilled, experienced and competent team who were thoughtful, nurturing and trauma informed in their approach.
- Continued support for young people who had moved on from the service was a real strength.
- Young people benefited from staff who had a proactive response to risk and who had strong collaborative relationships with external agencies

As well as promoting the principles reflected in “Staying Put Scotland”, placement duration reflects the core values and ethos of care for our residential homes. This includes a robust and systemic matching process. Our ethos is based on a therapeutic approach based on Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP). Using this approach with young people helps and supports them to recover from trauma and prevent further harm. The report also reflected the positive relationship staff sustained with young people who have moved on from our care.

There has been a very low level of placement breakdown - under 3% between 2020/2022. The benefits of this approach and matching process is evidenced by the number of long term placements and as young people move on, the increasingly successful sustaining of accommodation/tenancies as well as the increased number in further and higher education.

The recruitment of staff to residential child care is a local and national challenge. Staff report that caring for young people in a residential setting is often hugely rewarding, they also recognise the complexity and challenges associated with the role. In collaboration with Robert Gordon’s University and colleagues in People and Organisational Development attempts to grow the residential workforce are actively being pursued. However, responses to recent activity highlights this will not be quickly or easily resolved.

#### 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?
<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	High levels of assurance are taken Quality Improvement and Inspection visits	L	Yes

	reputational risk to the Council			
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</a></u>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p>Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and implement progressive choices.</p> <p>Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.</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><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></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><b>Regional and City Strategies</b></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 Dyce  
Appendix B – Action Plan for Broomhill ELC  
Appendix C - Action Plan for Kirkhill  
Appendix D - Action Plan for Forehill  
Appendix E - Action Plan for Orchard Brae  
Appendix F – Action Plan for Heathryburn

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Shona Milne/Graeme Simpson
<b>Title</b>	Chief Education Officer
<b>Email Address</b>	shmilne@aberdeencity.gov.uk
<b>Tel</b>	01224 522000