

ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
25 NOVEMBER 2010
HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION: MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS
REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report brings to the attention of the Education Committee details of a consultation exercise about proposals to further change the school inspection framework and of the establishment of a new national executive agency, within which HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) will be located.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:
- (a) note the terms of this report;
 - (b) note the arrangements made by HMIe to carry out an online consultation exercise in relation to further changes to the school inspection framework introduced in 2008;
 - (c) note and endorse the proposals to further streamline that framework summarised in paragraph 3.3 of this report;
 - (d) note that Head Teachers have been asked to encourage as many staff as possible to participate in this online survey which is available at:
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/generic/School+Inspection+Framework+Review>
 - (e) note the decision by the Scottish Government to establish a new executive agency comprising *initially* Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Learning and Teaching Scotland.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2008, HM Inspectorate of Education made considerable changes to the way in which it inspects schools. In light of those changes, inspections are now shorter and there are more opportunities for dialogue between members of inspection teams and school staff both throughout the exercise and in the course of the final feedback stage. Two other major changes in the way schools are inspected relate to a sharper focus on a school's own self-evaluation and the publication of succinct formal inspection reports. These reports simply now highlight the key findings of the inspection. HMIe recognise, of course, that Head Teachers and their colleagues need more detailed information than that provided by a succinct public reporting format and now issue, one week after the publication of the inspection report, both to schools and the local authority detailed records of inspection findings (RIF). These documents offer valuable advice to local authority staff and to Head Teachers and their colleagues in preparing inspection follow-up action plans.
- 2.2 The introduction in 2008 of a more streamlined approach to school inspection was undoubtedly due in part to the recommendations of the Crerar Review Report, published in September 2007. In June 2006, Scottish Ministers commissioned Professor Lorne Crerar to evaluate the system of scrutiny of public services in Scotland. The Scottish Government has responded positively to the main recommendations of Professor Crerar's report which concluded, inter alia, that, in order to be effective, a public scrutiny system needs to be robust, proportionate, risk-based, have a strong focus on self-evaluation, be open to the views

of users and potential users of services, be less burdensome, less costly and, where appropriate, involve fewer scrutiny bodies than the system in place prior to 2007.

- 2.3 On 6 November 2008, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth published a statement about the changes to be introduced in the light of the Crerar Review Report. In that statement, he highlighted the Government's commitment to a public scrutiny landscape in which "service providers would be responsible for robust self-evaluation of their activities" and in which "a small number of scrutiny bodies should support this self-evaluation".
- 2.4 On 23 September 2010 HMIE launched a public consultation on proposals for changing the school inspection framework, with effect from the Autumn of 2011. These proposals reflect the key messages of the Crerar Report and Scottish Government's commitment to a more streamlined, less burdensome approach to external scrutiny.
- 2.5 In March 2010, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning announced a ten point plan designed to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. That plan was targeted in particular at secondary schools which, it was felt, required a higher level of support to manage the changes and the expectations of the new school curriculum in Scotland. Responsibility for delivering support in accordance with the Cabinet Secretary's plan lies largely with HM Inspectorate of Education. As Elected Members are aware, in order to take forward that plan, HMIE have postponed all inspections of local authority secondary schools in the period August 2010 to December 2010.
- 2.6 In May and June 2010, District Inspectors were in discussion with education authorities to agree a programme of support to be delivered by mid-December 2010. The report programme which I have agreed with Angus Council's District Inspector comprises:
- visits to two secondary schools to gather information about their implementation to date of the new curriculum
 - literacy and numeracy workshops targeted at secondary Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers, the purpose of which is to support secondary school senior management teams to develop effective literacy and numeracy approaches across the curriculum
 - literacy and numeracy workshops targeted at Principal Teachers of Language and Communication and Principal Teachers of Mathematics, the purpose of which is to support these colleagues in leading the planning of literacy and numeracy learning programmes in line with the expectations of the new curriculum
 - training workshops for Head Teachers, Quality Improvement Officers, Community Learning and Development Managers and Principal Officers of Education support services in relation to self-evaluation procedures, school improvement strategies, the management of pupil transitions and partnership working
 - direct leadership support to one secondary school senior management team which has experienced significant personnel changes over the last two sessions
 - support to the education service's Extended Support provision.
- 2.7 The involvement of HMIE in this Curriculum for Excellence support programme may explain, in part, the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning on 14 October 2010 of a decision to establish a new executive agency, the Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency to be formally launched on 1 July 2011.
- 2.8 The following paragraphs provide an overview of the key elements of the developments described above.

3 CONSULTATION PROPOSALS FOR A NEW HMIE SCHOOL INSPECTION FRAMEWORK TO BE INTRODUCED IN AUTUMN 2011

- 3.1 It is the view of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education that the time is right to review and make further changes to the streamlined approach to school inspections adopted in 2008.
- 3.2 This interest in further streamlining the inspection process reflects a commitment to support the principles set out in the Scottish Government's response to the Crerar Review. In order to do this, HMIE are minded to move towards inspections that vary in size relative to the needs of schools and pre-school settings.

Understandably, proposals for further streamlining school inspection activity are also designed to assist HMIE to respond to the financial challenges facing all public bodies in the years ahead.

- 3.3 The online consultation exercise is being conducted via a brief user-friendly questionnaire designed to seek the views of consultees on proposals to:
- move to a smaller sample of schools to be inspected each year, while still ensuring “high-risk” schools are included in the inspection programme
 - focus the inspection on aspects of provision most important in improving the learning experiences and the achievements of pupils
 - increase the involvement of learners and parents in the inspection process
 - increase significantly the involvement of staff in the actual conduct of inspection exercises
 - produce clear and more accessible reports
 - introduce a shorter period of advance notice for inspections.
- 3.4 In my view, these proposals, if taken forward, are likely to result in a more manageable and a less costly approach to external inspection. They are also likely to enhance the role of school self-evaluation in securing continuous improvement in the performance of schools. Inspection activity will be much more closely aligned with the quality improvement commitments of schools than has previously been the case. The streamlined approach, which is being promoted through these consultation proposals, is likely to result in inspection being increasingly seen as part of the routine range of performance management approaches needed by schools to ensure that they are well placed to deliver high quality experiences and outcomes for learners.
- 3.5 This consultation exercise is a welcome opportunity for parents, pupils and staff to have their say about the future of school inspections in Scotland, and indeed, to influence the shape of a new school inspection framework. I have, therefore, written to Angus Head Teachers asking them to encourage their colleagues to respond to the simple online questionnaire which will remain open until 17 December 2010.

4 THE CREATION OF A NEW AGENCY TO LEAD SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

- 4.1 On 14 October 2010, Colin MacLean, the Scottish Government’s Director of Learning, wrote to Directors of Education and Chief Executives. In that letter, Mr MacLean confirmed the decision of Scottish Government to establish the Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency, initially bringing together Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education and Learning and Teaching Scotland. Mr MacLean’s letter was accompanied by an annex which summarises the main terms of the Cabinet Secretary’s decision in relation to this new agency. That annex is provided as an appendix to this report.
- 4.2 This new national agency is expected to undertake a key role in leading and driving Curriculum for Excellence. In the view of the Cabinet Secretary, it is an ideal time to review the current national arrangements to support the education system with a view to ensuring that the Government’s ambitions for Curriculum for Excellence are realised.
- 4.3 The decision to bring together *initially* two national agencies, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education and Learning and Teaching Scotland is designed to bring together the expertise of two agencies which currently have quite separate responsibilities for providing support to the education system. The wording of Mr MacLean’s letter implies that one or more other national agencies may join the new Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency at a future date. As with the proposals to further streamline school inspection activity, the rationale for the decision to establish this new national agency is in part economic. It is absolutely clear from the Cabinet Secretary’s statement that there is a commitment to achieve simpler, more effective public services and to identify ways of delivering services as efficiently as possible.
- 4.4 Detailed work will take place between now and the end of December 2010 to finalise the scope, functions and structure of this new body. It is reasonably clear that the initial operation of the new agency will build upon the work, currently undertaken mainly by HMIE but also by Learning and Teaching Scotland to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in secondary schools, described in paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 of this report.

- 4.5 It is worthwhile noting that, while the Cabinet Secretary's statement makes reference to a review of Learning and Teaching Scotland undertaken in 2008-2009, no report detailing the outcomes of that review, has been published to date.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the consideration of this report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from the consideration of this report.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The issues contained in the report fall within an approved category that has been confirmed as exempt from an equalities perspective.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Single Outcome Agreement:
- young people and adults in Angus maximise their potential through learning opportunities (National Outcome 3)
 - children and young people in Angus will have access to positive learning environments and opportunities to develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem to the fullest potential (National Outcome 4).

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law & Administration.

NEIL LOGUE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Appendix

CREATION OF A NEW EXECUTIVE AGENCY TO LEAD SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

Michael Russell, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, today announced a radical overhaul of support for the education system in Scotland.

A new executive agency – the Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency - is to be established, initially bringing together Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS). This exciting development will ensure that the best possible national level systems are in place to provide support and challenge to teachers, other practitioners, schools, colleges, local authorities and others as we move forward with Curriculum for Excellence.

Its role will be to:

- Lead and drive forward Curriculum for Excellence;
- Encourage and support effective innovation;
- Inspire practitioners and managers to meet new challenges and to be comfortable about doing so;
- Ensure that quality, standards and outcomes for learners are continually driven upwards to deliver educational excellence;
- Provide the necessary assurance to parents and others that Scottish education really is playing the key role it needs to in facing the challenges of the 21st century.

Mr Russell commented: "Scotland will face multiple challenges throughout the 21st century. We live in a rapidly changing, globally competitive, world and we need to prepare young people to deal with these challenges. Our education system is a crucial component of this and Curriculum for Excellence will ensure that it plays its part.

"The new agency will have a key role in leading and driving Curriculum for Excellence. We are requiring teachers and other practitioners to adopt new working practices and approaches. Successful delivery will stand or fall on the capacity of teachers and others to innovate, and to enrich the learning experience for all. It is therefore an ideal time to revise the current national arrangements to ensure that they support the innovative practice we are demanding of the system. Alongside all that is being done to deliver CfE the new agency is a further demonstration of my commitment to achieving this.

"HMIE and LTS currently provide excellent services to the system and I have great confidence that, by bringing this expertise together to refocus that national support, we are creating a new whole that is richer and stronger than the sum of its initial parts. Following the review of LTS in 2008-09 and the current consultation on the inspection framework by HMIE, the new agency will be well placed to deliver what is needed to lead Curriculum for Excellence, to support innovation and dynamism throughout the system and in doing so to make a major contribution to raising standards overall. We need to be ambitious in what we want to achieve in Scottish Education and this is one step to help achieve that ambition.

"In addition, we are committed to achieving simpler, more effective public services and the creation of the new agency provides an opportunity contribute to this, recognising that we have a responsibility to identify how we can deliver services as efficiently as possible. We may decide to incorporate other functions at some point in the future."

HMIE is currently undertaking a consultation on its inspection framework, with a closing date of 17 December 2010 and the results of this, taken together with the outcome of the review of LTS announced in 2009, will be invaluable in informing the first steps of direction for the new agency.

Further and more detailed work will be carried out between now and the end of the year to define the scope, functions, structure and leadership of the new agency. The agency will be operational from 1 July 2011.