

Aberdeenshire Council

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Contents	Page
Introduction	i
1. The aims, nature and scope of the inspection	1
2. What are the challenges for the Council?	1
3. How good are attainment and achievement of learners and how well are they supported?	3
4. What impact has the authority had in meeting the needs of parents, carers and families, staff and the wider community?	10
5. How well is the authority led?	15
6. What is the Council's capacity for improvement?	20
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Quality indicators	23
Appendix 2 – Performance information	24

Introduction

The education functions of each local authority in Scotland were inspected between 2000 and 2005. A second cycle of inspections began in 2006 taking a proportionate approach using the findings of the original inspection and other information subsequently available. Section 9 of the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* charges HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, to provide an external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local authority in its quality assurance of educational provision within the Council and of its support to schools in improving quality. Inspections are conducted within a published framework of quality indicators (*Quality Management in Education 2*)¹ which embody the Government's policy on Best Value.

Each inspection is planned and implemented in partnership with Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission for Scotland. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the *Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000*. It provides services to the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

The inspection team also includes Associate Assessors who are senior members of staff currently serving in other Scottish local authorities.

¹ *Quality Management in Education 2* (HM Inspectorate of Education 2006) is a framework of self-evaluation for Local Authority Education Services.

1. The aims, nature and scope of the inspection

HMIE inspects the education functions of all 32 councils within Scotland as part of its commitment to inspect and report on the quality of education and to help secure improvement. HMIE reported on an inspection of Aberdeenshire Council in January 2005. In the period since the publication of that report HM Inspectors have worked with senior officers of the Council to monitor progress on the main points for action arising from the 2005 report. The main period of the inspection was during September and October 2007. This report refers to progress since the 2005 report as well as looking more widely at education across the Council.

During the inspection, HM Inspectors visited the neighbourhoods of Westhill and Alford to sample the impact of the work of the authority. The inspection team also met with a range of staff working in neighbourhoods in Fraserburgh and Mearns. The inspection included the evaluation of the quality of educational psychology provision in the authority.

2. What are the challenges for the Council?

Context

Aberdeenshire is one of the biggest authorities in Scotland and one of the least deprived. The population is predominantly rural and is increasing steadily, particularly in areas around Aberdeen. There has been an increase in the number of areas with high levels of deprivation. The challenges facing the Education, Learning and Leisure (ELL) Service include the recognised need to create a culture of self-evaluation at establishment level, improve aspects of attainment and strengthen partnerships with public and voluntary sector partners.

Aberdeenshire has the sixth largest population of Scotland's local authorities and covers the fourth largest geographical area. The population of around 234,000 has increased steadily since 2000 and is distributed across several large towns and many small, scattered rural communities. Around 28% of Aberdeenshire is classified as remote, which has major implications for the delivery of public services. The number of young people aged under 16 is projected to decrease by 8.6% by 2014. At the same time, the population aged over 60 is projected to experience significant growth of over 39% compared with a 17% increase across Scotland as a whole. The towns and villages within commuting distance of Aberdeen City are growing in population, with resultant demands on housing, schooling and associated community facilities.

Aberdeenshire is one of the least deprived areas in Scotland. The overall proportion of pupils in primary and secondary schools entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. However, in the period from 2004 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of areas identified as experiencing multiple deprivation. Areas of particular need are mostly in wards in the Fraserburgh and Peterhead areas in North Aberdeenshire. The level of unemployment in Aberdeenshire is below the Scottish average and the rate of long-term unemployment is well below it. Compared to elsewhere in Scotland, there are higher percentages of jobs in agriculture, forestry and fishing, and production and construction.

The percentages employed in finance and business, and in the public sector are below the Scottish averages. Average earnings are broadly similar to the Scottish average.

The ELL Service had identified a number of challenges and had begun to address these through its Service Plan. Stated priorities included the continued need to develop integrated children's services in partnership with key public and voluntary sector partners, ensure consistently high attainment across all schools, improve the quality of the school estate and promote a culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

Political and organisational structure

At the time of the inspection, there were 68 elected members across the Council and a total of 19 multi-member wards. The administration had been formed in partnership between Liberal Democrat and Conservative members. The inspection took place against a backdrop of major changes within the education service. Following the appointment of a new Director of Education and Recreation (E&R) in February 2007, agreement had been reached to set up a new structure, based on the expansion of Heads of Service to six and the creation of three Area Offices. The service was currently engaged in rolling out the new structure. In May 2007, the Education and Recreation (E&R) Committee changed the name of the service to Education, Learning and Leisure (ELL).

Since May 2007, Aberdeenshire has been led by a partnership of Liberal Democrat and Conservative members. Over half of the elected members in the Council were newly elected. The ELL Service is the largest of the Council's services. The ELL Committee comprises 14 elected members, with teacher and church representatives. Very large financial issues or any expenditure outwith the approved budgets are reported to the Policy and Resources Committee. ELL policy issues are also discussed at each of the Council's six Area Committees to ensure a local dimension in the setting and monitoring of ELL policy.

In May 2004, the E&R Committee agreed to a comprehensive series of staffing and organisational changes, with a view to increasing the service's capacity. An HMIE report on the educational functions of Aberdeenshire Council was published in January 2005. A new Director of Education and Recreation was appointed in May 2005. He left the employment of the Council in October 2006. The changes to the structure of the education service agreed in May 2004 had not increased the Council's capacity to support and challenge schools. An Acting Director of Education and Recreation and external consultant were in place until the current Director took up post at the end of February 2007. The new Director moved quickly to design a new management structure and improve the quality of the service. The decision was taken to strengthen the capacity of the service by adopting an area-based structure. At the time of the inspection, six Heads of Service and a number of Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) had been appointed. A Directorate Management Team had been established to provide strategic leadership and direction for the service. This team, which included the six Heads of Service, the Support Services Manager and the Principal Accountant, was led by the Director.

3. How good are attainment and achievement of learners and how well are they supported?

Improvements in performance

Overall performance in this area was good. The authority's performance in SQA examinations was strong in most secondary schools. There had been improvements in the attainment of primary pupils in 5-14 in reading, writing and mathematics in a significant number of schools. There was scope for further improvements in primary attainment. Pupils' attainment in writing in S2 had not improved.

The authority was successful in ensuring that pupils benefited from regular school attendance. Rates of absence in primary and secondary schools within the authority were lower than those in comparator authorities² and nationally. Fewer pupils were excluded from schools in Aberdeenshire than in comparator authorities and nationally.

In the pre-school sector, the quality of provision was evaluated as good or very good in the majority of centres inspected in the last two years, but there were considerable variations, particularly in aspects of provision across partnership centres. In around a quarter of pre-school centres, important weaknesses had been identified in areas such as children's progress and development in learning, the arrangements to meet children's needs and the quality of leadership.

From September 2005 to September 2007 HMIE inspection reports on authority primary schools had been variable. In almost all primary school inspections, a number of aspects of provision had been evaluated as good or very good. These aspects included the quality of teaching, leadership, climate and relationships, and the promotion of equality and fairness. In most primary schools, pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was good but there was scope for improvement. HMIE inspection reports for secondary schools had identified a number of positive areas such as the quality of teaching, partnership working, guidance arrangements and pastoral care. Aspects for further development in a number of primary and secondary inspection reports included self-evaluation, the structure of the curriculum and the extent to which the needs of all pupils were met fully.

The attainment of primary-aged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics was good and improving. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment and an increasing number of pupils achieved these levels earlier than might be expected. By the end of S2 in secondary school, the majority of pupils were achieving national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment in mathematics and reading had shown signs of steady improvement.

The authority had not yet been successful in improving secondary-aged pupils' attainment in writing. Just over half attained appropriate national levels in writing by the end of S2. Common weaknesses in the five inspection reports in secondary schools in Aberdeenshire in the period September 2005 to September 2007 were the quality of attainment, particularly in S1 and S2, and self-evaluation.

² The term 'comparator authorities' refers to the group of education authorities which are comparative to each other in terms of socio-economic and demographic factors.

In all measures of attainment at S4 to S6, pupils in most Aberdeenshire secondary schools had achieved better than pupils in comparator authorities and nationally. The authority's performance in SQA examinations, including the attainment of pupils with additional support needs working at Access Levels 1, 2 and 3, was consistently high. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF³ Level 3 or better and at Level 4 or better by the end of S6 had steadily improved since 2003. The authority had ensured that pupils who were looked after⁴ attained well. The proportion of pupils attaining three or more and five or more awards at Level 6 by the end of S6 had declined in 2007. Authority staff had not yet been successful in closing the gap between the lowest attaining 20% of pupils and the rest. In a number of subjects including accounting and finance, biology, chemistry, business management, and graphic communication, attainment was consistently high at a range of levels in SQA examinations. Attainment in art and design, music and physical education had been inconsistent in secondary schools across the authority.

The number of learners achieving The Duke of Edinburgh's Award through groups operated in schools, youth centres, clubs and open award centres was increasing significantly. Over 1,700 young people, including young people with additional support needs, had been registered with The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in session 2006/2007. There were also improving trends in the number of Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards in schools, and Youth Achievement Awards, particularly for pupils in special schools.

The authority had been successful in ensuring effective transitions for learners moving into employment and further training. The proportion of pupils leaving school and not entering employment or further training was very low, had been decreasing, and was below national levels and those of comparator authorities.

Almost all schools which were part of follow-through arrangements after inspection made effective progress. In two secondary schools, HM Inspectors did not consider that sufficient progress had been made in bringing about necessary improvements. As a result, HM Inspectors had extended the follow-through process beyond the normal two year period.

A recent HMIE inspection report on the quality of community learning and development (CLD) in the Ellon area showed a variable picture. Overall this was positive with some aspects of provision requiring further improvement. The work of authority staff was judged to be having a very good impact on the learning of young people and adults.

Impact on learners

The impact of the authority's work on learners was good and improving. Partnership working arrangements were increasingly well developed at school network level and across the authority. The authority had introduced a variety of well-judged measures and initiatives to ensure that the needs of all learners were taken into account. Pupils with a

³ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

⁴ The term 'looked after' in this report includes all children looked after or looked after and accommodated by the Council.

range of additional support needs were very well supported in special schools, locality bases and mainstream schools. CLD staff worked effectively with secondary-aged young people to increase their confidence and develop their citizenship skills. The authority had identified the need to build on emerging good practice to ensure greater consistency in attainment and achievement across all establishments. Overall, authority staff effectively promoted the wider achievement and personal development of all learners, including adult learners.

Learners of pre-school age

The authority worked with a wide range of partner providers to make effective provision for pre-school children. The *Childcare Partnership* effectively coordinated provision by the local authority, support agencies, and voluntary and private sector providers. In line with the authority's policy of inclusion, there were a small number of specialist centres for children aged 0-5 with additional support needs. The authority and its partners met the identified need for additional support through increased staffing levels and specialist service support. The *Childcare 4 All* initiative effectively supported childcare providers when they were working with pre-school children with additional support needs.

The authority's partners gave valuable support to children aged 0-3 and their families, either in their homes or in local community groups. The *Childcare @ Home* project provided childcare to enable parents to enter employment. Volunteers in five *Home-Start* projects visited children and their families and gave practical help and support. Library services personnel and *Surestart* staff had successfully delivered early literacy programmes for very young children and their parents. This support included well planned *Bookstart* initiatives which had been successful in encouraging pre-school learners to access the library service and had developed their literacy skills.

The authority recognised that the quality of early years provision was variable in pre-school centres and partner providers. Most establishments and agencies shared information on children's development effectively and used this information to identify children's needs and address them appropriately. This good practice was not yet implemented consistently. The authority had introduced a range of initiatives to ensure better impact on the early development of pre-school learners. These initiatives included better regulation of deferred entry and more systematic approaches to support vulnerable two-year olds and their families. The authority had put in place appropriate procedures, to ensure that pre-school learners transferred effectively to primary school.

Primary-aged learners

The authority had worked well with a number of partner agencies to ensure that primary school pupils were supported to become confident, healthy and responsible citizens. Staff in primary schools used a variety of stimulating approaches to promote pupils' awareness of good citizenship. All schools used pupil councils to seek and act on pupils' views. Most schools had successful mentoring and buddy schemes. Pupils had responded well to these initiatives. HMIE inspection reports identified the quality of pastoral care as very good in almost all schools and described pupils in Aberdeenshire primary schools as happy and confident individuals.

Library staff had worked with the Early Intervention Team to provide a range of valuable assistance in developing pupils' reading achievements. This work included the provision of native language *Bags of Books* to pupils for whom English was an additional language. Cultural Co-ordinators worked successfully with staff in primary schools to provide a range of activities to foster pupils' creativity and understanding of Scottish culture. This initiative included art and drama activities in after school care settings and work with a drama company in 34 primary schools to perform a Scots historical drama. School staff and Active Schools Co-ordinators had effectively promoted pupils' awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Almost all primary schools in the authority had achieved Health Promoting School status.

ELL staff, local Rotary Clubs, health professionals and local police had cooperated in the development of the Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre. This was a successful initiative with the aim of warning pupils in rural schools of the dangers of substance misuse. Primary pupils had a sound understanding of their responsibilities for looking after their environment. Almost all primary schools had gained Eco School status in recognition of their work in this area. One school had gained a national environmental award for its success in cleaning up the local area. Across the authority there were examples of very good practice in which schools were well placed to deliver the approaches of *Curriculum for Excellence*⁵. Education authority staff recognised the need to ensure that this effective work was developed consistently across all primary schools.

Features of good practice: Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre (ALEC)

Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre (ALEC) is a partnership between the Education, Learning and Leisure Service, Life Education Centres and Aberdeenshire Rotary Clubs. The partnership works closely with other relevant agencies including Grampian Police school liaison officers and school nurses. The project aims to improve nursery children's and primary school-aged learners' awareness of health issues, particularly the dangers of substance misuse.

The project was the first of its kind in Scotland. Two trained educators worked from two mobile classrooms, providing education sessions for pupils, staff and parents. In addition the mobile classrooms were available for use at weekends for community events. An evaluation of the impact of the initiative, carried out by Aberdeen University, indicated positive responses from pupils and staff in the 120 primary schools involved. These included enhancing teachers' capacity to tackle health education issues.

More detailed information is available at www.hmie.gov.uk.

The authority was committed to ensuring that all pupils were educated within appropriate mainstream provision. Authority staff had recently launched a comprehensive policy framework on additional support needs which brought together a set of national initiatives. They had provided very clear advice, guidance and materials including the range of *Pathways to Policy* packs for practitioners to supplement the policy. The support materials

⁵ The *Curriculum for Excellence* programme outlines the purposes and principles of the curriculum 3-18 to provide a framework within which improvement to Scottish education can and should be made.

were successful in helping staff to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly at key transition points. The work of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) had a very positive impact on the experiences of primary and secondary-aged learners. School staff were positive about the support and advice they received from EPS staff. This advice and support included useful guidance on how best to meet the needs of individual children and young people. All schools had effective staged intervention processes, which ensured that pupils who experienced difficulties with aspects of learning were identified and supported appropriately. Support for learning teachers and auxiliary staff provided very effective additional support for pupils within mainstream primary and secondary schools. The Aberdeenshire Staged Intervention Supporting Teaching (ASSIST) programme was impacting positively on pupils with low level behavioural difficulties.

Features of Good Practice: Consultation

The Educational Psychology Service based its service delivery to establishments and partners on a “Consultation” approach. This approach is staged, structured and collaborative. Consultation involved the psychologist supporting those who had raised concerns or issues as a means of developing practical solutions that are then implemented and evaluated. A core principle of consultation was ensuring that those who are best placed to implement an intervention are involved in its development. Children, young people and their families were active participants in consultations and the approach was well suited to multi-agency work. The approach drew upon solution-focused, person-centred planning, appreciative enquiry and cognitive-behavioural principles. Although the approach is most often used to support learning and teaching, it can also be used in other contexts such as strategic planning at an authority level.

More detailed information is available at www.hmie.gov.uk.

Secondary-aged learners

Arrangements to support pupils, particularly vulnerable pupils, in the transition from primary to secondary schools, were very effective. The arrangements to ensure that secondary school staff built effectively on all pupils’ prior learning were not yet consistent. Evidence from HMIE inspection reports indicated that pupils’ learning experiences and attainment varied considerably across secondary schools and between subject departments within schools.

Secondary school staff developed pupils’ enterprise skills through a wide range of activities. This included the successful *Devil’s Cauldron* event, which effectively showcased enterprise work from secondary schools, and supported a number of local and national charities. In some schools, staff worked closely with local businesses, and this partnership significantly enhanced pupils’ learning experiences. There were productive working relationships between CLD and school guidance staff to support the personal development of young people. Most schools offered a broad range of lunchtime and after school activities, particularly for sports and music, which had a positive impact on the development of a wide range of skills. Police and other organisations had carried out safe driving programmes for young people across the authority to try to address the high casualty rate on local roads.

There were examples of good practice to support secondary-aged learners within community school networks (CSNs). Social work staff and community police officers worked well with school staff to inform them of issues concerning young people in the community. This was successfully bringing together information on young people and families, to allow for faster, more appropriate support to be delivered to young people. This effective partnership working enabled school staff to build up a more complete picture of young people's achievements and enabled them to support young people's learning more appropriately. The emerging good practice in CSNs had the potential to have a significant impact on the life chances of individual young people. The CSN initiative remained at an early stage of development and progress had been slow in ensuring that all young people in Aberdeenshire benefited appropriately.

The authority developed pupils' citizenship skills and confidence by engaging them in a variety of decision-making committees and forums. Pupil councils and youth forums had been established across all authority areas, and these had a positive impact on young people's experiences. A large number of young people were involved in volunteering opportunities across the authority area. Their involvement had been promoted and encouraged through effective community involvement programmes in schools, sports coaching, and engagement with CLD staff. Schools and youth work projects delivered peer education training, and supported young people in the development of counselling skills. These activities effectively developed pupils' confidence and enhanced their skills as responsible citizens.

The authority had significantly improved its provision for information and communications technology (ICT). The available bandwidth for use in secondary schools across Aberdeenshire was now one of the best in the United Kingdom. As a result, learners benefited from very fast connections to the Internet. There were examples of good practice in which school staff in rural communities used ICT effectively to support pupils' learning.

A broad range of youth work opportunities was available, which had a very positive impact on young people's personal development. The authority had put in place a range of accreditation awards to recognise young people's wider achievements. Authority staff had undertaken effective partnership work with Youth Scotland to increase the number of young people gaining Youth Achievement Awards and Dynamic Youth Awards. More remained to be done to build on this good practice, and make use of all available awards to accredit the achievements of all young people appropriately.

The authority supported secondary-aged learners very well in making the transition to college sector, employment and higher education. There were important strengths in the partnerships that all secondary schools had formed with colleges. This had widened the curriculum in schools, particularly for vocational courses, and was helping to meet the needs of local employers, notably in the oil industry. Almost all secondary schools were either presenting or preparing to involve pupils in skills for work courses. As appropriate, pupils could attend college for part of the school week, or after leaving school. In order to support shared provision between schools and colleges, three secondary schools had synchronised their S5/S6 pupil timetables on one day of the week. An overall strategy group managed these links very effectively.

Effective links had been developed with colleges to improve curricular opportunities for higher-attaining pupils through provision of Higher level courses in philosophy and psychology, and provide better progression routes for pupils into higher education. Authority staff worked well with staff in Aberdeen College and Banff and Buchan College to support CLD work in various locations across the authority. They had collaborated effectively to make secondary-aged learners aware of the wide range of career choices available to them. A high proportion of pupils left school to attend college education, including training linked to skilled jobs in industry. This proportion had been increasing significantly and was above national levels and levels in comparator authorities. The proportion of secondary-aged learners entering higher education was also above that of comparator authorities and national levels but had declined significantly in 2006.

Features of good practice: Links with the college sector

The authority made effective use of partnership working with a range of colleges, including Aberdeen College and Banff and Buchan College, to ensure Skills for Work provision for secondary-aged learners, and to deliver vocational and enhancement courses. School staff and Aberdeen College staff had worked with Robert Gordon's University to develop flexible routes to degree courses, allowing young people to move into employment at appropriate points during the courses.

College staff worked well with community learning and development staff to identify and meet a range of learners' needs. Aberdeen College was delivering courses at over 100 locations in Aberdeenshire.

More detailed information is available at www.hmie.gov.uk.

The authority worked well with partner agencies to ensure very positive outcomes for looked after children. The attainment, progress and attendance of this group of learners were well monitored and tracked in primary and secondary schools. The authority made effective use of specialist tutors who could access CLD provision to work with individual learners. All newly qualified teachers in Aberdeenshire received useful training which assisted them in deploying appropriate learning and teaching approaches for this vulnerable group of pupils.

Adult learners

CLD staff provided high quality, accessible adult learning opportunities both directly and in partnership with a range of providers. These activities had positive outcomes for participants in their personal, family, work and community lives. Community-based adult learning opportunities were available across the authority area in a broad range of subjects. Almost all participants gained new skills and most progressed onto further courses.

Authority staff worked well with Aberdeen College staff in delivering an extensive range of leisure interest courses in local communities. CLD staff were successful in targeting more vulnerable learners, particularly parents, through programmes delivered within pre-school settings. These programmes included the *Pirates* programme in Ellon. This involved a range of agencies, including local library and swimming pool staff, in effectively supporting families to learn together. The authority had not yet ensured that provision of adult learning,

including support for families, was fully integrated with the support provided by schools. There were helpful courses for learners for whom English was an additional language. These courses encompassed learning about the local community and how to access available services. Learners progressed onto community learning classes such as confidence building and painting and drawing. Authority staff had recognised that courses did not attract a high number of male adult learners. As a result, they were developing courses on digital inclusion and parenting skills for men. The *Aberdeenshire Adult Literacies Partnership* was very effective, and had improved engagement with adult learners. Partnership staff had improved adult learners' levels of literacy and gave appropriate recognition for learners' achievements and progression.

4. What impact has the authority had in meeting the needs of parents, carers and families, staff and the wider community?

Impact on parents, carers and families

Overall, the authority's impact on parents, carers and families was good. Parents were supportive of their local schools and were positive about the quality of education which their children received. The authority had recognised that a few parents felt that they had insufficient knowledge of, or involvement with, improvement priorities or future plans for education. As a result, authority staff had taken active steps to communicate with parents and involve them more actively at school and community level.

In almost all schools inspected since September 2005, partnerships with School Boards, parents and the local community were judged to be good or better. Questionnaires issued to parents and carers during these inspections showed that most respondents thought that the authority recognised the achievements in their local schools. Most respondents felt that the authority treated parents, carers and families equally and fairly. Around a third were not aware of the authority's priorities or future plans for education.

Aberdeenshire Childcare Information Service, working with other agencies, had produced *Under 8s*, a very helpful handbook. It offered parents and professionals a comprehensive guide to pre-school provision and support within their local area. Most parents identified positively with their local schools. The authority had recognised that a few parents felt that they had insufficient knowledge of, or involvement with, developments across the authority as a whole. As a result, authority staff had taken effective steps to ensure that parents and carers became more actively involved in its work. They had implemented a series of 'road shows' in schools throughout Aberdeenshire. Helpful presentations at these meetings provided opportunities for parents and carers to learn more about the work of the authority and its plans for the future. Recently, authority staff had met groups of parents across Aberdeenshire to consult them on developments in the school curriculum. These meetings benefited from the personal involvement of the Director, senior officers, and the Chair of the ELL Committee.

There were examples of effective parental involvement in the work of the authority. These included the formation of a strategy group to respond appropriately to the *Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006*. This strategy group included representatives from a range

of parent groups and was led by an officer of the authority. The group's work had ensured that parents across the education authority knew about the details of the Act and their own roles and responsibilities within it.

With the support of the authority, most schools had formed, or were in the process of forming, a Parent Council. The authority had consulted parents and involved them appropriately on the actions required to implement *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004* (ASL). Parents of children who had additional support needs felt that this process had led to appropriate support being provided for their children. These parents believed that they were well involved in decisions which affected their children and felt that the EPS had been very supportive. The authority had successfully involved parents in a working group which had developed the authority's strategy for pupils with autism spectrum disorders.

The authority had a range of successful initiatives in place to involve specific groups of parents in supporting their children's learning. A variety of projects including *Blokes and their kids into books*, and *Bilingual tales* had increased parental involvement in a number of important aspects of children's learning. There was not yet an overall strategy which could build upon these successful examples to ensure that all schools consistently engaged parents in supporting their children's learning.

The Council's *Compliments, Comments and Complaints* procedures applied to all aspects of the work of the Council, including education, and staff followed them well. Authority staff were reviewing these procedures to ensure that information about the nature, pattern and trend of complaints relating to education could be gathered and analysed appropriately.

Impact on staff

The authority's impact on staff was good. Since the appointment of the current Director, staff motivation, confidence and morale had improved. There was a very good range of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for staff across most sectors. There was very effective support for newly qualified teachers. The authority had placed an appropriate emphasis on developing leadership and mentoring and had taken steps to further improve the system of professional development and review. Staff had responded well to the new leadership structures and were very supportive of the new framework for improvement set out by the Director and his team.

A number of effective initiatives had improved the extent to which staff felt valued. The Director had ensured high visibility and direct contact with a range of staff. He had extended attendance at area days to communicate with key staff from schools and other services. He had visited a large number of establishments, and attended a number of events across the authority.

Evidence from the pre-inspection survey indicated strong support from staff about the work of the authority. Responses from headteachers were largely positive. Almost all agreed that senior staff showed a high level of commitment to improving education and that the authority was well led. Headteachers were positive about the staff development they had received and most thought that there was effective training for aspects such as leadership and

supporting improvements. A majority felt that the authority was effective in disseminating good practice about how to improve the quality of education. Centrally-deployed staff were very positive about aspects of the authority's work. Almost all thought that the authority actively promoted equal opportunities and was well led. The majority of centrally-deployed staff agreed that they had good opportunities to be involved in decision making.

The CPD Unit organised and delivered a wide range of relevant training and development activities. The opportunities for joint training between education staff and other services had been increased. CLD staff did not yet have access to the wide range of courses which were available to staff in schools. The authority had recognised the need for specific training for staff to help them support learners with autism spectrum disorder or behavioural difficulties. Authority staff, working with colleagues from Aberdeen City Council and The Moray Council, had carried out a series of seminars and training events in response to *Curriculum for Excellence*. These events involved headteachers and teaching staff and aimed to promote effective learning and teaching. Participants' evaluations of authority CPD courses were generally very positive.

Staff in pre-school centres, including those in centres in partnership with the authority, were positive about the support and assistance provided by the authority. This included the quality of input from the Early Intervention Team and the Early Years Team. The Early Intervention Team had shared good practice through visits to establishments and had implemented an effective CPD programme. This programme included assistance in developing early numeracy and literacy strategies as well as workshops to explain how parents could support their children's learning.

The authority had improved the teachers' Staff Development and Review scheme and had re-launched it as the Professional Development and Review scheme. Most staff benefited from an annual professional review of their work. The authority had made an effective start to the process of developing the leadership capacity of its staff. Senior central staff managers had benefited from participation in the Council's Management Development Programme. Initial responses from headteachers had been positive about the Leadership Development Pathways programme recently introduced for staff in establishments across the service. This offered a flexible framework for entry to a degree course in Leadership and Management. The authority had been working in partnership with Aberdeen University and two other authorities on an innovative *Coaching for Change* project. All secondary headteachers had been trained and training was available for staff who mentored students and probationers. There was a very effective support programme for newly qualified teachers.

Features of good practice: Training and support for newly qualified teachers

The authority had recognised the need to recruit and retain teachers, and had developed effective training and support for newly qualified teachers. This training had been responsive to the views of participants and was well focused on key aspects of the Standard for Full Registration. In 2007, the Director's personal involvement enhanced the impact of the training.

The support offered included the work of a support officer, mentors within each school and a full range of training activities. The mentors themselves received helpful training in fulfilling their important role.

More detailed information is available at www.hmie.gov.uk.

Impact on the local community

The authority's impact on the local community was good. There was a broad range of active community organisations across the authority and a high level of committed volunteers who delivered a range of services within their local communities. There was a good range of community capacity building work being undertaken but a more cohesive strategy was required at a corporate level to maximise the contributions of services and departments. CLD, most schools and other education establishments had effective links with groups and individuals in local communities. Engagement with local communities by Community Development Groups (CDGs) and across CSNs required further development.

Within the authority, there were a number of examples of effective impact on the local community. This had been brought about where strong links had been developed between education staff and local businesses. This good practice was being extended but was not yet consistent across the authority. In Portlethen, the secondary school had worked with the local CDG to set up a youth café and to put on a film night for all of the local community. Authority staff were developing community profiles in partnership with some local communities. These gave organisations and networks clear statements of available services in the area and identified gaps in provision. CLD staff had strong relationships with local communities and were very effective at directing learners to other relevant services. Effective consultation had taken place to gather the views and needs of local communities when planning new build schools. The authority was committed to increasing community access to schools and other establishments through more effective strategic planning and programming.

The authority had established CDGs across Aberdeenshire. These groups were intended to involve local people in operational and strategic decision-making about lifelong learning and leisure activity in their local area. Levels of membership varied and some members were unclear about how priorities were set or decisions reached. Senior managers in ELL were aware of this and were undertaking a review of the role and effectiveness of CDGs. Joint work and engagement between CDGs and CSNs was limited and varied across the authority area. The authority had identified the need to give clearer direction to CDGs to maximise their impact on communities.

Many young people were actively engaged in influencing local decisions through membership of youth forums and pupil councils. The approach adopted by the Community Planning Partnership effectively encouraged the inclusion of young people in decision making, working in partnership with Aberdeenshire Youth Forum. Partners, including Careers Scotland, felt that this good example of consultation had positively changed their practices.

Local communities benefited well from the involvement of a broad range of community organisations and social enterprises across the authority area. Many of these were supported by CLD teams, the local Community Planning Partnership, Community Volunteer Services, rural partnership staff and specialist staff from outwith the authority area. Authority staff had developed a helpful draft plan to encourage further joint working, and coordinate and increase community capacity building across council services and partner organisations.

Impact on the wider community

The education authority's impact on the wider community was good. Many members of the directorate team, including the Director himself, had a high national profile, and were impacting positively on their sphere of influence. They had influenced wider policy and practice. The authority had encouraged and developed enterprise, vocational education pathways, and was beginning to implement Curriculum for Excellence. Some schools had demonstrated very good examples of innovation and leading-edge practice.

The Director had a prominent national profile and was highly respected. At the time of the inspection he had been President of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and had spoken widely on key national educational issues. He demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of learning outcomes and achievements being experienced by young people. This included his work as chair of the Scottish Advisory Group for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The Head of Lifelong Learning and Recreation was secretary of the Association of Chief Officers for Cultural and Leisure Services. He was a leading national influence on sports, and on cultural and policy development. As a result, Aberdeenshire was one of a number of authorities piloting national developments in cultural entitlement. Senior officers of the authority continued to be well represented on key national groups working with Learning and Teaching Scotland, The General Teaching Council for Scotland, the Early Years Workforce Forum, and the United Kingdom Literacy Association. CLD staff had recently adopted the new National Standards for Community Engagement. Aberdeenshire's practice in embedding these standards was currently the subject of a national good practice study.

Within Aberdeenshire there were good examples of innovative practice where a number of schools and individual teachers were involved actively in the development of emerging educational initiatives. Authority staff recognised that more remained to be done to ensure that all establishments responded appropriately in developing and adopting leading-edge practice. The authority had recently begun to celebrate innovative practice more effectively, but this practice was not yet well embedded.

The authority worked closely with other authorities to develop a range of national initiatives. An innovative approach involving inter-authority working had been a feature of the

authority's approach to *Curriculum for Excellence*. Learning and Teaching Scotland had used this approach as an example of good practice. The pan-Grampian HPS Working Group had worked in partnership to develop the Grampian HPS accreditation scheme. Aberdeenshire staff were working with staff in Aberdeen City and Moray on a national project to implement the guidance report *Happy Safe and Achieving their Potential*.

The authority had developed strong links with Aberdeen University and had participated in the Scottish Teachers for a New Era Project with university staff. Successful partnership working with Aberdeen University's School of Education had encouraged teachers to enhance their skills. The Aberdeenshire Staged Approach to Supporting Teaching had received national interest and been positively evaluated by the University of Aberdeen.

5. How well is the authority led?

Vision, values and aims

The authority's vision, values and aims were very good. They were appropriate and well focused on achieving excellence. The Director had taken very effective steps to ensure that all stakeholders were appropriately aware of the authority's vision, values and aims. He had clearly articulated the role of staff and other stakeholders in fulfilling the authority's vision for improvement. Authority staff promoted inclusion and ensured that their work encouraged positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity.

During 2006, the Chief Executive had worked effectively with authority staff and elected members to draw up the authority's vision statement. In October 2006, elected members agreed to adopt *Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea, the very best of Scotland*. The authority's stated values placed an appropriate emphasis on aspects such as continuous improvement, offering opportunity for all and consulting stakeholders. The aims of the authority were well focused on building capacity and achieving excellence. The authority's vision, values and aims reflected the priorities set out in Aberdeenshire's Community Plan and articulated well with the improvement projects in the revised Service Plan.

In his short time in post, the Director had been highly effective in communicating and sharing the authority's vision, values and aims with a wide range of stakeholders. He had produced a DVD which had been widely distributed across the authority and viewed by groups such as all school staff, CLD teams, groups of parents and council officials. The Director had been very active in visiting establishments, and in talking to staff, parents, and newly appointed teachers. He had set out the roles and responsibilities of all staff in taking forward the shared vision for Aberdeenshire. As a result, awareness of the authority's wider vision, values and aims had increased. The Director had made clear his commitment to build upon strong levels of attainment and achievement to ensure greater consistency in provision for all learners.

Elected members, the Chief Executive and senior officers were well focused on the promotion of positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity. Commitment to the implementation of this vision was evident in many aspects of the authority's work. These included work with a small number of Gypsy/Traveller pupils and with pupils for whom

English was an additional language. Examples of very effective partnership working had ensured that all learners in Aberdeenshire benefited from inclusion in the authority's vision for improvement. A range of staff from the ELL service and from other agencies such as police and social work had worked well together to increase the participation of learners in a range of cultural and sporting activities.

Features of good practice: *Towards the very best DVD*

The Director of Education Learning and Leisure had produced a DVD which enabled him to introduce himself and the new Directorate team, and to share the authority's vision values and aims. The 20 minute DVD was set in a number of schools and community centres, and effectively showed the breadth and scope of the service.

All schools had shown the DVD to all staff at the start of the 2007/2008 session and it had also been used with a wide range of relevant groups. This had been a highly effective means for the Director to share this vision with all staff, parents and elected members. Parents, staff in schools and staff in related agencies were very positive about the impact of the DVD, in recognising strengths and in setting out clear expectations for the improvement of the service.

More detailed information is available at www.hmie.gov.uk.

Leadership and direction

Leadership and direction was good and improving. Elected members and senior officials had provided strong leadership of the service during a period of major transition within the ELL service when significant changes at senior levels, including the extended absence of senior staff and a change of director, had reduced the leadership capacity of the service. The present Director had made a significant contribution to improving the leadership and direction of the service, including the establishment of a new Directorate Management Team structure. The new structure, albeit in an early stage, had added capacity at strategic and operational level, and had a clear potential for improvement. The Service Plan for 2007-2010 set the direction for the service. The ELL service had recognised the need to better align resources with policies and plans, and to focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement.

The authority had consulted widely with stakeholders to develop the Service Plan for 2007-2010. The plan was consistent with the authority's Strategic Plan and Community Plan. It included clear statements of the outcomes sought, together with targets for each year of the plan. The Service Plan had been communicated effectively across the service. All schools, establishments and teams had been issued with posters outlining the Service Plan and the authority's vision, values and aims. Pocket-sized booklets encapsulating service plan objectives had been issued to all staff to raise their understanding of their contribution to ensuring the successful implementation of the Service Plan.

The Leader of the Council and the Chair of the ELL Committee were active in promoting the work of the service with partners and stakeholders. Following the election in May 2007, half of current elected members were in their first term of office. The authority had provided

an effective three-day corporate induction for newly elected members. This had been supplemented by a programme of activities, devised by the Director and the Chair of the ELL committee. These activities, which included visits to schools, were effective in giving new elected members a wider perspective on the work of the ELL Service. The Chair of the ELL Committee had provided effective continuity between the old and the new administrations. In May 2007, the authority adopted an area based operational delivery structure with centralised policy and support structures. This 'single service' approach to the planning and delivery of services aimed to add value to the work of schools, learning and leisure establishments and to communities in general. These promising new structures had not yet had time to have significant impact.

The Chief Executive provided strong leadership and had led the ELL Service well during a major period of transition. In his brief period in post, the Director had taken effective action and had created a clearer sense of direction. He had actively involved headteachers in helping to set the direction of the service. The Director had introduced a new management structure to ensure an appropriate balance between strategic and operational leadership. The new structure included the appointment of six Heads of Service and the creation of three area office teams. At the time of the inspection, a number of key appointments had been made, including the six Heads of Service and almost all QIOs. Staff at all levels were responding well to the Director's dynamic approach, leadership and vision. The new Heads of Service and senior managers were responding well to their revised roles. They had made a good start in setting expectations, promoting standards, identifying opportunities for improvement and acting as role models for others. The appointment of the new Director and the establishment of the new management structure were important steps in the transition process. The authority recognised that the next stage was to embed the area structure, improve quality assurance at establishment level and embed a culture of continuous improvement.

The authority's ELL Committee monitored performance against the ELL Service Plan using comprehensive quarterly reports on performance indicators. The authority was currently enhancing the monitoring role of Area Committees, as part of the drive to promote continuous improvement across the ELL service. The Scrutiny and Audit Committee effectively reviewed and challenged the performance of the authority. The committee examined the effectiveness of authority policies and service delivery and identified any potential improvements.

Effective arrangements were in place to inform the allocation of budgets to ELL services. The ELL service worked closely with the authority's finance service. A dedicated finance team, reporting to the Director of Finance, was located in ELL. This arrangement enabled the finance team to provide a full finance service to ELL, while also contributing to corporate monitoring, reporting and challenge. The authority's Policy and Resources Committee effectively monitored spend against budgets in ELL and other services of the authority. The ELL Service Plan had recognised the need for improvements in aligning the authority's resources with its plans and policies. The plan included a commitment to review the service's budget during 2007/2008. The authority was already targeting resources more effectively. Between April and October 2007, the authority had appointed 300 additional teachers, supported by increased Scottish Government funding. There had been additional investment in ICT. The Director had initiated a review of resources devolved to schools, CLD and to lifelong learning and leisure. Full funding for the Active Schools Programme to

increase sport and cultural activity had been committed following a successful pilot programme. The service had recently appointed a Continuous Improvement Champion whose role was to work with teams of staff on designing improved processes.

One of the key financial pressures facing the authority was the management of the ELL service estate. This included a wide range of building such as school establishments, community halls and swimming pools. The authority had increased the availability of provision in response to the growing pre-school population. Six new schools with family centres had been opened and more were planned at Balmedie and Stonehaven. Two new academies and seven new primary schools had been built in the past five years. The authority's 2007 Estate Management Plan highlighted major concerns about the sufficiency, condition, and suitability of the present ELL estate. The proportion of schools with rolls that exceed their capacities was high in comparison to national levels. Primary school rolls had fallen every year since 1996 and were expected to continue to fall. A high percentage of primary, secondary and special schools were in need of extensive upgrading to match the authority's vision for delivering excellence in its services to children, young people and adults.

Developing people and partnerships

The Directorate Management Team exemplified the ELL service's improved approach to development. They were committed to active leadership and personally involved in improvement strategies and activities. New management structures had the potential to enable more effective leadership of staff and partnerships at area level. Leadership by key elected members was effective and motivated staff and partners to work to deliver agreed priorities. Strategic partnerships enabled agencies and organisations to work together to maximise resources and increased levels of impact on participants.

The Director had inspired high levels of confidence and motivation across the ELL service at all levels. He had engaged with a wide range of staff and volunteers. This had encouraged them to see themselves as part of a collective Aberdeenshire service and to look beyond their own establishments and departments. The ELL newsletter kept staff aware of decisions and areas for development. Creativity and innovation were encouraged across the service. Improvements in learning and teaching and in curriculum provision were emerging in schools. These included effective work in citizenship, improving fitness and in developing skills for work.

Almost all staff responded positively when consulted about the new Directorate Management Team. The newly established team was clearly focused on an improvement agenda, agreeing actions and setting clear timelines. The new operational management structures, designed to develop further the effectiveness of strategic leadership, were not yet fully in place. Area teams had been established to improve consistency and team working across ELL. The amount of joint training, information sharing and networking had increased as a result of cross sectoral training days at area level. There were some examples of senior staff developing skills and passing on their training and experience through local CSNs. Staff were very positive about learning through this type of approach and were using their experiences to increase their own impact on learners.

The emerging culture of the service was one of encouraging improvement by empowering staff and major developments had been largely driven forward by working groups. These included the implementation of the ASL Act and the promotion of an integrated approach to cultural entitlement and sporting opportunities in schools and the wider community. Service wide representation by educational psychologists, social work managers, police, and health officials had broadened the effectiveness of these developments.

Staff worked well together in a number of effective strategic partnerships across the authority area. The Aberdeenshire Lifelong Learning Forum was an effective partnership, with a clear set of agreed joint priorities. The Aberdeenshire Literacies Partnership was a good model of effective partnership working and was a key part of the community planning structures. The partnership was well organised and ensured that all partners were involved in planning, delivering, monitoring and evaluating agreed priorities. All partners were clear about their roles and responsibilities in relation to strategic outcomes. Aberdeenshire Childcare Partnership provided advice, help and support to the development and sustainability of childcare and out of school club provisions throughout Aberdeenshire. Multi-agency working, to oversee looked after children and the placement of pupils outwith the authority, was very effective.

Leadership of change and improvement

Leadership of change and improvement was good. The ELL Service had taken effective steps to bring about change and to build capacity for improvement. The personal involvement of the Director had been an important factor in driving these changes. The authority had well-organised systems for gathering information on aspects of performance. These had not always been used effectively to support and challenge schools but the situation was improving. In some areas, such as the development of CSNs, progress had been slow. The new area structures and the additional QIO posts had increased the capacity of the service to bring about changes and improvements.

The ELL service had recently improved the capacity of senior officers and quality assurance staff to support and challenge schools and pre-school centres. The Director, with the support of the Chief Executive and elected members, had been proactive in streamlining the previous area structure to allow senior officers to be more actively involved in leading change within the service. The authority had recognised the need to build on examples of best practice in the work of the former Education Network Managers (ENMs). A number of ENMs had effectively supported and challenged the establishments for which they were responsible. Due to a number of factors, including staff absence, their success in supporting schools had been constrained by their involvement in day to day administrative and operational matters. This had led to inconsistencies in the degree to which all ENMs performed their duties effectively. The authority had recognised the need to take action and had replaced the ENM posts with Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) to increase the focus on supporting and challenging schools. The authority had recruited additional staff to ensure that each of the 17 school groups was supported by a QIO and to provide support at the centre. The authority also planned the recruitment of 17 new Early Years Officers to support change in the pre-school sector. As this early stage, the changes had not had time to have significant impact in ensuring consistency in quality assurance practice across establishments.

The Director was taking an effective lead in promoting a more systematic, robust and proportionate approach to quality assurance. He had met with senior officers and all secondary headteachers as a group. His personal involvement in such discussions was highly effective in demonstrating the authority's commitment to change and improvement.

The authority had very well managed and effective systems for analysing pupils' attainment including the use of SQA attainment data. Authority staff collected a range of data, including library use, 5-14 attainment trends and comparisons with similar schools in Aberdeenshire. This provided schools and senior managers with a detailed analysis of performance. The authority was improving the use of this data, particularly in primary schools, to identify good practice and challenge underperformance.

Following the appointment of the new Director, the authority had taken initial steps to bring about change and improvement within the service. There were examples of good practice in all sectors. Authority staff worked well in partnership with a range of agencies to support vulnerable learners. Children and young people were responding well to a range of opportunities to develop as successful learners and responsible citizens. This included their involvement in pupil councils, art projects and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Staff absence and lack of capacity within the service had impacted adversely on the full implementation of CSNs and the development of guidance for teachers on aspects of learning and teaching. Changes in leadership, the establishment of the area structures and the introduction of a range of new posts had increased the authority's capacity to bring about further change and improvement.

6. What is the Council's capacity for improvement?

Aberdeenshire ELL service had a strong capacity for further improvement. The Chief Executive and elected members had effectively managed the service during a period of transition. The Director had made significant improvements within his short time in post. These had increased the authority's capacity to improve, but had not yet had full impact. The authority was now well placed to build on existing good practice and fulfil its vision of providing excellence in its services for children, young people and their families.

The ELL service had undergone a period of transition and change since the publication in January 2005 of the HMIE report on the authority's education service. This included the absence of some senior education managers and a lack of continuity in the post of Director. The Chief Executive and elected members had taken strong and effective action to maintain good quality services to children, young people and families during this period.

The appointment of the Director in February 2007 had greatly increased the capacity of the service to improve. He had identified the need to build on existing good practice and improve aspects such as the ELL estate and quality assurance procedures. With the support of the Chief Executive and elected members he had made significant strategic changes to area structures. Additional quality assurance staff had been recruited. This would increase the capacity of the authority to deliver greater consistency in the quality of services to children, young people and their families. As yet this increased capacity for improvement had not had time to have full impact. With improved leadership structures at all levels and a

strong base of good practice on which to build, the authority was now well placed to fulfil its vision.

Key strengths

- Strong, dynamic leadership by the recently appointed Director of Education, Learning and Leisure who had implemented a range of important measures to restructure the service and develop a clear and appropriate improvement agenda.
- The highly effective and productive working relationships between elected members, the Chief Executive, the Director of Education, Learning and Leisure and senior officials within the Council.
- The initial impact of the education authority's vision, values and aims across the service.
- Consistently high levels of performance by senior pupils in SQA examinations across most secondary schools.
- Effective support and advice, including that given by the Educational Psychology Service, to enable staff to provide high quality learning experiences for pupils with a range of additional support needs.
- The active participation and involvement of volunteers in supporting a variety of purposeful activities across local communities.

Main points for action

- Increase the level of support and challenge for all sectors and ensure the active participation of all staff in the process of self-evaluation, the identification of improvement priorities and the promotion of a continuous improvement culture.
- Ensure that attainment levels, learning experiences and staff expectations are of a consistently high standard in all establishments.
- Build on the emerging partnership working arrangements across the Community School Networks.
- Continue to review and improve the quality of the Education, Learning and Leisure estate to ensure the provision of high quality facilities for all users of the service.

The authority has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report. The District Inspector will continue to monitor progress with the Council.

Annette Bruton
HM Chief Inspector
Directorate 5
March 2008

Appendix 1

Quality indicators

Quality Indicator⁶	Evaluation
Improvements in performance	Good
Impact on learners	Good
Impact on parents/carers and families	Good
Impact on staff	Good
Impact on the local community	Good
Impact on the wider community	Good
Vision, values and aims	Very good
Leadership and direction	Good
Developing people and partnerships	Good
Leadership of change and improvement	Good

Note

The quality scale used in inspections is indicated below. Further details are provided on the inside cover of this report.

Old level	New level	Description
Very good	Excellent	Outstanding, sector leading
	Very good	Major strengths
Good	Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement
	Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Fair	Weak	Important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Major weaknesses

⁶ The indicators in this list are evaluated in all inspections.

Appendix 2

Performance information

Attendance

Table A.1: Percentage Attendance

Primary:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	96.7	96.2	95.9
CA Average	95.5	95.4	95.4
National	95.3	95.0	95.0
Secondary:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	93.5	93.3	93.0
CA Average	90.5	90.6	90.9
National	90.2	90.1	90.5

Staying on Rate

Table A.2: Percentage of pupils staying on to S5 (Post Christmas)

	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	65.3	64.4	64.5
CA Average	67.7	68.0	66.9
National	64.2	64.1	63.8

Pupil Destinations

Table A.3: Percentage of pupils entering each destination

Higher Education:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	38	40	35
CA Average	31	32	32
National	29	31	30
Further Education:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	22	22	26
CA Average	20	19	20
National	21	21	23
Training:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	2	2	1
CA Average	4	4	4
National	5	5	5
Employment:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	22	26	28
CA Average	29	29	30
National	25	27	26

Unemployed and seeking employment or training:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	9	7	7
CA Average	9	8	9
National	13	10	11
Unemployed and not seeking employment or training:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	3	2	2
CA Average	3	4	2
National	3	3	2
Destination unknown:	2004	2005	2006
Aberdeenshire	3	2	1
CA Average	4	3	2
National	4	3	2

Exclusions

Table A.4: Total number of exclusions and exclusions per 1,000 population

Primary:	2004		2005		2006	
	Total	Per 1,000	Total	Per 1,000	Total	Per 1,000
Aberdeenshire	123	6	181	9	191	10
CA Average		8		9		12
National	4,478	11	5,319	13	5,779	15
Secondary:	2004		2005		2006	
	Total	Per 1,000	Total	Per 1,000	Total	Per 1,000
Aberdeenshire	805	51	937	59	979	62
CA Average		73		76		76
National	33,465	105	35,513	112	36,136	115

SQA Attainment

Table A.5: Results in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Levels:
Level 7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C
Level 6: Higher at A-C
Level 5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2
Level 4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4
Level 3: Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving by the end of S4

English at Level 3 or better		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Aberdeenshire	97.0	96.8	97.2	96.6	96.3
	CA Average	94.2	94.2	94.1	94.3	93.8
	National	93.7	93.7	93.6	94.0	93.9

Mathematics at Level 3 or better		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Aberdeenshire	96.9	96.5	95.9	96.3	95.8
	CA Average	93.7	93.7	93.3	93.8	93.7
	National	92.6	92.5	92.1	92.9	93.1

5 + at Level 3 or better		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Aberdeenshire	93.9	94.3	94.5	94.4	92.6
	CA Average	91.5	91.9	90.9	90.6	90.7
	National	90.7	90.8	90.2	90.7	90.5

5 + at Level 4 or better		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Aberdeenshire	86.1	85.5	86.5	85.4	83.6
	CA Average	79.0	79.1	78.9	78.5	76.6
	National	76.4	76.6	76.1	76.8	75.0

5 + at Level 5 or better		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Aberdeenshire	43.1	42.8	44.0	43.3	40.2
	CA Average	37.6	37.7	37.7	37.8	34.8
	National	34.0	34.6	34.2	34.8	32.3

Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving by the end of S5

3 + at Level 6 or better		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Aberdeenshire	31.0	29.8	29.8	27.7	26.4
	CA Average	25.2	25.6	25.4	24.7	24.0
	National	22.6	22.7	22.7	21.7	21.6

5 + at Level 6 or better		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Aberdeenshire	12.3	12.1	13.2	12.1	12.0
	CA Average	10.9	10.1	11.2	10.8	10.6
	National	9.6	9.4	9.9	9.7	9.4

Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving by the end of S6

English and Mathematics at Level 3 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	96.0	96.4	96.2	95.8	95.8
CA Average	94.0	92.9	92.8	92.9	93.2
National	92.3	91.6	91.8	91.7	91.5

5 + at Level 3 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	94.3	95.1	94.5	95.2	95.3
CA Average	92.9	92.4	92.2	92.5	92.3
National	91.1	91.3	91.2	91.4	90.9

5 + at Level 4 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	87.6	88.5	87.2	87.1	87.9
CA Average	82.4	81.0	80.9	81.1	81.6
National	78.6	78.6	78.4	78.5	78.4

5 + at Level 5 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	57.1	57.5	56.1	55.8	55.8
CA Average	52.4	51.0	51.5	51.1	51.0
National	46.9	47.2	47.1	47.6	47.2

1 + at Level 6 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	50.2	51.5	50.1	49.8	48.7
CA Average	49.0	47.6	47.9	47.1	46.2
National	43.6	43.5	43.1	43.0	42.4

3 + at Level 6 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	38.6	39.5	37.1	36.7	35.3
CA Average	35.2	33.9	33.9	33.3	32.8
National	30.7	30.6	30.1	30.0	29.2

5 + at Level 6 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	26.3	25.5	25.1	25.1	22.7
CA Average	22.4	21.9	21.8	22.1	21.4
National	19.6	19.6	19.4	19.7	18.9

1 + at Level 7 or better	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Aberdeenshire	16.4	17.2	17.0	16.1	15.9
CA Average	12.6	12.8	12.7	13.5	12.9
National	11.9	12.3	12.1	12.5	11.9

Notes

- (1) CA Average denotes comparator authority average.
- (2) Comparator authorities for Aberdeenshire include:

Comparators	Rating
Stirling	**** 'Very Close'
Perth and Kinross	**** 'Very Close'
Highland	**** 'Very Close'
Scottish Borders	**** 'Very Close'
South Lanarkshire	**** 'Very Close'

- (3) Caution should be exercised when making comparisons with comparator authority averages if there are a number of authorities that are not extremely or very close.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the Chief Executive of the local authority, elected members, the Director of Education and Recreation, other local authority officers, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Audit Scotland, heads of the local authority educational establishments, chairpersons of the local authority Parent Councils and to other relevant individuals and agencies. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Directorate 5, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600 379. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of education authority inspections you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600 200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsso.org.uk.

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