

10 August 2017

## **Update on Strategic Inspection of the education functions of Argyll and Bute Council**

In March 2017, HM Inspectors of Education published a report on the education functions of Argyll and Bute Council. The report set out a number of areas for improvement which we had agreed with the council. We returned to the council in June 2017 to carry out a further visit to monitor progress. During our visit we talked to a number of key stakeholder groups. As a result, we were able to find out about the steps which are being taken, by the council, to improve. This is a short summary of what we found.

The council has formulated a detailed improvement plan outlining how it will address the five main points for action detailed in the original inspection report. The plan sets out appropriate improvement actions, progress and timescales. Inspectors noted that the council had taken prompt action to develop this plan at the conclusion of inspection activity in September 2016. It is important that members of the council and staff, at all levels, buy-in fully to the plan and work together to realise the significant improvement that is needed.

The council formally published its vision and strategy document: Our Children, Their Future (OCTF) in January 2017. Strategic leadership and direction is now more clear, underpinned by the aspirations set out within OCTF. Inspectors noted this is beginning to bring about a common purpose across the council. Education services have strengthened the central team to support the priorities outlined in OCTF.

A new headteacher advisory group, selected by and accountable to their peers, has been put in place. More time is needed to establish how members' work, as strategic leaders, will help build the capabilities of education services. Moving forward, the council must ensure that all those with leadership responsibilities work with professionalism to build high levels of stakeholder confidence.

The council is continuing its work to improve the quality of communication across its education functions. Centrally-based officers are beginning to have more direct and purposeful engagement with schools. Revised approaches to supporting and challenging schools are being put in place with a greater emphasis on consistency and improving outcomes for children and young people. More time is needed to see if these revised processes bring about a stronger ethos of collaboration for improvement.

Argyll and Bute Council has made some early progress since the original inspection in September 2016. Much more remains to be done. As planned, we will return in September 2017 to carry out further inspection of the education functions of the council and report on its progress in addressing the findings of the original inspection.

HM Inspectors of Education