

**Inspection of the education
functions of local authorities**

**Summary of evaluation of the
educational psychology service**

Falkirk Council

17 July 2007

Definition of terms used in this report

HM Inspectors use published criteria when making evaluations. They are published as quality indicators which relate evaluations to six levels. HMIE began using a six point scale to make evaluations in August 2005. The table below shows how the six point scale relates to the four point scale that we used previously.

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

This report also uses the following words to describe numbers and proportions:

almost all	over 90%
most	75-90%
majority	50-74%
less than half	15-49%
few	up to 15%

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1. The aims, nature and scope of the inspection

The education functions of each local authority in Scotland were inspected between 2000 and 2005. A second cycle of inspections began in 2006 which incorporates an evaluation of educational psychology services. 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.

The inspection of Falkirk Council included the evaluation of the quality of educational psychology provision on behalf of stakeholders. The evaluation of educational psychology services is conducted within a framework of quality indicators which embody the Government's policy on Best Value.

This web-based report should be read alongside the report on the inspection of the education functions of Falkirk Council which sets out the wider context in which educational psychology services are delivered.

The Educational Psychology Service

The Falkirk Council Educational Psychology Service (EPS) was based across two locations, one in Grangemouth and one in Falkirk. At the time of the inspection, the complement of educational psychologists was 9.1 full-time equivalent (FTE). Promoted staff consisted of a principal educational psychologist; three depute principal educational psychologists and a senior educational psychologist with responsibility for sensory impairment. This represented a staffing level of approximately 75% of established posts. In addition, there were four FTE, clerical support staff.

2. What key outcomes has the service achieved?

The EPS was well represented on a number of inter-authority groups including, for example, the secondary school improvement partnership (SSIP), integrated learning community core groups and senior management groups within education services. All educational psychologists were routinely asked to contribute to the pre-inspection evaluation reports on schools collated by the authority for inspection purposes. Educational psychologists had also assisted in improving trends for children and young people in the early years and those in transition.

The EPS was involved in a number of targeted initiatives to improve outcomes for stakeholders. These included a range of projects and development activities such as the *Managing Schools* project which improved playground behaviour in those schools which participated in the project, and more recently the newly developed *Psychology for Life* project which focuses on the wellbeing of senior secondary-aged pupils. The service was now taking further steps to develop its capacity to make a wider impact on behalf of its stakeholders, and the key priorities of the authority.

Educational psychologists across the service had very good knowledge and understanding of their statutory requirements. The service effectively complied with appropriate guidance and legislation which was well embedded in individual practice and service documentation.

3. How well does the service meet the needs of its stakeholders?

The EPS had developed very good working relationships with educational officers and support staff across the authority. Partnerships with staff from educational provisions and external agencies, including the Reporter to the children's hearings, were good. Individual educational psychologists had formed positive relationships with children and young people. Further work was required to embed impact and outcome measures for children and young people into the formal structures of the service. Parents and carers felt that educational psychologists took time to ask them for their views and listened carefully to what they said. A few parents and families felt that the quality of service was variable across the authority. The roles, remits and functions of the EPS were not clear to all stakeholders.

All staff in the EPS spoke positively about team working. They were highly motivated and felt supported by senior managers and their peers. Educational psychologists valued the support they received from their clerical support colleagues. Overall, staff made very good use of continuing professional development and training to improve their practices. Educational psychologists collaborated on a number of projects and service-wide developments, for example, the pre-school network.

4. How good is the service's delivery of key processes?

The EPS delivered a broad and balanced range of services with regard to consultation and advice, assessment and intervention, and contributions to policy-making. The service had developed a strong research and training portfolio. However, it had not yet established robust mechanisms for monitoring the quality of these services and making interventions to improve them. The service had developed a comprehensive range of training courses which effectively met the professional development needs of a wide range of stakeholders, including school staff and social workers. Equality and fairness were embedded in service practice.

5. How good is the service's management?

The EPS had established very effective links within the authority and had taken steps to develop partnership working with external agencies. The EPS promoted the aims of the Council in an effective manner. However, the service did not routinely involve stakeholders in the review, development and improvement of services.

The service management team of principal and depute educational psychologists sought to promote the contributions of the service across the authority. The senior management team should continue to develop its approach to planning for improvement through the development and review of policy and the distribution of a well-focused, annual standards and quality report for stakeholders.

6. How good is leadership?

The authority valued the professional skills and knowledge of the principal educational psychologist. All staff reported that there had been positive developments and changes in the service over the last 18 months. The senior management team recognised the need to provide stronger direction to ensure continuous improvement with agreed policy and practice guidelines.

The service had conducted a number of self-evaluation exercises with schools, parents and young people in the past but these had not been focused on impact and outcomes and had resulted in improvement in only a few instances.

Key strengths

The service had:

- established very good links within the authority and had taken steps to develop partnership working with external agencies;
- very well motivated staff who worked effectively in teams;
- developed a broad and balanced range of services with nearly all staff contributing to the extensive research and development programme; and
- made a positive start to service review and development through the support of the new management team.

Main points for action

The service should:

- monitor more closely the impact and outcomes for children and young people of educational psychology service interventions;
- formally monitor and review planning and policy arrangements to promote consistency of practice across the service; and
- develop a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation involving all stakeholders in service development and improvement.

What happens next?

The service and the authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report. HM Inspectors will engage with the service and authority and will make a return visit within two years to evaluate progress.

Annette Bruton
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Directorate 5
July 2007

Appendix

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Improvements in performance	Good
Fulfilment of statutory duties	Very good
Impact on children and young people	Adequate
Impact on parents, carers and families	Good
Impact on education establishments	Good
Impact on the education function of the authority	Very good
Impact on staff	Very good
Consultation and advice	Good
Assessment	Good
Intervention	Adequate
Provision of professional development and training for other groups including parents, teachers and health professionals	Very good
Research and strategic development	Very good
Inclusion, equality and fairness	Good
Policy development and review	Adequate
Participation of stakeholders	Weak
Operational planning	Adequate
Partnership working	Good
Leadership and direction	Good
Leadership of change and improvement	Adequate

How can you contact us?

If you wish to comment about the inspection of educational psychology service

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of the inspection of educational psychology, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Directorate 5, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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