

**Inspection of the Education Functions of
Renfrewshire Council**

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Introduction

The education functions of each local authority in Scotland was 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 Executive 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 an Associate Assessor who is a senior member of staff currently serving in another Scottish local authority.

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

Inspection of the education functions of Renfrewshire Council

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 the first inspection of Renfrewshire Council in April 2004. In the period since the publication of this report HM Inspectors have worked with senior officers of the council to monitor progress on the main points for action arising from the 2004 report. This report refers to the progress the council had made on the main points for action contained in the original inspection report.

During the inspection HM Inspectors visited the neighbourhoods of Johnstone and Renfrew to sample the impact of the work of the authority.

2. What are the challenges for the council?

Context

Renfrewshire is Scotland's ninth largest council and has a population of around 170,600 people. It is an authority of contrasts with significant urban centres and a number of more rural communities. In economic terms, pockets of affluence sit alongside areas of extreme disadvantage. A few areas are among the most deprived in Scotland. A key challenge for the Council is to capitalise on the strengthening economy and on major investment in the area. Challenges for Education and Leisure Services (ELS) relate to working for inclusion and equality and raising aspirations and achievement.

The diversity of environments brings particular challenges for the Council. There are residents who benefit from well-paid employment, alongside significant pockets of unemployment. As a whole, Renfrewshire enjoys economic prosperity but there is also significant social deprivation. In the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, Renfrewshire was ranked as the seventh most deprived local authority in Scotland. The proportion of pupils with free meal entitlement (FME) in 2005 was broadly in line with the national average. Health varies significantly across the communities of Renfrewshire. The death rate from heart disease is above the national average and the standard mortality rate for all causes of death is 8% above the Scottish average. Within this social and economic context, the Council's highest priority was to tackle problems of multiple deprivation such as health and social exclusion, alongside maximising the opportunities for economic regeneration through, for example, raising education standards. The recent £500 million investment in the Renfrew Riverside Project is an example of the Council and partners' commitment to revitalising Renfrewshire. ELS had set out their School Estate Management

Plan for 2005 to 2015 showing how they intend to manage the provision of school buildings, taking due account of changes in the population and to ensure Best Value.

Political and organisational structure

The administration of Renfrewshire Council is controlled by Labour who hold 21 out of the 40 seats. A new Director of Education and Leisure Services had taken up post in October 2005, following the retirement of the previous Director. Restructuring within ELS had reduced the number of Divisions from four to three.

Most of the work of ELS was dealt with by the Lifelong Learning and Work Policy Board. Senior elected members demonstrated a strong commitment to education and to continuous improvement. The Council's Scrutiny Board had responsibility for examining aspects of provision and for monitoring and reviewing service delivery, performance, policy and practices. Over the past two years, the Scrutiny Board had carried out reviews of pupils' attainment in S5 and S6, the early intervention strategy and approaches to child protection. Previous reviews had impacted positively on service delivery including, for example, in helping reduce exclusions in schools.

In March 2005, the Council approved changes to the number and remits of chief officers. Consequently, ELS reviewed its management structures. The outcomes of the review included a reduction in the number of divisions, from four to three: Resources Services, Children's Services and Planning and Community Services. A separate unit handled the improvement and rationalisation of the school estate. The restructuring had improved the organisation of responsibilities further to enable each division to focus on key objectives, promote ownership of major developments and improve communication across teams. The Council had identified 16 learning neighbourhood areas as an effective means of delivering integrated working of services to children and families. Eight of the learning neighbourhoods, in the more disadvantaged areas of Renfrewshire, were now in operation. This had led to improved services in these areas and was helping to lessen the opportunity gap.

3. How good are attainment and achievement of children and young people and how well are they supported?

The overall quality of attainment and achievement of children and young people, and the support they received, was very good.

Pre-school establishments

The Council had continued to build on the notable strengths identified in the previous inspection. Places were available for all three and four year olds whose parents wished them to attend some form of pre-school provision. Staff were very positive about the value placed on pre-school education by the Council and the extent to which they were consulted, involved and supported in key developments. There was a very strong sense of partnership with voluntary and private providers. Children benefited from high quality experiences and inspections carried out over the three years were very positive in their conclusions. In almost all centres, leadership was effective and children were found to be making good or very good progress.

Pre-school and early years services were seen as an essential part of the Council's approach to meeting many of the challenges it faced. Staff were aware of this and felt valued and included. In particular they welcomed the strong focus placed on delivering quality services to children and their families and the role of the Council's officers in challenging and supporting them. Those working in voluntary or private centres valued the way in which they were given equal status, included in staff development opportunities and supported when completing improvement plans and transfer documents. Staff development opportunities were highly rated and allowed staff from a range of centres to train together and work with other professionals.

As part of the Council's focus on quality assurance and improving services, regular surveys of users were undertaken. The findings from these, along with other information such as that gained from inspections, provided the basis for further improvement. The Council was also responsive to demographic changes and the need to provide a wide range of types of provision to meet the needs of different communities, such as centres offering extended opening times. There were positive links with social work and health professionals to provide effective support for families with young children. Approaches to including and meeting the needs of children with additional support needs continued to be very strong.

Pre-school centres in Renfrewshire performed very well across the range of quality indicators used in inspections. Children were found to be making good or very good progress in all the key areas of development and learning in almost all centres inspected. Leadership was good or very good in almost all. The Council's own customer satisfaction survey carried out in the summer of 2005 also showed very high approval for such key aspects as the range of learning experiences, the care standards and the provision of a healthy environment. Provision for pre-school education remained a major strength of the Council.

Primary schools

Pupils in primary schools continued to benefit from effective schooling. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics continued to be strong. Schools were very well supported by the Council's education services. Improvements in the rigour and consistency with which officers engaged with schools allied to improvements in the use of performance information, had helped improve further a number of key aspects. Pupils were very positive about their school experience and welcomed the increasing opportunities they had to be consulted and involved in decision-making. The Council's work in promoting the arts, sports and active pastimes was involving substantial numbers of pupils and helping promote healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' performance in National Assessments in reading, writing and mathematics continued to be strong and had improved in each subject over the period 2001 to 2005. The gap between boys' performance and that for girls' in each subject had been reduced. On the last national figures available, overall performance was consistently better than the national average or that for comparator authorities². The education authority provided strong support for quality assurance and improvement and schools were provided with increasingly sophisticated analyses of data and opportunities to discuss these with advisers.

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

Of particular note were the developments in tracking pupils' progress across the stages to ensure that pupils achieved in line with their capabilities and to drive up standards overall.

Inspections of primary schools in the three-year period to March 2006 showed that Renfrewshire schools performed well or very well in almost all the quality indicators evaluated. There was no aspect found to be weak or unsatisfactory. The quality of pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was good or very good in all the schools inspected. Leadership was very good in most schools and good in the rest. Almost all pupils reported that they enjoyed being at school and thought they had a say in how to make the school better.

Pupils in primary schools benefited from a wide range of cultural and sporting opportunities. The authority's approach to promoting wider experiences for pupils through, for example, visits to museums, libraries and arts performances and participation in workshops in schools, was highly praised by headteachers. The authority had also succeeded in involving a much greater number of pupils in a range of active pursuits and sports allowing them to develop skills, positive attitudes to health and well-being and self-esteem.

Features of good practice: championing culture in Scottish schools

The *Championing Culture in Scottish Schools* initiative aimed to maximise the contribution of culture and cultural activities to children's education. A very positive evaluation of the impact of the authority's approach to promoting wider experiences for pupils highlighted that useful advice and information were now readily accessible. As a result, schools had an increased knowledge of what was available and a heightened awareness of the role of creativity in education. Pupils had access to a much wider range of cultural experiences and staff had extended opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD) to assist them in linking cultural activities in the community to the school curriculum.

Secondary schools

Secondary schools were very well supported by the ELS. In particular, headteachers and staff appreciated the support given by advisers, opportunities to meet and work with colleagues and the CPD programme. They had ready access to increasingly sophisticated analyses of performance information and very good opportunities to discuss with senior officers and advisers how pupils were progressing. Overall, standards of attainment continued to be above the national average and that for comparator authorities and gains had been made at Higher. Attendance was in line with the national average and there had been a significant reduction in the days lost due to exclusions. The authority successfully supported pupils' involvement in a wide range of other courses. Inspections of secondary schools over the past three years had shown strong performance. Pupils had an increased number of opportunities to play a part in taking forward developments affecting their education.

Secondary headteachers reported that senior managers within ELS recognised their schools' successes and, along with the advisers, maintained effective contact with them and helped

them evaluate performance. They welcomed the increasingly sophisticated use of performance information. They all thought that the authority effectively disseminated good practice about how to improve the quality of education. Those interviewed welcomed instances where school review teams had been strengthened by the participation of former headteachers from outwith the authority and the additional perspective they brought to the review. They considered that, overall, the authority was striking an appropriate balance between challenge and support.

Pupils' performance in National Assessments at S2 for the last year, when figures were available nationally, showed a greater rate of improvement than that for comparator authorities in writing, but lower in reading and mathematics. Nonetheless, performance in all three subjects remained significantly above the average of comparator authorities and the national average. In 2005, however, there was a dip in performance in both reading and writing.

Performance within the national qualifications framework continued to be strong, with improvements being made in the targeted areas of Higher and Advanced Higher. Overall, across a wide range of measures, the authority continued to perform above the national average and that for comparator authorities. In 2005 the percentage of pupils achieving five or more awards at Levels 3³ and 4 at the end of S4 fell slightly, but there was improvement in the number gaining five or more at Level 5. By the end of S5 there had been steady improvement over the last five years in the percentage of pupils gaining three and five or more awards at Level 6, above the national average for these indicators. By the end of S6 performance in five plus awards at Level 6 in 2005 was the highest in the last four years. In 2004 and 2005, the percentage of pupils who gained one or more NQ awards at Level 7 by the end of S6 improved to be above the performance of comparator authorities but was still below the national average. The authority had recognised that further work was required to improve some aspects of performance in national examinations, for example in further improving the extent to which pupils' performance at Standard Grade was fully reflected at Higher.

In the period from April 2003 to March 2006 HMIE inspected six secondary schools, half the total number of secondary schools. In almost all, the quality of attainment was good or very good at S1/2, S3/4 and S5/6. Other aspects identified as good or very good in all schools were; the quality of the curriculum, pastoral care, personal and social development, curricular and vocational guidance, climate, expectations, equality and fairness and partnerships. As a result of the strong performance of schools inspected only one is to receive a follow-through visit from HMIE.

The authority had taken a measured approach to curriculum flexibility encouraging schools to use the relaxation of age and stage and new courses where this could better meet the learning needs of pupils. This had led to the provision of intermediate courses in S3 and S4, to some schools beginning Standard Grade courses slightly earlier and the introduction of courses leading to the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN)

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

and City and Guilds Awards. Programmes of vocational education had been developed in conjunction with Reid Kerr College and there were now more than 300 young people in S3 and S4 attending college on a part-time basis to participate in vocational education courses, resulting in a range of qualifications outwith the national qualifications framework.

Staff at all levels in secondary schools appreciated the provision of additional opportunities for pupils to learn through the highly effective links with Reid Kerr College. This, along with other initiatives, allowed many pupils to gain qualifications which might otherwise have been denied them. Staff were also very conscious of the success of the *Family Support Services*' teams in working with pupils and their families. The percentage of pupils staying on after Christmas at S5 had increased and was now above the national average and the average for comparator authorities.

There was effective support for developments in learning and teaching and the curriculum through opportunities for staff to participate in courses, meet colleagues in subject groups or other areas of mutual professional interest as part of network arrangements and joint-working groups. Seconded staff, along with advisers, made an important contribution across a broad range of developments.

Pupils considered they had good opportunities to be involved in decision-making. Their involvement in Pupil Forums allowed them to discuss issues of concern to pupils with, among others, senior managers from ELS. They also welcomed the annual pupil conference.

Schools and the authority stressed the importance of recognising achievement in the widest sense and young people were achieving awards through *The Duke of Edinburgh's Award* qualifications, ASDAN, Construction Industry Training Board and other industry bodies and through participation in a wide range of sports and cultural activities. Five pupils were currently members of the *Scottish Youth Parliament* and the authority's schools were well represented in *Young Enterprise* competitions. An extensive range of bands and orchestras provided public performances within the Council area and took part in national competitions.

Features of good practice: Education through Sport

Renfrewshire was one of only two authorities in Scotland to receive European Union (EU) funding for *Education through Sport*. Twenty-five young people were selected to undertake a 15 week programme of sports coaching and related skills. All young people involved were registered as *Millennium Volunteers*. The programme involved service to the school and community, sport awards, first aid, child protection, Community Sports Leadership Awards and coaching. On average, young people delivered 150 hours community service. The Council continued funding the project which reached the finals of the CoSLA awards.

Children and young people with additional support needs

The authority's approaches to inclusion were outstanding. A well-considered strategic framework was helping to deliver high quality support to children and young people, successfully promoting their personal and social development and achievements. Pupils

with a wide range of additional support needs benefited from in-school support systems, flexible curricula and additional provision. Staff from ELS worked in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of individual children and young people. The Educational Psychology Service was delivering a broad and balanced range of services. Educational psychologists had assisted in raising attainment, reducing the number of exclusions and promoting inclusive practices.

ELS had very effective approaches to ensure that all children and young people were included appropriately in formal and informal learning opportunities. The Council offered a broad range of education provision for pupils with additional support needs. More young people were able to attend local schools and the number of children and young people being educated outwith the authority had fallen over the last three years.

Pupils attending the Council's three special schools received high quality learning experiences. In 2004, HMIE carried out a visit to one of the schools to follow-up progress from a previous inspection. The school had made outstanding progress and had significantly improved pupils' learning experiences. Another school was inspected in February 2006. In this inspection, the quality of pupils' learning experiences, achievements in English language and personal and social development, climate and relationships within the school, expectations and promoting achievement, equality and fairness, partnerships with parents, leadership and self-evaluation were all excellent. Building on its outstanding HMIE inspection report of 2002, the third special school had been successful in gaining several national quality awards.

The authority's early intervention programme was achieving success in tackling underachievement in children at the early stages of primary. The programme involved the assessment of pupils' early skills in language and mathematics and the provision of additional staffing to enhance learning and teaching at P1 to P3.

The authority had demonstrated a high level of commitment and effort in preparing for, and supporting the implementation of, *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*. Pupils across Renfrewshire were now benefiting from school staff working with partner agencies as part of an Extended Support Framework which ensured effective identification, monitoring and provision for children and young people with additional support needs. As part of the framework, Extended Support Teams played a key role in ensuring valuable discussion, careful planning and effective actions at multi-agency level to meet children's needs. Young people and parents were fully involved in discussions and making decisions about suitable support.

The Educational Psychology Service had developed very good working partnerships with children and young people, educational establishments and social workers. Educational psychologists took care to ensure that young people and their families were well involved in the process of making decisions about plans to support them. The service had insufficient impact through working in partnership with agencies which supported children and young people and were external to the Council.

Features of good practice: Implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

The fulfilment of statutory duties by the authority was characterised by its strategic approach to implementation of legislation on additional support for learning. The authority's programme of implementation was led very effectively by senior managers through a strong partnership approach, engaging with key stakeholders. A challenging transition programme for the review of Records of Needs was supported by helpful documentation, clear timescales, staff training and the targeted use of resources. The strategic role of the extended support team provided continuing support to all establishments. As a result, the legislation has become firmly embedded, strengthening existing good practice to the benefit of those with additional support needs.

The attainment of the small number of looked after⁴ children leaving care had increased over the last three years and was above the national average. ELS staff had worked closely with colleagues from the Social Work Department and schools to develop further the Council's approaches to supporting looked after children. Approaches included improved arrangements for tracking children's achievements and monitoring the rate of their progress. Building on best practice, within and beyond the authority, ELS had recently published new guidance to support this group of children and young people to achieve their full potential.

Following the inspection of the education functions of the Council in 2004, the authority was asked to take steps to reduce further the levels of exclusions from schools and to support schools in taking inclusive approaches to pupils who experience behavioural difficulties. In the past two years, the authority had made significant progress in reducing the number of days lost to pupils through exclusion. Additional teaching staff, Home Link workers, youth workers and classroom assistants helped to provide more flexible approaches to supporting vulnerable young people. The role of extended support teams helped to ensure appropriate additional provision. Behaviour support bases had been established within every secondary school and in three primary schools and two specialist provisions. Central staff monitored exclusions very closely and fed back to schools on a monthly basis.

Building on the strong record of success with *New Directions*, ELS had introduced *Extended New Directions*, an alternative curriculum for pupils at S3 at risk of exclusion. Pupils took part in core skills and vocational learning experiences leading to ASDAN. They undertook their studies at school, at college and in the community. The authority's strong and effective approaches to inclusion were having a positive impact on the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils.

Community learning and development

ELS had developed and delivered new and innovative programmes that effectively engaged and impacted on learners. Staff from a range of services, along with partner organisations, were using the arts, sport, youth work and adult learning to appeal to

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

priority groups and improve learning outcomes. The authority had a clear focus on social inclusion, and services worked together in a fully integrated way to respond to the needs of learners.

An inspection report on community learning and development (CLD) in the Paisley and Johnstone area was published in August 2003. HM Inspectors made a follow-up visit in February 2005 to evaluate progress. Since the original inspection the previous Community Education Service had been restructured to form the Community Learning and Development Service (CLDS). The CLDS comprised of three teams covering adult services, youth services and community capacity building. They had made very good progress on one recommendation and good progress on the remaining four and had improved overall the quality of service they provided to learners.

The authority had increased significantly their range of learning opportunities resulting in higher levels of participation. They had delivered over 50 new adult learning opportunities in 2005/2006 leading to a significant increase in participation. Detached youth workers engaged with over 1,000 young people in four priority communities. *Sports Leaders Awards* had seen an increase in participation for three consecutive years. The range of activities for young people in sport, culture, arts, music and community activities through *Young Scot Clubs* had exceeded its target, whilst massively exceeding participation targets.

Learner achievement had also improved. *Young Scot Clubs* had exceeded their target for the range of qualifications offered, and by more than twice the target for the number of young people achieving awards and qualifications. Considerable numbers of young people continued to achieve *The Duke of Edinburgh's Award*. The authority had introduced new opportunities for young people to receive accreditation for their informal learning. Five young people had already completed their three star *Dynamic Youth Award* in 2005 and a further six were on target for completion by June. Others were completing *Youth Achievement Awards*, and *Community Sport Leaders Awards*. Adult learners demonstrated considerable development of confidence and self-esteem. All adult learners received certification, with around 40% receiving accreditation from an external awarding body.

The CLDS were working very effectively with other partners to enhance learners' achievement and attainment. Staff ran a senior school pupil conference, P7 to S1 transition programmes in all schools and alternatives to exclusion projects in some schools. They employed a drugs education worker to work in schools. The department had engaged with young people to produce a youth friendly version of their children's services plan.

Learners were very happy with the quality and impact of their learning experiences. The authority engaged very effectively with priority groups through comprehensive local community profile information and systematic referrals from other services and partner agencies. Evaluation information demonstrated high levels of satisfaction amongst learners, and learners were both keen and able to articulate the significant, and in some cases, life-changing impact that had resulted.

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

The impact on meeting the needs of parents, carers and families was very good. Partnership with parents and the community was reported to have been very good in almost all primary and secondary schools inspected by HMIE since August 2004. The authority promoted positive relationships with members and chairpersons of School Boards. Parents and carers had access to a range of services to enable them to support and be involved in their children's learning.

All schools in Renfrewshire had a School Board. The authority convened four meetings for School Boards each year. Evidence from questionnaires returned during school inspections indicated that parents and carers were highly satisfied with the quality of provision in the schools their children attended. Partnership with parents and the community was reported to have been very good in almost all schools. In the pre-inspection survey of School Boards/Parent Associations almost all respondents agreed that the education authority was having an impact on raising standards of education across Renfrewshire. Most were of the view that different services worked together effectively with schools to help children and families.

School Board members were regularly consulted on developments and received training on key areas, such as child protection, race equality and the implementation of *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*.

The *Home Link Service* provided a highly valued service to parents and carers. It had been developed in the context of the roll out of the integrated community school approach and comprised four area Home Link teams combining a range of expertise. It enabled parents and carers to access a wide range of support mechanisms and be meaningfully involved in their children's learning. Parents benefited from advice and information, curricular workshops, links with other agencies and health promotion activities. Recent developments have further strengthened partnership working and an external evaluation by Strathclyde University cited the service as an example of best practice.

The authority had developed an innovative approach to combating bullying, *Tackling Bullying in Renfrewshire*. The Arts Team delivered drama activities in schools leading to locally based anti-bullying videos. A large number of parents attended launch nights in each cluster. Evaluations by parents were very positive. Recorded incidents of bullying in both primary and secondary had decreased over the past year.

The Department was responsive to complaints and had identified an officer to quality assure its procedures and responses. It was improving its ability to respond timeously to complaints. In 2005/2006, 115 complaints had been received with 98% answered within the published timescale.

Features of good practice: Parents as Educators programme

Parental involvement in their children's education was being effectively promoted through the *Parents as Educators* programme within the *Home Link Service*. The project was delivered by CLD staff and aimed to engage hard-to-reach parents in their children's learning. The project was making significant impact on parents and families, and through them, on children. The Educational Psychology Service conducted an extensive evaluation which concluded that the project had met or exceeded almost all objectives. The project had been chosen from 500 nominations to present to the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Ministers in 2003.

Impact on staff

The impact on meeting the needs of staff was very good. An extensive range of high quality, well-focused staff development opportunities enabled staff in all sectors to develop their professional expertise and, as appropriate, to train alongside colleagues from other professions. Teaching and support staff were very positive about working in schools, but a significant minority of centrally-based staff expressed concerns about insufficient time to fulfil their remits and about morale.

All heads of establishments who responded to the questionnaire issued as part of this inspection thought that the authority assisted staff in accessing training to support their work. Most had been involved in training with other council departments. Importantly, all reported that the authority had encouraged them to develop a systematic approach to self-evaluation and that staff had access to training for leadership. Almost all believed that the authority made a positive difference to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence from questionnaires returned during school inspections showed that both teaching and support staff were very positive about working in schools. Most thought they had good opportunities to be involved in decision-making and that CPD time was used effectively. Almost all reported that their school was well led.

Centrally-based staff were also very positive about their opportunities for CPD. Most thought they were given time to carry out CPD and that their expertise and professional experience were used effectively. However, a significant minority expressed concerns about not having sufficient time to fulfil their remits effectively. Senior managers should discuss these concerns with staff and take appropriate action where necessary.

Staff in the Educational Psychology Service were very well motivated and worked very effectively in teams. Educational psychologists made very good use of training and development activities to improve their practices. They also contributed significantly to the on-going development of other professionals.

The authority provided a broad range of opportunities for staff to extend their professional skills closely matched to key priorities. It consulted on the courses required and evaluated their value to staff. Principal teachers welcomed the opportunities provided each session for them to meet and discuss aspects of their subject, the curriculum or area of particular responsibility. Such meetings were increasingly focused on raising attainment. The authority encouraged and supported staff at all levels to further their professional development and good numbers had gained formal qualifications appropriate to their posts.

Recently appointed staff commented very positively on the support provided. Recently qualified and probationer teachers, for example, praised the induction programme arranged by the Council and the support they had received.

Professional Review and Development arrangements were being implemented in all schools and centres for all teaching staff. Training had been provided for principal teachers to support them in their role as reviewers and these interviews were seen as beneficial in supporting individuals and in identifying CPD. Within headquarters increasing numbers of staff were benefiting from the Council's Managing Team and Individual Performance Development Programme (MTIPD). However, overall, not all support staff had yet had the opportunity to benefit from a formal review and development interview.

Impact on the local community

The authority's impact on the local community was very good. Innovative and imaginative partnerships between different services ensured that communities were supported to be involved in issues that concerned them. Social and economic inclusion was a major focus for the authority and it was exceeding its targets in a number of key areas.

The authority effectively supported community organisations. School facilities were available for community use at a reduced rate for local organisations. Council staff brought groups together for mutual benefit and contracted voluntary organisations to undertake specific tasks, such as detached youth work.

Local people were supported to participate in community planning by council staff, although overall there were limited opportunities for communities to influence its direction. Staff had conducted extensive consultations in eight of 16 learning neighbourhoods to inform local planning, targeting priority groups particularly well. The authority had clear plans to complete the remaining eight areas over the next two years. *Young Scot Clubs* exceeded their target for young people participating in youth forums or other citizenship activities, and also exceeded their target for the number of local adults and young people organising and running activities in their communities. The *Active Schools Coordinator Programme* had more than doubled the number of volunteers working in primary schools. This included working with younger groups in schools and in local sports organisations.

The authority effectively supported social and economic development. Staff made good use of local facilities such as the observatory and museum. Schools recognised the value of pupils participating in cultural activities as a result of the cultural coordinators project, and a number of schools had developed excellent contacts with cultural organisations and specialists in various arts forms. The CLDS employed local people to undertake survey work associated with developing CLD action plans and *Young Scot Clubs* had exceeded their target for employing local adults and young people in their activities.

Impact on the wider community

The authority had played a prominent role in relation to a number of important national initiatives and developments such as through its response to The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. It actively sought opportunities to liaise

with other councils, work collaboratively with some and to share information on developments.

There was a strong encouragement to forge and maintain links with organisations and educational establishments both within and outwith the authority. Schools had arranged visits and established electronic links using e-mail and video-conferencing. Renfrewshire had been successful in securing funding from external sources, as with the EU support for its participation in the European Year of Education Through Sport.

Nationally, the Council had excelled in the number of Eco School awards gained and its successes in achieving Charter Mark status. The *New Directions* initiative had been nominated for an award from the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE). A good example of innovation at a national level was ELS's working with the Chartered Institute of Banking and City and Guilds to enable additional accreditation for pupils.

The authority had linked well with other councils and beyond to build on best practice. A number of other councils had sought advice from Renfrewshire on developments in areas such as pre-school provision and the approaches adopted in reducing the numbers of exclusions from school. The continuum of provision available within schools and through off-site support facilities was of particular interest.

Features of good practice: Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service played an important role in encouraging innovation and leading-edge practices within the authority. The service conducted high quality evaluations that helped in promoting the aims and values of the Council. Its projects highlighted examples of good practice as well as making suggestions for improvements to service delivery. For example, the recent evaluation of the *Parents as Educators* project provided helpful advice and guidance on how to involve hard-to-reach parents in their children's education. Commendably, the service disseminated its findings and recommendations widely both within and outwith the authority.

The authority had responded very positively to *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004*. Its programme for the implementation of the Act was an example of good practice and, as such, it had contributed to national guidance on effective approaches to meeting the requirements of this legislation.

In keeping with the authority's positive record on compliance with legislation, it had taken a strong lead in preparing a parental involvement strategy in anticipation of forthcoming legislation. A member of the management team had been seconded to the Scottish Executive to support the implementation of the Bill.

CLD had also received national recognition for the *Digital Inclusion Programme* in West Johnstone and for the *Buddies for Learning Programme* relating to adult literacy and numeracy. The success of ELS health initiatives, *Eat well to play well* and *Massage in schools* had been adopted at national level.

5. How well is the authority led?

Vision, values and aims

The vision, values and aims of ELS were highly appropriate and clearly linked to those of the Council. They addressed issues relating to the economic and social diversity of the area and set out clear expectations for equality and social justice. They provided a very sound basis for directing the work of ELS. Senior managers had succeeded in communicating and sharing this vision with staff in all sectors and there was a very impressive degree of commitment and purpose at all levels. Overall, this aspect of the Council's work was excellent.

The corporate priorities for the Council for 2005 to 2008 identified the broad aims of making a difference, tackling the problems of multiple deprivation and capitalising on the opportunities for economic regeneration. In line with corporate priorities, those for ELS focused strongly on raising achievement, working for inclusion and equality, and modernising and improving education services. The targets set for education were clear, appropriate and fully consistent with national priorities. They were very well understood by staff who showed an impressive degree of commitment to achieving them.

Senior officers and elected members demonstrated strong commitment to the principles of social inclusion and equality. These principles clearly underpinned the work of the authority and were reflected in key planning documents at all levels. In particular, members of the extended senior management team had been proactive in visiting establishments, meeting staff and discussing with them the Council's aspirations and its vision, values and aims as set out in the relevant sector plans. This opportunity to meet and discuss was viewed very positively by staff and had enabled them to understand their role in helping deliver key objectives and contribute to the future direction of the work of the Council. The Educational Psychology Service was promoting the vision, values and aims of the Council in a well-focused and effective manner.

The authority had continued to ensure that the aims of ELS were reinforced through all aspects of its work. Establishments, services and partners, such as those working in partnership to provide pre-school services, fully endorsed the aspirations. The vision and values had clearly influenced practice. Staff delivering education and leisure services demonstrated a strong sense of purpose in working to empower individuals to fulfil their potential and contribute to the economic, social, and cultural well-being of local communities. As a result, the authority had been successful in raising attainment and in extending the range of qualifications available to young people. Its strong focus on inclusion had improved the range of support and services available to children and families. Across Renfrewshire children and adults had more opportunities to participate in cultural activities and to adopt healthier lifestyles.

The Council continued to implement the actions contained in *Building A Learning Renfrewshire*, the strategic framework for putting the vision into practice. Maintaining a strong focus on addressing the major challenge of tackling multiple deprivation and the aim of making a difference, the Council had prioritised the setting up of Learning Neighbourhoods in the more deprived areas. This had led to improved integrated services for children and families in these areas. It had provided enhanced learning opportunities for

children and adults within their own communities and involved communities in contributing to key decisions about their local area.

Leadership and direction

The quality of leadership and direction was excellent. Stakeholders benefited from the very clear sense of purpose and strategic direction established by elected members and senior officers. There was a strong commitment to empowering staff and encouraging them to play a part in shaping the direction of the service. The authority had established well defined planning processes with clear links across the various planning documents. The Education and Leisure Service Plan was the key monitoring document leading to operational delivery plans across all services. Progress was monitored and advanced through a regular reporting cycle within the service planning and reporting calendar.

Elected members and senior officers worked very well together to provide a very clear, purposeful sense of strategic direction for education services well matched to the challenges facing the Council and the needs of children and young people. There was a clear strategic framework which focused on providing a comprehensive service and within which staff could contribute and take initiative. The committee structure within the Council mirrored the themes of the community plan. There was strong evidence of a performance-focused culture within the Council that underpinned its approach to delivering services at all levels.

Planning was well coordinated, with established planning processes using standardised approaches and documentation and a published calendar setting out the cycle of events. ELS and its officers played a key role in corporate plans and developments in areas such as Integrated Children's Services. *The Education Services Plan* was a key document in monitoring and reporting progress. Staff in pre-school establishments and primary and secondary schools welcomed the approach to planning which included providing them with sector plans designed to help ensure that school improvement planning was closely linked to the achievement of Council and national priorities. As a result, there were many positive examples of schools and other parts of education services contributing to the Council's agenda, such as the work being undertaken to promote social inclusion through the development of *Learning Neighbourhoods*. A commendable initiative was the involvement of children and young people in producing a child-friendly version of the *Children's Services Plan*. This was due for publication in November 2006.

Audit Scotland undertook a Review of Financial Strategy and Performance Management in autumn 2005. These reviews confirmed that the Council had well developed procedures in most of the areas covered in the study. Some areas of good practice which were identified in the reviews included service plans to support the corporate aims and objectives as outlined in both the corporate statement and community plan and integrated timescales for financial and service planning processes. The Council had a sound budget-setting process in place which included an annual review of budgets to ensure that resource allocations fairly reflected prioritised need. This process was reinforced by a Budget Strategy Group comprising senior elected members and officers, which considered the budget in light of corporate objectives.

The Department's approaches to risk management were in line with the Council's risk management strategy. This strategy clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of officers, elected members and risk management groups. Similarly, the Department's

approaches to ensuring that appropriate health and safety legislation and regulations were implemented were informed by the Council's health and safety policy.

Developing people and partnerships

Overall, this aspect of leadership was very good. Despite recent changes to senior management positions the Council had succeeded in maintaining continuity and progress in meeting its key objectives for education services. Staff in schools commented very positively on the way in which they were able to develop their capabilities, take responsibility and show initiative. Teamwork and partnership with others were notable strengths and successful joint-working was impacting positively on children and young people's lives.

The Council had managed the transition to the recently appointed Director of Education and the associated reduction in the number of posts at Heads of Service level very well, ensuring continuity in key developments while refreshing senior management posts within the Department. Staff interviewed commented very positively on the opportunities afforded to build on existing strengths while embracing new challenges. They welcomed the depth of knowledge of establishments and people which the new Director brought to the job and his approachable and highly visible style. Almost all heads of establishments surveyed for the inspection thought that the authority was well led.

Throughout the Council's services and establishments there was a very strong sense of commitment and involvement. Staff considered themselves well informed, consulted and involved in key developments. They thought that the Department had struck the right balance between providing professional challenge and a focus on improvement with well-targeted support. They welcomed the opportunities provided for their own professional development, including when working with other professionals, and thought that the Department encouraged initiative and innovation.

Teamwork was very well established. There were numerous instances of partnership working which was making a positive difference to children and young people, for example through the success of the extended support teams and Home Link initiatives in supporting pupils in primary and secondary schools. Very effective links with Reid Kerr College included programmes for pupils and young people through the *New Directions* programme and a range of vocational education opportunities. The success of such developments was widely recognised by staff, parents and pupils. Within the Educational Psychology Service, senior managers gave close attention to the development of policies, teamwork and the deployment of staff. The service had established very good links within the authority and had taken steps to develop partnership working with external agencies.

Leadership of change and improvement

Leadership of change and improvement was very good. The Director and Heads of Services gave strong leadership and direction to their teams. They were very well supported by Senior Advisers who helped to drive and facilitate continuous improvement across the services. Senior managers had established a strong culture of self-evaluation and reporting on progress which had led to further improvements in the quality of provision for all learners.

In the past two years, following a period of consultation and evaluation, the authority developed further the arrangements for school reviews. Senior managers were actively involved in challenging establishments to continuously improve the quality of their provision. The School Review Team had participated in further training to enhance their evaluation skills and practice was now more consistent. Almost all heads of establishment who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that senior managers showed a high level of commitment to improving education and that the authority made a positive difference to improving the quality of learning and teaching. All agreed that the authority had encouraged them to develop a systematic approach to self-evaluation.

Senior managers had established very good systems that enabled them to monitor performance and outcomes and to identify best practice. They had built upon successful initiatives, such as *New Directions*, to enable more young people to benefit from enhanced educational experiences. Senior managers also actively encouraged staff at all levels to contribute their ideas for improving provision. Senior advisers had given very good support to establishments to promote innovative approaches which were facilitating more effective learning and teaching experiences for children and young people. A best practice website had recently been set up to recognise and share effective practice across the authority.

The Director had placed a strong emphasis on striving for excellence in all aspects of the authority's work. The recent restructuring of ELS had resulted in more streamlined roles and responsibilities for senior managers. Heads of Services had a clear focus on continuing to drive up the quality of educational provision. Senior managers had given good attention to nurturing and promoting staff talents and skills by providing a range of leadership opportunities. Staff were encouraged to undertake secondments, to lead development groups and to pilot initiatives. CLD and the Educational Psychology Service benefited from clear and effective leadership.

6. What is the councils capacity for improvement?

Renfrewshire Council demonstrated a very high capacity for improvement across all the main areas of its work. It had a proven track record in delivering high quality education services. Through continuing effective leadership and management it had successfully overtaken all the recommendations arising from the previous inspection and had continued to improve its education services through such developments as the Learning Neighbourhoods and highly effective joint-working with other council services and external agencies.

The Council continued to build on its strengths in providing high quality education for children, pupils and young people. It had successfully addressed the main points for action identified in the previous HMIE report on the Council's education services. The Council had managed the transition to a new Director of Education and Leisure and the associated restructuring within ELS very well, ensuring continuity and renewed impetus. Staff in schools commented favourably on the start made by the new Director and the high profile he had adopted in meetings with staff.

Elected members, senior officers and staff shared a clear vision which took full account of the challenges facing the Council and identified the central role education services should

play in addressing these. There was a well-established culture of Best Value, risk assessment and commitment to improvement. Morale was high overall, especially in schools, and key stakeholders consulted in the course of the inspection gave a very positive view of the Council's support for education.

Performance information and the outcomes of recent inspections of schools and community learning confirmed that Renfrewshire continued to perform well, and in many aspects very well, in relation to national and comparator authority averages. The improvements made in results at Higher and in reducing significantly the number of exclusions in schools showed it was able to respond quickly to major challenges resulting from inspection. Of particular note was the extent to which different services work effectively and innovatively together to achieve benefits for stakeholders. There were also good examples of the Council looking beyond its own boundaries to forge productive links with others.

Renfrewshire had succeeded in building on its previous high level of performance in delivering education services. The Council was very well placed to continue to improve and meet the needs of its stakeholders in education very effectively.

Key strengths

- Strong sense of continuity, direction and purpose.
- Well-established culture of improvement.
- Strong support for the Council's vision, values and aims among heads of establishment and staff.
- Highly effective partnership working.
- The approach to promoting inclusion and the implementation of *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*.
- The strategic approach to improvement and the success of initiatives such as New Directions and the Home Link service and the positive impact on children, pupils and their families.
- Effective pre-school establishments, schools and community learning and development.

Main points for action

- Continue to monitor and address aspects of attainment requiring further improvement.
- Ensure that all staff can participate in a system of staff development and review.
- Examine issues of workload and morale among centrally-deployed staff.

As a result of the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of ELS, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The District Inspector will continue to monitor progress on the main points of action as part of his regular work with the authority.

Annette Bruton
HM Chief Inspector
Directorate 5
November 2006

Appendix 1

Quality Indicators

Quality Indicator ⁵	Evaluation
Improvements in performance	Very good
Impact on learners	Very good
Impact on parents/carers and families	Very good
Impact on staff	Very good
Impact on the local community	Very good
Impact on the wider community	Very good
Vision, values and aims	Excellent
Leadership and direction	Excellent
Developing people and partnerships	Very good
Leadership of change and improvement	Very 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

⁵ The indicators in this list are evaluated in all inspections.

Appendix 2

Performance information

Attendance

Table A.1: Percentage Attendance

Primary:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	95.2	95.5	95.3
CA Average	94.9	95.3	95.0
National	94.9	95.3	95.0
Secondary:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	90.2	90.0	90.2
CA Average	88.8	89.8	89.7
National	89.2	90.2	90.2

Staying on Rate

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

	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	64	64	67
CA Average	63	64	65
National	64	64	64

Pupil Destinations

Table A3: Percentage of pupils entering each destination

Higher Education:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	32	31	34
CA Average	31	29	30
National	31	29	31
Further Education:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	17	17	19
CA Average	21	21	24
National	21	21	21

Training:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	6	4	5
CA Average	6	6	6
National	5	5	5
Employment:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	25	25	29
CA Average	21	23	25
National	23	25	27
Unemployed and seeking employment or training:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	14	14	10
CA Average	15	16	11
National	12	13	10
Unemployed and not seeking employment or training:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	4	2	3
CA Average	4	3	3
National	4	3	3
Destination unknown:	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	3	7	1
CA Average	3	2	2
National	4	4	3

Exclusions

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

Primary	2003		2004		2005	
	Total Exclusions	Exclusions Per 1000	Total Exclusions	Exclusions Per 1000	Total Exclusions	Exclusions Per 1000
Renfrewshire	200	14	139	10	141	10
CA Average		9		9		11
National	4,131	10	4,478	11	5,319	13
Secondary	2003		2004		2005	
	Total Exclusions	Exclusions Per 1000	Total Exclusions	Exclusions Per 1000	Total Exclusions	Exclusions Per 1000
Renfrewshire	1807	152	1772	150	1625	139
CA Average		114		122		125
National	31,055	98	33,465	105	35,513	112

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		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	Renfrewshire	92.8	95.2	94.6	95.3	93.6
	CA Average	93.1	92.8	93.5	93.3	93.3
	National	93.3	93.4	93.7	93.7	93.6

Maths at Level 3 or better		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	Renfrewshire	93.2	93.4	93.4	93.0	92.1
	CA Average	93.2	91.9	92.0	92.5	92.0
	National	93.3	92.6	92.6	92.5	92.1

5 + at Level 3 or better		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	Renfrewshire	91.5	93.2	92.6	93.5	90.6
	CA Average	90.2	89.8	89.7	90.5	90.1
	National	90.7	90.8	90.7	90.8	90.2

5 + at Level 4

or better

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	78.9	79.2	78.7	79.3	77.4
CA Average	75.4	74.9	74.7	75.1	75.3
National	76.8	76.7	76.4	76.6	76.1

5 + at Level 5

or better

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	36.9	37.1	36.4	36.5	36.7
CA Average	32.2	30.3	31.9	32.3	31.8
National	33.8	33.9	34.0	34.6	34.2

**Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving
by the end of S5:**

3 + at Level 6

or better

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	22.4	22.7	22.7	23.2	23.3
CA Average	21.4	21.3	19.7	20.8	20.8
National	23.0	22.8	22.6	22.7	22.7

5 + at Level 6

or better

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	10.0	9.4	9.8	10.0	11.0
CA Average	7.9	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.3
National	9.3	9.3	9.6	9.4	9.9

**Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving
by the end of S6:**

**English and
Maths at Level 3**

or better

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	93.1	95.0	91.9	93.1	93.0
CA Average	94.1	91.6	92.0	90.7	91.2
National	93.1	92.3	92.3	91.6	91.8

**5 + at Level 3
or better**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	92.7	93.6	91.7	93.4	92.9
CA Average	92.7	90.0	90.6	90.2	90.1
National	92.2	90.9	91.1	91.3	91.2

**5 + at Level 4
or better**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	78.5	81.1	79.7	81.0	79.9
CA Average	76.6	76.6	77.4	76.9	76.9
National	77.0	77.9	78.6	78.6	78.4

**5 + at Level 5
or better**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	44.4	45.2	47.5	49.4	48.1
CA Average	42.7	43.7	46.2	45.1	45.6
National	43.4	45.7	46.9	47.2	47.1

**1 + at Level 6
or better**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	47.1	42.8	43.9	44.9	42.7
CA Average	44.7	42.0	43.2	41.7	42.1
National	45.5	43.7	43.6	43.5	43.1

**3+ at Level 6
or better**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	31.6	29.5	30.9	32.5	30.4
CA Average	30.6	29.4	29.7	27.9	28.3
National	31.8	31.0	30.7	30.6	30.1

**5+ at Level 6
or better**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	20.3	19.4	18.1	19.7	20.2
CA Average	18.5	18.3	18.6	17.5	17.5
National	20.0	19.7	19.6	19.6	19.4

**1+ at Level 7
or better**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Renfrewshire	10.6	10.9	10.0	11.8	11.4
CA Average	10.6	10.0	11.4	10.7	10.5
National	11.2	11.6	11.9	12.3	12.1

Notes:

- (1) CA Average denotes Comparator Authority Average.
- (2) Comparator Authorities for Renfrewshire include:

Comparators	Rating	
Fife	****	'Very close'
Falkirk	****	'Very close'
Clackmannanshire	****	'Very close'
West Dunbartonshire	****	'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.
- (4) Users are urged to exercise particular caution when using the comparator authority averages for the city EAs of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, as these have very few EAs to which they are considered extremely or very close.

How can you contact us?

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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, Directorate 5, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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