



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 14 MAY 2024**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION (CONTINUING
ENGAGEMENT) OF FORRES ACADEMY**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the outcomes of the recently published report on a Moray school following inspection revisit by Education Scotland.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) scrutinise and note the contents of this report and findings of Education Scotland following their inspection visit;**
- (ii) note that a revised school improvement action plan is in development with review of key actions identified by Education Scotland His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to be addressed;**
- (iii) note that support will continue from the Quality Improvement Manager in order to support and challenge school improvement required with further oversight, scrutiny and support by the Head of Education; and**
- (iv) note that following future revisit from Education Scotland (anticipated April 2025), a further paper will be brought to Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee in order to provide update on school progress with improvements.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 When a school is inspected by Education Scotland and/or the Care Inspectorate a report is published which gives commentary on the school's performance. These reports are presented regularly to Committee, where possible at the first available opportunity after publication.
- 3.2 In January 2023 and as previously reported to Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 7 June 2023 ([para 11](#) of minute refers), a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Forres Academy. During the visit, Education Scotland inspectors talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the Acting Headteacher and staff. Education Scotland gathered evidence to enable them to evaluate aspects of the quality of leadership and children's achievements. Forres Academy was subject to a full inspection model visit at that time spanning across five days in total.
- 3.3 The Education Scotland Inspection team use selected Quality Indicators (QIs) from "[How good is our school? 4th edition](#)" (HGIOS4), rated using the [six-point scale](#).
- 3.4 Education Scotland focus QIs for the Secondary school (full inspection model inspection) are:

QI 1.3 Leadership of Change
QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment
QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement
QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion

Inspectors make evaluations of these QIs using the six-point scale. The first three of these QIs feed directly into the evidence base for the National Improvement Framework.

- 3.5 Full establishment inspections also include focus on Safeguarding and themes from other QIs to ensure Inspectors continue to capture the evidence needed to promote improvement and provide evidence to inform national policy development. These are not assigned a rating and are:

QI 2.2 Curriculum (Learning Pathways theme)
QI 2.7 Partnerships (Partnerships in evaluating the impact of parental engagement)

- 3.6 Through inspection in January 2023, Forres Academy were graded as 'satisfactory' for QI 2.3 (Learning, Teaching and Assessment). In the further three QIs, Forres Academy were graded as 'weak' for QI 1.3 (Leadership of Change), QI 3.2 (Raising Attainment and Achievement) and QI 3.1 (Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion). Areas for development were also agreed in relation to safeguarding. Education Scotland liaised with Moray Council thereafter regarding the school's capacity to improve and intimated their intention to carry out a further inspection of the school in discussion with Moray Council within one year of the publication of their letter in April 2023.

- 3.7 Education Scotland HMIE identified the following strengths of the school in January 2023 as reported in April 2023:
- The members of staff, who are working in a way that helps young people to feel included and valued.
 - The clubs and activities on offer to young people, which help them to develop a range of skills. The provision at the local college, which helps young people to achieve positive outcomes and skills for life and work.
- 3.8 Through inspection, Education Scotland HMIE also identified the following areas for improvement following inspection in January 2023 as reports in April 2023:
- Improve the strategic leadership of change and improvement across all areas of the school. Leadership at all levels needs to be focussed on improving outcomes for learners.
 - Improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers should focus on meeting the needs of individual learners. Class lessons need to be more engaging and young people should be involved in leading their learning.
 - Improve approaches to supporting young people's learning and wellbeing. This includes the planning and review of supports for learning. Young people and their parents should be fully involved in decisions that affect them.
 - Improve attainment for young people from S1 to S6. Teachers should track progress at all stages and make sure learner's progress is understood by young people and their parents.
- 3.9 Following inspection, the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team were supported in the development of a comprehensive school improvement action plan which would require support from all staff, in order to address areas identified for improvement noted above. Previous inspection findings and report to Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 7 June 2023 ([para](#) 11 of minute refers) note key actions underway at that time. From the action plan developed, the Senior Leadership Team and all staff were asked to input their thoughts based on the findings of His Majesty's Inspectors of Education during their visit.
- 3.10 As a result of inspection findings, additional support was put in place by the local authority for the school including direct involvement of the Quality Improvement Manager as Quality Improvement Officer for the school. Operational support from a central Quality Improvement Officer was also provided, support in relation to QI 3.1 from a Senior Leader in another local authority secondary school and critical friend offer from Education Scotland HMIE Associated Assessor, also an experienced Head Teacher in another local authority secondary school. Support from a peer Head Teacher as Education Scotland Associate Assessor was also offered and school improvement partner.

- 3.11 Due to absence experienced within the Additional Support Needs (ASN) department, additional budget was released in order to appoint a further Principal Teacher of ASN in order to support improvement required. The Education Support Officer (ASN) was also on site and support implementation of key changes as well as professional learning for teaching and non-teaching staff. Increased budget allocation from the Head of Education was also redirected from school improvement monies in order to fund supported study in the lead up to SQA 2024.
- 3.12 The Quality Improvement Manager with oversight from the Head of Education continue to provide support to the school. Through regular reporting by the Quality Improvement Manager and through quality improvement visits to the school, it was noted that key improvements had been made in the lead up to June 2023, led by the Head Teacher and with additional support from the local authority as outlined in para 3.8 above. The Senior Leadership Team also looked outwards to other schools for best practice and undertook visits, bringing forward key changes to systems and processes in place. Education Scotland Head of Scrutiny continued to engage for progress updates with the Head of Education and Quality Improvement Manager.
- 3.13 As notified to elected members in August 2023 and as reported to this Committee in an update by the Head of Education on 28 November 2023 ([para 19](#) of minute refers), reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was identified in the Forres Academy structure. This resulted in closure of a notable number of classrooms spaces, repurposing of general spaces and transporting identified Senior Phase classes (practical including Home Economics, Science, Technical) to other locations including Moray College UHI, Elgin High School, Elgin Academy and Lossiemouth High School. A period of disruption followed with changes to school operations, access/egress arrangements, teaching areas and reduction in social spaces available due to repurposing as classroom areas (including main hall, gym hall and social area).
- 3.14 From January 2024 with the exception of Home Economics, most subjects had access returned to departments or repurposed classrooms following building works overseen at pace by colleagues in Moray Council Housing and Property, and Learning Estates sections. Regular updates to parents/carers and elected members have taken place since August 2023 including meetings and written communications, in order to update on progress and address concerns raised. Working in partnership, Moray Council Housing and Property, Learning Estates, Education and Public Relations teams worked together in order to support timely updates to pupils, parents/carers, staff, and wider stakeholders, with frequently asked questions (FAQs) developed in response to stakeholder questions across a range of themes. Forres House Community Centre was also use for SQA preliminary examinations in February 2024 for most young people.
- 3.15 In March 2024, Education Scotland returned to inspect Forres Academy, leading to publication of a parent/carers letter in April 2024 as intimated in their previous inspection report as noted in para 3.6 above. This is provided in **Appendix 1**.

- 3.16 Education Scotland HMIE noted in their April 2024 visit letter following their visit in March 2024, RAAC was identified in Forres Academy in August 2023 which resulted in Senior Leaders devoting much time to ensure effective mitigation measures were in place. As a result, they acknowledge that they have not made the progress they would have liked to have made with identified areas for improvement noted in para 3.8 above. This was due to the significant disruption and impact that RAAC had on the school building and access to practical spaces, requiring school timetable rewrite into a blocked timetable arrangement with partnership arrangements initiated for Senior Phase classes.
- 3.17 In specific regard to the four key areas identified for improvement (para 3.8 above), Education Scotland report that the school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection as outlined in their visit letter for each priority area within **Appendix 1**.
- 3.18 It is reported that improvement area 1 (*improving strategic leadership of change and improvement across all areas for the school*) has not yet been overtaken successfully. In regard to improvement area 2 (*improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment*), this remains an area for continuing improvement. Through improvement area 3 (*improve approaches to supporting young people's learning and wellbeing*), while at an early stage it is noted that changes are beginning to have positive impact with further areas for development noted. In regard to improvement area 4 (*improve attainment for young people from S1 to S6*), while it is noted that improvements have been initiated through revised monitoring and tracking, department attainment review processes and early signs of improvement in identified areas of attainment, this would remain an ongoing area for improvement.
- 3.19 As a result of inspection findings, Education Scotland HMIE will continue to liaise with Moray Council Education regarding the school's capacity to improve. Education Scotland HMIE will also return to carry out a further inspection of Forres Academy within one year of the publication of the inspection letter (further visit anticipated, April 2025). Following further inspection, Education Scotland HMIE will write once again to parents based on findings of their further inspection visit.
- 3.20 Since February 2024 and following inspection in March 2024, the school have experienced further change in the Senior Leadership Team. The Acting Depute Head Teacher with overview of SQA has commenced maternity leave. A substantive Depute Head Teacher has returned from secondment from the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative, assuming overview of SQA systems, processes and overview. A further substantive Depute Head Teacher is currently absent from work. Departure of a substantive Depute Head Teacher in term 1 following appointment to a Head Teacher post in another local authority highlights further change, where the Head Teacher continues to review Senior Leadership Team remits in support of school improvement and oversight of key priorities.

- 3.21 Following inspection, further review of School Improvement Action Plans is underway, in order to streamline actions for improvement now required and ensure focus on key areas which will realise greatest impact at pace. These are based solely on areas identified from further inspection with engagement from staff at all levels as well as key partners where appropriate based on improvement areas identified.
- 3.22 Link meeting continue with the Head Teacher and Quality Improvement Manager in planning for further improvement looking ahead, including planning for engagement with key stakeholder groups in vision for the school and engagement activities now required to ensure full school ownership of improvements now required. Due to further engagement anticipated, the Head of Education will increase overview with the Quality Improvement Manager of the school in relation to scrutiny and support required.
- 3.23 For reference, the Education Scotland HMIE Further Inspection Letter published in April 2024 following further inspection in March 2024 is contained within **Appendix 1**.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The report links to the 'Tackle Poverty and Inequality' priority as referred to in the Moray Council Corporate Plan. With regards to the 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan LOIP), (2) building a better future for our children and young people in Moray through equity of learning experience offered across our schools; supporting ambitious and confident children, able to reach their full potential.

(b) Policy and Legal

It is the duty of the local authority to secure improvement and the quality of school education which is provided in schools managed by Head Teachers and to raise standards of education (Section 3, 8 of Standards in Scotland Schools Act etc 2000).

This report relates to Section 66 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which concerns the inspection of educational establishments.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

Further changes in the Senior Leadership Team have resulted in remit change and review of key priority oversight. As a school, changes in staff are noted within key departments with particular change noted in English and Maths departments, with two vacancies arising in the latter department that the school continue to proactively look to recruit to, in

order to minimise potential disruption and impact on attainment. As a result of RAAC and wider scrutiny activities, continued focus around wellbeing of all staff is maintained as a local authority and continues to be reviewed when guiding implementation and pace of school improvement activities.

(f) Property

Issues in relation to RAAC noted as above.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An Equality/Socio Economic Impact Assessment is not required as this report is to inform Committee on school performance following external scrutiny/validation activity.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

No climate change or biodiversity implications have been determined due to the scrutiny based nature of activities reported and no findings related to such implications contained herein.

(i) Consultations

Senior Officers in Education, Communities and Organisational Development, Equal Opportunities Officer, Human Resources Manager, Caroline O'Connor, Committee Services Officer and the Headteacher of Forres Academy have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report as regards their respective responsibilities.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Committee is invited to scrutinise and note the contents of this report, noting that further revision to school improvement action plan is underway, led by the Headteacher and to involve all staff. This follows in initial inspection in January 2023 and further inspection in March 2024.**
- 5.2 Further revision will consider improvements in further areas noted by Education Scotland HMIE now required through their further inspection activities in March 2024. Time has been allocated during SQA study leave for staff to meet, discuss and agree next steps looking ahead based on local authority and Education Scotland visit reports.**
- 5.3 Considerable disruption has been encountered by the school due to RAAC. The Senior Leadership Team recognise the need to move at pace on improvement areas identified with importance of involving all key stakeholders as the vision for Forres Academy is refreshed.**
- 5.4 School improvement actions continue to be progressed with increased support and scrutiny from central Education colleagues including the Quality Improvement Manager and Head of Education. Further supports will be called upon as school improvement plans are refined and refocussed, as required.**

5.5 Further inspection is anticipated around April 2025 in order to gauge progress with areas of school improvement being progressed.

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Background Papers: Appendix 1 – Further Inspection Letter (April 2024)
[Further Inspection Letter \(April 2024\)](#)
[Inspection Report \(April 2023\)](#)
[Summarised Inspection Findings \(April 2023\)](#)
[Additional Inspection Evidence \(April 2023\)](#)
[How good is our school? 4th edition](#)
[Education Scotland six-point scale](#)

Ref: