
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	2 September 2025
Report By:	Ruth Binks Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/02/25/MR
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Subject:	Education Update Report – Overview of Local and National Initiatives		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 ☐ For Decision ☒ For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to ask members of the Education and Communities Committee to note updates relating to the Education Service both in terms of local development as well as national policy development.

1.3 The report includes update on:

- Care Inspectorate inspection outcomes
- Placing request update 2025
- Support for ASN pupils and families over summer
- Education Reform / Education (Scotland) Bill
- Post School Educaiton reform
- Scottish Languages Bill
- Promise Bill
- Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill
- Religious Observance and RME in schools
- Use of Emergency Powers - Award of contracts for the Provision of Transport for Children with Additional Support/Medical Needs for 2025/26 and 2026/27

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to:

- note the content of the update report

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 **Care Inspectorate inspection outcomes**

Kings Oak Primary School – Nursery Class had an unannounced inspection on the 29th and 30th of April 2025. The evaluations of the quality indicators are as below:

How good is our care, play and learning?	Good
How good is our setting?	Good
How good is our leadership?	Very Good
How good is our staff team?	Very Good

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=323406>

Whinhill Primary School – Nursery Class had an unannounced inspection on the 7th and 8th of May 2025. The evaluations of the quality indicators are as below:

How good is our care, play and learning?	Very Good
How good is our setting?	Very Good
How good is our leadership?	Very Good
How good is our staff team?	Very Good

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=323543>

Wemyss Bay Primary School – Nursery Class had an unannounced inspection on the 6th and 8th of June 2025. The evaluations of the quality indicators are as below:

How good is our care, play and learning?	Good
How good is our setting?	Good
How good is our leadership?	Adequate
How good is our staff team?	Good

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=324092>

Whilst the overall report for Wemyss Bay is a positive one, there is one indicator from the Care Inspectorate judgements which falls below good and as a result an action plan has been agreed with the school leadership team which will be supported by the Early Years team and tracked by the Quality Improvement Manager of Early Years.

Blairmore Early Learning Centre had an unannounced inspection on the 18th and 19th of June 2025. This was a follow up inspection after the inspection in October 24, when the evaluations were:

How good is our care, play and learning?	Adequate
How good is our setting?	Adequate
How good is our leadership?	Good
How good is our staff team?	Adequate

The evaluations of the quality indicators in June 2025 are as below:

How good is our care, play and learning?	Very Good
How good is our setting?	Very Good
How good is our leadership?	Good
How good is our staff team?	Good

The full report can be found here:

<https://careinspectorate.com/berengCareservices/html/reports/getPdfBlob.php?id=324047>

It should be noted that moving from adequate to very good in two of the quality indicators in less than a year, is a significant achievement.

3.2 **Placing requests update 2025**

As part of the school admissions process for the academic year 2025/26 the follow information is a summary of the overall picture relating to placing requests. This is the data linked to the Pupil Placement Panel.

For primary schools

Total placing requests received	127
Total placing requests granted:	127
Total appeals received:	0
Total appeals successful:	0

For secondary schools:

Total placing requests received:	127
Total placing requests granted:	121
Total placing requests refused:	6
Total appeals received:	5
Total appeals successful:	0

3.3 **Support for ASN pupils and families over the summer**

A report was presented to the May 2025 Committee with proposals to expand the summer provision. This section provides a brief overview of recruitment of staff, the services offered and the uptake of services.

Recruitment of suitably qualified staff

A wide advertising campaign was undertaken to recruit suitably qualified staff. Despite these efforts, the service again experienced difficulties in securing the required staffing levels for summer provision.

Play 4 All Out of School Childcare (Chargeable Childcare Service)

This was the first year of the new allocation process in line with the Out of School Childcare change in policy. This change allowed the service to maximise the number of places available for parents who met the eligibility criteria.

Services offered over the summer period included:

1. **Play 4 All Holiday Out of School Childcare** – Chargeable full days over 4 weeks. A total of 19 applications were received, and all were allocated a place. 13 service users were allocated the maximum of seven days each. In total, 115 days were offered, with 103 attended, giving an overall attendance rate of **90%**
2. **Play 4 All Summer Club** – Full days over 4 weeks. Of 50 applications (including one late application), 47 places were allocated. 3 applications were declined as the children were still attending nursery and therefore did not meet the eligibility criteria.

In total, 124 days were offered across all allocations. Of these, 101 days were attended, and 23 days were lost to cancellations, non-responses, or 'no shows'. Attendance rates were:

- 78% for those allocated the maximum three days
- 75% for those allocated two days
- Lower attendance for single-day or split placements, largely due to non-attendance.

3. **Specialist provision operated by the third sector** – 2 days (Mondays & Fridays) over 4 weeks for children with communication needs who currently attend a specialist school.

- In total, 80 days were allocated, with 40 days attended, giving an overall attendance rate of 50%.

4. **Enhanced support for playschemes** – Provided in one school per week across 4 localities. For the additional support service aimed at pupils attending mainstream primary school:

- 23 applications were received, and all were allocated a place.
- 94 two-hour sessions were offered with 39 sessions attended.

In total 94 two-hour sessions were offered, with 39 attended, giving an overall attendance rate of 41%.

3.4 **Education reform / Education (Scotland) Bill**

The Education (Scotland) Bill provides for the establishment of a new qualifications body to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and creates His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland removing the inspection function from Education Scotland. The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 4 June 2024 www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s6/education-scotland-bill.

The Bill is in two substantive parts. Part 1 establishes Qualifications Scotland, to replace the SQA. It will be set up as a Non-departmental Public Body (NDPB), including appropriate governance arrangements and statutory functions. Qualifications Scotland will be responsible for delivering and awarding qualifications, and for accrediting qualifications delivered by others.

Part 2 establishes the office of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland. The statutory functions will be conferred on the Chief Inspector. The Chief Inspector will lead a new independent education inspectorate, to take forward the education inspection functions that currently sit within Education Scotland. The Bill sets out the governance arrangements and statutory functions necessary in relation to the full range of educational establishments and services currently inspected, from early learning and childcare to adult learning.

The Bill completed its Parliamentary passage by the summer recess with the new bodies being operational in Autumn 2025. The recruitment process to appoint the new Chief Inspector of Education remains ongoing.

The new Chief Executive of the SQA was appointed in June 2025. Nick Page was appointed and more about this can be found here: [Nick Page appointed Chief Executive of Scottish Qualifications Authority \(SQA\) - SQA](#)

3.5 **Post School Education Reform**

In Programme for Government 2024-25, the Scottish Government announced a Post-School Education Reform Bill to simplify the post-school funding body landscape. Consultation took place on legislation which concluded in September 2024 and the proposal is to change existing arrangements within the post-school funding body landscape to consolidate all provision funding within one public body (currently Scottish Funding Council) and all student support funding within one public body (SAAS). The Bill has not yet been introduced to the Scottish Parliament but will be in time to conclude its parliamentary consideration in this session.

3.6 **Scottish Languages Bill**

Following the passing of the Scottish Languages Bill by the Scottish Parliament on 17 June 2025, the Bill received Royal Assent on 31 July 2025 and has now officially become an Act of the Scottish Parliament.

A link to the Scottish Languages Act 2025 is available via the Scottish Parliament's website - [Scottish Languages Bill | Scottish Parliament Website](#) or at this link - [Scottish Languages Act 2025](#).

Part 3 of the Act came into force on the 1 August 2025) which gives the necessary powers to start to commence the substantive provisions of the Act in due course.

The Gaelic and Scots Division is now planning the implementation of the provisions and will share further details on these plans, as they are finalised and become available.

3.7 **Promise Bill**

The Scottish Government is committed to introducing a Promise Bill into the Scottish Parliament by the end of this Parliamentary session. This will provide an opportunity to make any legislative changes required in order to Keep the Promise by 2030. The Scottish Government are conducting a number of consultations which will inform the next steps on key areas such as the reform of the children's hearing system, the future of foster care, the definition of care experience and the support available to those moving on from care. Where appropriate, these may inform the Promise Bill.

3.8 **Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill**

This is a non-government bill, introduced to parliament on 20 June 2024 by Liz Smith MSP. The bill is currently at Stage 1.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is to establish that all pupils in state and grant-aided schools will have the chance to experience at least four nights and five days of residential outdoor education during their school career. The Education, Children & Young People Committee is lead committee for scrutinising the bill, and has conducted an initial Call for Views and held evidence sessions with stakeholders to inform its considerations. These activities concluded in December 2024.

The Scottish Government submitted its memorandum on the Member's Bill to Committee on 3 September, and the Minister for Children, Young People & The Promise provided evidence on 27 November.

The Scottish Government recognises the good intentions underpinning Liz Smith's Member's Bill, but have significant reservations and questions concerning key aspects of the provisions that must be fully considered and assurance given. These relate to: legislating in the curriculum; presenting a narrow focus on only one form of outdoor learning; and deliverability and affordability. The Finance & Public Administration Committee wrote to the Education Committee on 13 December following its scrutiny of the bill's Financial Memorandum, highlighting that it is likely some of the costs associated with delivery of the provisions are underestimated.

3.9 **Religious Observance and RME in schools**

The proposed legislation on religious observance and religious and moral education in schools is currently in the consultation stage, with the consultation scheduled to close on 26 January. The consultation seeks views on proposed changes to section 9 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (“the 1980 Act”). The proposed changes will support the alignment of legislation with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by requiring that children and young people’s views are taken into account in relation to their participation in religious observance (“RO”) and religious and moral education (“RME”) as a curricular area, also called religious education in denominational schools (“RE”), as part of their attendance at a public or grant-aided school. This would bring legislation into line with existing guidance on RO last updated in 2017. Following the consultation a report on the consultation responses will be prepared with the intention of publishing this in spring this year.

3.10 **Use of Emergency Powers - Award of contracts for the Provision of Transport for Children with Additional Support/Medical Needs for 2025/26 and 2026/27**

On 1 July 2025 Councillors Clocherty, McGuire, Moran, McCabe and Curley, the Interim Chief Financial Officer, the Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services and the Chief Executive approved the use of Emergency Powers for the award of contracts for the provision of transport for children with additional support/medical needs for 2025/26 and 2026/27. The total annual value of the contracts was £200,000.

The use of Emergency Powers was required as it was essential the contracts were in place for the beginning of the new term on 19 August 2025 to enable smooth transition from one contract to another, for pick-up points to be confirmed and for parents to be notified prior to beginning of the new term, and this pre-dated the next Education & Communities Committee meeting. Inverclyde Council has an agency agreement with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) to conduct the procurement process and recommendations for the award of contracts is provided by them, and this was not available for the May Committee cycle.

This will also be reported to the Policy & Resources Committee at their next meeting.

4.0 **PROPOSALS**

4.1 N/A.

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal/Risk		X
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		X
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People’s Rights & Wellbeing		X
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

5.2 Finance

N/A.

Annual recurring costs (savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

5.3 Legal/Risk

N/A.

5.4 Human Resources

N/A.

5.5 Strategic

N/A.

5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
N	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
N	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
N	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

5.7 Environmental/Sustainability

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
N	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

5.8 Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
N	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 N/A.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 N/A.