
Report To:	Education & Lifelong Learning Committee	Date:	06 September 2011
Report By:	Corporate Director Education & Communities	Report No:	EDUC/32/11/AH
Contact Officer:	Albert Henderson	Contact No:	01475 712761
Subject:	Validated Self Evaluation of Inverclyde Education Services		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee of the outcome of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) and Inverclyde Education Services.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) is a voluntarily process and involves the authority working in partnership with HMIe with the aim of supporting and challenging the education authority in its quest to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. For the purpose of this evaluation the authority and HMIe agreed to concentrate on five themes (see paragraph 4.3).
- 2.2 The Validated Self Evaluation process involved three main phases:
- (i) Initial engagement – HMIe and senior managers from the Education & Communities Directorate briefed a wide range of staff on the principles and planned approaches to be taken.
 - (ii) Self evaluation – HMIe worked closely with a wide range of education authority staff and other stakeholders with the purpose of supporting and challenging the quality of the authority's self evaluation. This took place from 21 – 25 February 2011.
 - (iii) Validation – HMIe undertook activities to check the rigour of the process and the robustness of evidence with a view to validating the authority's self evaluation. This took place from 18 – 22 April 2011.
- 2.3 At the end of this process a two-part report was produced containing the joint report between the Authority and HMIe (appendix 1) and a report on the Authority's Self Evaluation and the Valuation of the five themes chosen. This is available online at www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning or as a hard copy from Education Headquarters.
- 2.4 The outcomes of the VSE process have endorsed the strong culture reflected on robust self evaluation and the culture of openness, integrity and commitment to the process. The report underlines the strengths of the Authority (paragraph 5.1) and outlines what the Authority plans to do next to continue to develop its robust self evaluation processes (paragraph 6.1)

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Education & Lifelong Learning Committee is recommended to note the content of the report.

Albert Henderson
Corporate Director Education & Communities

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 21 February 2011 Inverclyde Education & Communities Services commenced a joint process with Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) to support and challenge education authorities' own self evaluation.
- 4.2 Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) seeks to:
- (i) Build the capacity of education authorities to evaluation their own performance and improve the quality of services and outcomes for learners
 - (ii) Promote and develop good practice and best value in education authorities
 - (iii) Provide information to Scottish Ministers and the public on the quality of provision in education authorities
 - (iv) Offer independent evaluation and validation
 - (v) Contribute to a reduction in external scrutiny at service level where possible taking account of risk and provide high quality and robust information for shared risk assessment.
- 4.3 VSE was planned in line with our own self evaluation processes. In agreement with HMIe, five key areas (themes) were chosen to be examined and these reflected key aspects of service delivery. The five key areas were:
- (i) Literacy and the Learner
 - (ii) Attainment and Achievement
 - (iii) More Choices More Chances
 - (iv) Parental Involvement
 - (v) Curriculum for Excellence – impact co-operative learning
- 4.4 Five theme groups were established and position papers were prepared on each of the themes prior to HMIe arriving. Working with HMIe the group tested the position statements by examining a variety of evidence which confirmed the validity. The evidence sources included visits to establishments and interviews with elected members, officers, pupils, service providers, parents, learners and partners. Policy papers, reports and committee papers were also a valuable source of evidence.
- 4.5 The five evaluative statements on the themes are included on the Council's Validated Self Evaluation report from HMIe. This is available online at www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning or as a hard copy from Education Headquarters.
- 4.6 The outcome of the process determined the final report jointly written by HMIe and education and community services officers (appendix 1).

5.0 KEY STRENGTHS

- 5.1 Inverclyde Council and HMIe have jointly identified the following high level strengths:
- (i) Leadership of the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team through a period of major change in the Council and the commitment of elected members to the work of the Education & Communities Directorate
 - (ii) Leadership and vision of the Corporate Director Education & Communities and the commitment of senior staff and the Quality Improvement Team to improving the work of the Council
 - (iii) Motivating learning environment for children and young people supported by significant improvements to the school estate
 - (iv) High expectations of young people leading to consistent and sustained levels of attainment and very high proportions of young people leaving education to go to positive sustained destinations
 - (v) High quality music, arts and sports opportunities provided for all learners leading to high levels of achievement in expressive arts

- (vi) Partnership work with parents as partners in learning, community learning and development, child protection including approaches to engaging with young people at risk of missing out of education

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 As a result of the work undertaken through the VSE process, Inverclyde Council and HMle have agreed the following areas for further improvement:
- (i) Develop further the approaches to self evaluation in quality improvement to ensure a more collective approach to continuous improvement and in approving outcomes for all learners
 - (ii) Continue to develop a more co-ordinated approach to acknowledging and accrediting the achievements of learners
 - (iii) Work with partners to develop a consistent approach in taking forward literacy developments for learners of all ages
 - (iv) Further develop and share an understanding of excellent practice and
 - (v) Use the principles of developing a nurturing Inverclyde to plan key improvements in implementing the principles of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and the wellbeing outcomes

7.0 OUTCOME OF THE VSE PROCESS

- 7.1 The outcome of the VSE process has endorsed a strong culture of robust self evaluation. The open, honest and committed approach to the process and the major strengths of Inverclyde Education Services. The Service will address the next steps agreed through its Directorate Plan.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial Implications

N/A

8.2 Human Resources

N/A

8.3 Legal Implications

N/A

8.4 Equalities

N/A

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Joint VSE report (appendix 1)
2. Council Validated Self Evaluation Statement and Theme Evaluation
(www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning)

Validated self-evaluation



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1. Validated self-evaluation in Inverclyde Council

Information about validated self-evaluation can be found by following this link:

[The aims, nature and scope of validated self-evaluation](#)

HMIE joined the Education and Communities Directorate in Inverclyde Council to carry out a validated self-evaluation (VSE) as part of the Council's approaches to continuous improvement, focused on improving outcomes for children, young people and adult learners. As part of HMIE's regular contact with the Council, the District Inspector (DI) had worked closely with education staff to support and challenge them to improve and also to help prepare for the VSE. This report includes HMIE's assessment of the rigour of the Council's self-evaluation. It also includes a summary of agreed key strengths and what the Council intends to do to continue to improve.

Education in Inverclyde Council has strong support from elected members, the Chief Executive and a wide range of partner agencies. Within the Education and Communities directorate, some members of the senior management team are recently appointed and have only been working together for a relatively short time. They have already identified and shared a clear vision set within community and corporate plans. They have set out to ensure that self-evaluation is fully embedded in improvement planning at all levels and are currently developing their work around a 'Nurturing Council' and the principles of 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC).

The VSE was planned in line with their own self-evaluation, where areas at different stages of development were being evaluated to look at their impact on learners. Senior managers and staff identified the following areas as a specific focus.

- *Literacy and the Learner* – a new initiative that builds on earlier developments in Inverclyde to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in literacy 3-18 and also adult literacies.
- Strengths in attainment of young people in the senior phase. Senior managers and staff set out to focus on specific areas such as mathematics and then broadened their focus to look at attainment and achievement across all aspects of learning.
- More Choices More Chances (MCMC) had already been identified as a key strength across the Council. Senior managers wanted to scrutinise this more closely, in particular to take a closer look at the impact of partnership working across this area.
- In response to the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, Inverclyde Council produced its Parental Involvement Strategy. The strategy was developed by education staff and parents and was launched in

September 2007. They identified the need to examine the impact of this strategy in fully involving parents as partners in learning across the authority.

- The Education and Communities Directorate had introduced 'cooperative learning' as part of the development of their Learning and Teaching Policy. They identified the need to focus on the impact of this development in the context of other areas being developed in learning and teaching, closely related to Curriculum for Excellence.

The Education and Communities Directorate had in place well-developed systems for self-evaluation at all levels. For example, senior managers and central staff regularly scrutinise Scottish Qualification Authority attainment information and provide support and challenge to headteachers to secure continuous improvement. This process has resulted in improvements in attainment and the numbers of young people going on to positive and sustained destinations. The Council also has in place robust and rigorous approaches to stakeholder engagement. As a result, senior managers are able to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders and use the information appropriately to improve services.

Senior managers and staff entered into the VSE in an open and transparent manner and welcomed the opportunity to discuss with HMIE how they could improve their work. This partnership, along with the honest and strong relationships that developed throughout the VSE, was supported by the positive climate of openness and constructive challenge across the themes. Throughout the first main week of VSE activities, staff were scrutinising the evidence they had gathered more closely and were more confident in setting out the strengths and areas for improvement in their focus area. They felt that the support and advice given by HMIE had assisted them in the analysis of their evaluations and resulted in a stronger focus on the impact of their work.

During the VSE, staff had planned an appropriate mix of activities and meetings involving a wide range of stakeholders and partners. Groups scrutinised a comprehensive range of information to ensure that the self-evaluation was supported by appropriate evidence. Where appropriate, groups also visited a wide variety of educational establishments to seek the views of staff, parents, pupils and partner agencies. HMI joined the theme group chairs to work together on their identified self-evaluative activities. Early in the VSE process, HMI held some detailed conversations with senior managers and theme chairs to ensure that the VSE process was sufficiently focused on the impact of self-evaluation, and in particular that it evaluated the contribution of the Education and Communities Directorate on outcomes for learners. For example, in the MCMC theme, inspectors worked with theme chairs to scrutinise evidence on how they formed their view that their work was highly effective and that it was making a difference to young people and adults, including parents, and considered how it could be improved even further.

Following the first part of the VSE, the senior management team met with HMIE to take stock of the initial findings. At this stage, some aspects of their early draft findings needed to be more evaluative and to draw on a wider range of evidence.

It was agreed that the VSE to date had strengthened their approach to self-evaluation by increasing the focus on impact and outcomes. Additional joint work was agreed to refine and test the themed evaluations and to add further evidence on the impact of self-evaluation. During the next phase, theme chairs and other staff not previously involved in the process worked very effectively with HMI to carry out additional evaluative activities, scrutinise further their evidence and consider findings. Senior managers also identified the need to work with the quality improvement team and headteachers to continue to develop their roles in challenging staff further and building their capacity to improve their work. The stocktaking meeting and, in particular, the additional time in the second VSE week were key parts of the process that led to a clearer, robust self-evaluation and identified ways in which self-improvement could be strengthened further. At this stage, HMI were confident that the Council were clearly articulating their strengths, areas for further development and the impact of their self-evaluation.

Further work has been identified by senior managers that will involve the District Inspector working with the quality improvement team, development officers, partners and heads of establishments to support and challenge their ongoing approaches to improvement.

Inverclyde Council's full report on the findings of VSE can be found at www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning

2. HMIE's assessment of the quality of self-evaluation in Inverclyde Council

Inverclyde Council's existing well-developed systems and effective approaches to self-evaluation developed further as a result of the VSE. Whilst there were already strong processes in place at corporate and operational levels, the VSE processes enabled the authority to articulate the overall impact of these much more effectively. This will support their ongoing drive for continuous improvement for learners.

Throughout the VSE, staff were keen to seek advice and welcomed opportunities to discuss their work and how it could be improved. Working in partnership with HMIE, they recognised the need to broaden the scope of the activities to widen their evidence base and hence gain a deeper understanding of the impact of their self-evaluation. By the end of the VSE, staff were making additional important connections across each of the key themes, which resulted in a more comprehensive picture of provision, to inform careful planning of what needed to be improved. As a result, senior managers and theme chairs were clearly prioritising developments to ensure that a more streamlined approach to improvement is in place. Through the use of more challenging questions, staff were able to check that the evidence and information they collected was both rigorous and accurate. Staff also extended their partnerships and worked with a broader range of staff across sectors, services and themes.

Staff now plan to build on this important work by continuing to identify where there are areas of strength and taking forward key aspects for improvement based on rigorous self-evaluation.

From the evidence gathered throughout the VSE and the ongoing engagement with the Council, HMIE are confident that the quality of the self-evaluation is strong and that there is capacity for the authority to continue to improve.

What strengths has the validated self-evaluation identified?

Inverclyde Council and HMIE have jointly identified the following high-level strengths.

- Leadership of the Chief Executive and corporate management team through a period of major change in the Council, and the commitment of elected members to the work of the Education & Communities Directorate.
- Leadership and vision of the Corporate Director of Education and Communities, and the commitment of senior staff and the quality improvement team to improving the work of the Council.
- Motivating learning environment for children and young people supported by excellent improvements to the school estate.
- High expectations of young people leading to consistent and sustained levels of attainment and very high proportions of young people leaving education to go to positive and sustained destinations.
- High quality music, arts and sports opportunities provided for all learners, leading to high levels of achievement in expressive arts.
- Partnership work with parents as partners in learning, Community Learning and Development, and Child Protection, including approaches to engaging with young people at risk of missing out of education.

What is the Council's capacity for improvement?

All staff, including the Chief Executive, Director of Education & Communities and elected members are strongly committed to ensuring an appropriate focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and adult learners in Inverclyde. The Council has a very clear vision for improving services within the authority and there is strong evidence of a long track record of delivering high quality education services. The senior management team are recently appointed and have worked together quickly to develop as a very strong team. They have a high profile across the Council and carry out their complex remits effectively. The VSE process has helped to strengthen their understanding of how they can develop further. In particular, they have articulated how they can use the strengths and expertise of staff across the service in developing a more collective approach to self-evaluation and improvement. As a result of existing good practice, the work

of the VSE and the work of the DI, we are confident that the Education and Communities Directorate in Inverclyde Council has clear capacity to continue to improve.

3. What does the Council plan to do next?

As a result of the work undertaken through the VSE process, Inverclyde Council and HMIE have agreed the following areas for further improvement:

- develop further the approaches to self-evaluation and quality improvement to ensure a more collective approach to continuous improvement and to improving outcomes for all learners further;
- continue to develop a more coordinated approach to acknowledging and accrediting the achievements of learners;
- work with partners to develop a consistent approach in taking forward literacy developments for learners of all ages;
- further develop and share an understanding of excellent practice; and
- use the principles of developing a 'Nurturing Inverclyde' to plan key improvements in implementing the principles of GIRFEC and the wellbeing outcomes.

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6 September 2011

How can you contact us?

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of validated self-evaluation you should write to Dr Gill Robinson, HM Chief Inspector, at Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. Alternatively, if your query is related to this report, you may also write to Mr John Mundell, Chief Executive, Inverclyde Council, Municipal Buildings, Greenock, PA15 1LX.