

Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	22 January 2019
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/01/19/SP
Contact Officer:	Stephen Parsons	Contact No:	01475 712824
Subject:	Inspection of Local Authorities – How well is Inverclyde Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap?		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Education & Communities Committee of the recent Education Scotland inspection. The inspection focused of progress being made within Inverclyde to improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Inverclyde Council was inspected in May 2018, under the new model of inspection of local authorities. The inspection focused of progress being made within Inverclyde to improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 2.2 As part of this inspection, there was an evaluation of the contribution that has been made by the educational psychology service to the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- 2.3 The report published on October 2018 outlines the many sector leading practices and interventions that are having a significant impact in improving outcomes for young people.
- 2.4 Education Scotland notes that the evidence and evaluation to date indicate that Inverclyde Council is making very good progress in improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The self-evaluation processes are robust and demonstrate improvements.
- 2.5 The report noted the strong drive for change and improvement that has clearly directed the professional focus of elected members, centrally deployed staff and heads of establishment providing a strong shared vision which is driving excellence and equity.
- 2.6 Senior Staff across Inverclyde Council have established an excellent culture of collaborative professional learning as demonstrated through the highly effective implementation groups and professional learning communities.
- 2.7 It is recognised that Inverclyde Council has implemented a range of sector leading approaches to close the poverty related attainment gap. These approaches are grounded in sound research and have been developed in with the strong support of educational practitioners to meet the local needs of Inverclyde's communities.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Education & Communities Committee note the Education Scotland report on Inverclyde Council.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The First Minister launched the Scottish Attainment Challenge in February 2015 to narrow the poverty-related attainment gap in the primary sector within seven Challenge Authorities. This was extended in June 2016 to include secondary schools; the Inverclyde Attainment Challenge work now covers the whole of the Broad General Education.
- 4.2 As part of the Attainment Challenge fund, the Scottish Government has committed a further £120 million allocated directly to schools to reduce the attainment gap linked to deprivation. This is distributed to schools, in session 2017/18 and session 2018/19 through the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).
- 4.3 In 2017, Education Scotland introduced a new model of inspection of local authorities. The purpose was to evaluate the progress that Authorities were making in responding to the poverty related attainment gap.
- 4.4 As part of this national scrutiny, Inverclyde Council was inspected during the week commencing 30 April 2018. HM Inspectors and professional associates from education authorities, working in partnership with Audit Scotland, evaluated the education service strategies to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 4.5 In addition there was an evaluation of the contribution that the educational psychology service made to the Scottish Attainment Challenge in Inverclyde Council. The findings on this aspect are also included in this report.
- 4.6 The inspection focused of progress being made within Inverclyde to improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 4.7 The report was published on October 2018. It has been issued to staff, local elected members and the Convener and Vice-Convener for Education & Communities.
- 4.8 The framework_for this inspection included quality indicators which enabled Education Scotland to evaluate aspects of leadership and management, self-evaluation and improvements in performance. In addition the evidence gathered was used to answer two questions.
 - How effective is the education service's use of data to target, select and evaluate the impact of initiatives?
 - How effective is the education service's leadership, governance and management of resources to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap?

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Inverclyde Council has received an extremely positive report from Education Scotland which outlines the significant progress in key areas and intervention. In many cases these have been described as sector leading.
- 5.2 The Attainment Funding model and methodology with the innovative Start Small Think Big along with effective leadership has very successfully supported Inverclyde council in the development of strong impactful interventions that are addressing the needs of the local community.
- 5.3 The report noted the strong drive for change and improvement that has clearly directed the professional focus of elected members, centrally deployed staff and heads of establishment providing a strong shared vision which is driving excellence and equity.
- 5.4 Robust arrangements have been put place by Inverclyde Council to support Head Teachers to track and monitor individual establishments Pupil Equity Fund spending.

- 5.5 Across the education service, primary and secondary schools are making very good use of data to target improvement through initiatives funded by the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund. The authority's investment in data analysis to improve performance monitoring is having a significant impact. Staff across establishments report very positively on how the quality of data has improved their work, and ultimately outcomes for learners.
- 5.6 Inverclyde Council is making very good progress in improving learning and raising attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Across the Broad General Education phase learners' performance, in nearly all measures has improved over the last few years. The clear drive Of Inverclyde Council has effectively reduced the gap in performance between pupils in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 and those in deciles 3 to 10 for almost all stages and areas.
- 5.7 Senior Staff across Inverclyde Council have established an excellent culture of collaborative professional learning as demonstrated through the highly effective implementation groups and professional learning communities. There is a very impressive and well-structured approach to professional learning for all staff working with children and young people.
- 5.8 Staff are using improvement methodologies very well to select the right interventions for individuals and specific groups of young learners. This is resulting in more positive outcomes for children and young people.
- 5.9 Inverclyde Council has built upon, and further strengthened the impact of partnership working to enhance staff capacity in leading learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Community learning and development is a highly effective partner for schools, working to improve the life chances of children and young people and their families.
- 5.10 It is recognised that Inverclyde Council has implemented a range of sector leading approaches to close the poverty related attainment gap. These approaches are grounded in sound research and have been developed in with the strong support of educational practitioners to meet the local needs of Inverclyde's communities.
- 5.11 The report also noted that across Inverclyde Council establishments have engaged in a wide range of sector leading family learning initiatives which are enabling establishments to better inform and involve parents in supporting their child's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- 5.12 It is also noted that the educational psychology service is making a very strong contribution to the council's work in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Inverclyde Council has provided an effective authorising environment for the educational psychology service to turn theoretical constructs into practice.
- 5.13 Through a range of well-chosen and targeted interventions, reflecting sector leading practice Inverclyde Council is making very good progress in improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty related attainment gap. There is a strong collaborative culture; the education authority has a clear evidence informed picture of Inverclyde's Council poverty related attainment gap.

The report lists key strengths of Inverclyde Council:

- The very strong vision and shared values which are 'lived by all' across the authority.
- The influential leadership at all levels, from the Chief Executive, head of education through the central teams, and heads of establishments empowering staff to play their part in improving the life chances of children, young people and their families.
- Sector-leading evidence-based professional learning resulting in a culture of strong reflective and confident practitioners.
- Staff and partners working very effectively together to provide sensitive and well-judged support for children and young people, which is improving literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing outcomes.

- Robust self-evaluation, supported by strong strategic governance, at the heart of Inverclyde Council's practice.

5.14 The report lists two areas identified for improvement:

- Continue to secure high-level outcomes for all children and young people.
- Strengthen exit and continuation strategies for Scottish Attainment Challenge initiatives.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

6.1

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

Legal

6.2 N/A.

Human Resources

6.3 N/A.

Equalities

6.4 Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

Yes See attached appendix

No This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Repopulation

6.5 N/A.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 N/A.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 N/A.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A.



Inspection of Local Authorities

How well is Inverclyde Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?

October 2018

Introduction

In 2017, we introduced a new model of inspection of local authorities. As part of this national scrutiny, [Inverclyde Council](#) was inspected during the week commencing 30 April 2018. HM Inspectors and professional associates from education authorities, working in partnership with Audit Scotland, evaluated the education service strategies to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap. These are the aims of the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#) a key Scottish Government programme introduced in 2015. Within this programme, Inverclyde Council is one of the nine [Challenge Authorities](#).

As part of this inspection, we use the same framework to evaluate the contribution of the educational psychology service to the Scottish Attainment Challenge in Inverclyde Council. Our findings on this aspect are also included in this report.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge has a total budget of £750 million over the period 2015-16 to 2020-21. As a Challenge Authority, Inverclyde Council is allocated a significant proportion of this funding. The money is being directed to support the excellence and equity agenda. The aim is to close the attainment gap which currently exists between those living in Scotland's least and most deprived areas. This report is our findings on the progress Inverclyde Council is making and the capacity of the council to continue to make appropriate progress with this work. Whilst we worked in partnership with others to gather the evidence that underpins this, the report and the judgements in it belong solely to Education Scotland.

Throughout the report when you see text that is underlined, you can click on this text to get further information from the webpages owned by Inverclyde Council, the Scottish Government or Education Scotland. We hope you will find this useful.

The [framework](#) for this inspection includes quality indicators which enable us to evaluate aspects of leadership and management, self-evaluation and improvements in performance. We use our evidence to answer two questions.

1. How effective is the education service's use of data to target, select and evaluate the impact of initiatives?
2. How effective is the education service's leadership, governance and management of resources to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap?

As a result, we are able to make an overall judgement about the extent to which Inverclyde Council is improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Context

The Corporate Director for Education, Communities and Corporate Development sadly passed away a few weeks before this inspection. In the context of the inspection, the inspection team and colleagues across Inverclyde Council would like to acknowledge her vision and leadership, which have contributed substantially to the progress outlined in this report.

Education services in Inverclyde Council are responsible for the education of 11,111 pupils across the authority's primary, secondary and additional support needs schools, and a further 1,197 children in early learning and childcare settings. The strategic lead for education is the head of education. She is supported by a team of education officers, each of whom has responsibility for an area or function of the service including Scottish Attainment Challenge developments across primary and secondary provision, school improvement, leadership and early years. The head of inclusive education, culture and corporate policy is responsible for additional support needs, educational psychology and inclusion. He is supported by the principal educational psychologist.

Education is delivered through:

20 early learning and childcare settings;

20 primary schools;

6 secondary schools; and

2 schools and centres for children and young people with additional support needs.

Inverclyde Council has a specific [Education and Communities Committee](#) whose role is to scrutinise the performance of the education service. The Education and Communities Committee consists of elected members, as well as representatives from the teaching community, parent body and religious community. The [Inverclyde Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017/22](#) sets out a powerful strategic vision for the council, 'Nurturing Inverclyde, Getting it right for every Child, Citizen and Community', with the associated council corporate planning being structured around the [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#) wellbeing indicators¹. This strong drive for change and improvement has clearly directed the professional focus of elected members, centrally-deployed staff, and heads of establishments providing a strong shared vision

¹ The eight indicators of wellbeing outlined in the GIRFEC framework are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected and included.

which is driving excellence and equity. The Inverclyde Outcomes Improvement Plan also provides a clear and detailed analysis of the barriers which support the poverty cycle across Inverclyde Council, as well as the drivers for improvement, including the three corporate drivers of population, inequalities and environment, culture and heritage.

This aspirational agenda, focused on addressing the barriers created by child poverty runs through corporate and service planning, including the [Children's Services Plan: Nurturing Inverclyde \(2015\)](#) and the [Education Services Standards and Quality Report April 2017 – March 2018](#), to achieve improvements in learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

“ I am glad I work for Inverclyde. ”

principal teacher

Along with a sound targeted approach at school level, the authority has also provided very good universal support, for example, the highly effective up-skilling of staff across the whole spectrum of Inverclyde's education provision.

“ It's not just about training staff it's about the reflection on the training and implementation of new practice. ”

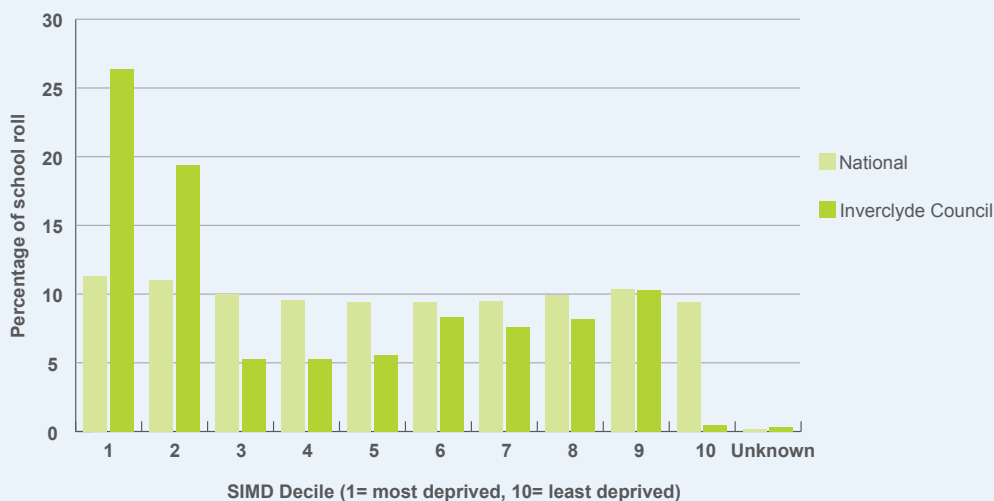
primary school headteacher

Click on the link below to find out more about Inverclyde Council's [Education Services Improvement Plan 2018/19](#).

It provides detailed information about the structure, achievements, priorities, budgets and performance of the service. This will help you to understand more about how the council's plan for education aligns with national and local priorities.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) provides information about pupils in Scotland's schools. It tells us what percentage of pupils live in the most deprived and in the least deprived areas of each council. From the graph below you can see that just under half of all pupils in Inverclyde Council schools live in the areas of highest deprivation categorised as SIMD 1 and 2. This is well above the national average.

Percentage of pupils on the local authority roll in September 2016 living within SIMD deciles 1 (most deprived) to 10 (least deprived), all sectors.



The Attainment Scotland Fund in Inverclyde Council

Inverclyde Council took a robust evidence-based approach to strategic planning and chose to target Scottish Attainment Challenge resources initially on a small number of primary schools, six in total, in 2015-16, building up to 12 primaries and all of Inverclyde's secondary schools by 2017-2018. This innovative 'Start Small, Think Big' methodology, along with highly effective leadership of the Attainment Challenge, has very successfully supported Inverclyde Council in the development of strong impactful interventions which are addressing well the needs of the local community.

“ We have embedded our ‘Start Small, Think Big’ philosophy across all of our attainment challenge work. ”

attainment challenge project lead

Primary schools

Inverclyde Council is now in its third year as a challenge authority, as Scottish Attainment Challenge primary school funding began in the financial year 2015-2016. Between 2015-2016 and 2017-2018, the education service drew down £3.8 million from the Scottish Government to support primary initiatives across learning, teaching and raising attainment. This compares to a total grant of £4.6 million from the Scottish Government. As the programme has continued, the education authority has been able to move more quickly to put projects and interventions in place. As a result, there have been notable improvements across the authority in the quality of learning and teaching, matched by improvements in the progress of learners at P1-P3, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy.

Building on Inverclyde Council's strong improvement work, the education service is using Scottish Attainment Challenge funding to implement proven interventions designed to improve outcomes for children, and their families, including:

- increasing leadership at all levels, including parents and children;
- further strengthening links with third sector partners, including Barnardo's;
- embedding nurture across the education system; and
- supporting the skilled understanding and use of data for improvement.

Secondary schools

Scottish Attainment Challenge secondary school funding began in 2016-17. Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, the authority drew down £0.98 million compared to a grant of £1.9 million from the Scottish Government. The secondary Scottish Attainment Challenge programme in Inverclyde Council has focused on a range of highly effective interventions including:

- a professional learning programme for support staff, to empower young people to take greater ownership of their learning; and
- embedding collaborative practitioner enquiry in practice, to strengthen joint-working and support the dissemination of effective practice.

“ I am now so much more than a ‘subject teacher’, I have got to know the young people in my classes, their challenges, issues and aspirations. These developments are changing the way I think about teaching. ”

principal teacher

Across all sectors

Scottish Attainment Challenge funding for primary and secondary schools will continue until the end of this parliament. While senior education service staff have already given consideration to the issue of sustainability once funding ceases, they recognise that exit strategies must now be developed. This is particularly important where initiatives are delivered in partnership, as consideration must be given to long-term sustainability.

An additional fund, the Pupil Equity Fund was introduced in 2017-18. This forms part of the overarching £750 million Attainment Scotland Fund. The authority has produced helpful guidance to support headteachers in planning how to use their Pupil Equity Funding. This includes information on procurement and factors to consider in relation to recruitment. Robust arrangements have been put in place by the authority to support headteachers to track and monitor their individual Pupil Equity Fund spending. In 2017-18, a total of £2.45 million was provided to headteachers in Inverclyde Council, however, it is estimated that only £1.22 million of this will be spent by the end of the financial year 2017-18, with the rest being carried forward into 2018-19. Schools have been liaising closely with senior leaders across Inverclyde Council to agree arrangements for carrying forward any funding into the new financial year. Arrangements are appropriately aligned with guidance from the Scottish Government. Headteachers reported that they felt both empowered and well supported by the authority in developing and implementing their Pupil Equity Fund plans.

How effective is the education service's use of data to target, select and evaluate the impact of initiatives?

Across the education service, primary and secondary schools are making very good use of data to target improvement through initiatives funded by the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund. The authority's investment in data analysis to improve performance monitoring is having a significant impact. Staff across establishments report very positively on how the quality of data has improved their work, and ultimately outcomes for learners. Headteachers value the high-quality support of the central team, including the data officer and Scottish Attainment Challenge researcher in planning their interventions. As a result of this support, headteachers are effectively using data with their staff to challenge, set targets and inform next steps in school improvement. The authority is clearly able to demonstrate a range of improvements which have been achieved as part of its work through the Scottish Attainment Challenge. For example, there has been a robust authority-wide focus on improving learner engagement and increased participation in learning. The authority has in place a number of strong partnerships with a range of 'critical friends', including the link attainment advisers who are providing challenges to Inverclyde Council staff as they reflect on their practice.

“ The rigour applied to how data is collected and used has improved significantly as a direct result of participation in the Attainment Challenge. ”

secondary school teacher

The authority is making very good progress in improving learning and raising attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Across the broad general education phase (age 3-15 years), learners' performance, in nearly all measures, has improved over the last few years. Authority data from 2015-2016 to 2016-2017 indicates that across broad general education, the proportion of pupils from SIMD deciles 1 and 2 achieving the expected level or better for reading, writing, talking and listening, and numeracy has increased. The clear focus and drive of the authority has effectively reduced the gap in performance between pupils in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 and those in SIMD deciles 3 to 10 for almost all stages and areas. Compared to the overall authority average, the Attainment Challenge primary schools have improved attainment at a faster rate and as a result there has been a positive narrowing of the gap between the authority average and the schools in the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

“ (Attainment Challenge) team are fabulous in supporting us interrogate data. ”

secondary school headteacher

National attainment data in the senior phase (age 16-18), indicates that most young people make very good progress at the end of S4, and by S5 and S6. Inverclyde secondary schools are attaining better for young people with similar characteristics than those being educated in other areas of Scotland.

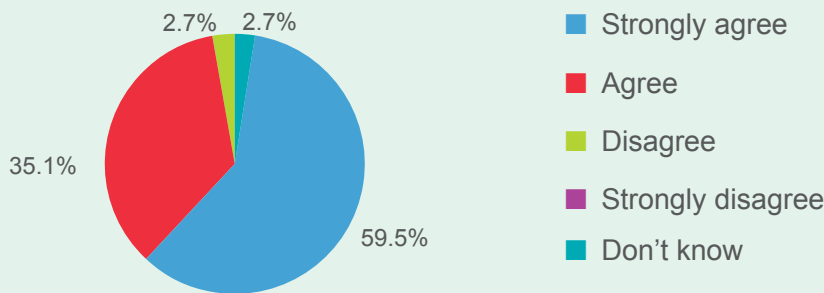
“ I now spend my time analysing the data not gathering it. ”

primary school headteacher

Therefore, across broad general education and into the senior phase there is clear evidence that Inverclyde Council is making very good progress in narrowing its poverty-related attainment gap. The authority recognises that the proportion of young people moving on to a positive destination, for example, employment, training, college or university is slightly below national averages, and already has plans in place to address this.

Pre-inspection questionnaire feedback from 35 heads of establishments

The education authority promotes and supports effective use of data to evaluate impact and outcomes.



“ We have more useful data than we have ever had before. ”

class teacher

Collaborative practice

Senior staff across the authority have established an excellent culture of collaborative professional learning as demonstrated through the highly effective implementation groups and professional learning communities. There is a very impressive and well-structured approach to professional learning for all staff working with children and young people. Staff across the authority are outward focused and ambitious for all children, young people and their families. Through a wide range of learning opportunities, there is a deep understanding of the importance of evidence-based approaches to raising attainment.

“ Having the coaching and modelling officer working with us in school has been the most powerful thing we have done. ”

primary school headteacher

Defining and targeting the poverty-related attainment gap in Inverclyde Council

Educational staff across all stages report very positively on how the quality of the data has enabled them to better identify and target the poverty-related attainment gap. As a result of this robust and rigorous approach to data, staff have a deeper understanding of their local context and the challenges faced by many children, young people and families in their care. They very much value the high-quality leadership and professional support from the Attainment Challenge leads. Staff, strongly supported by the data officer, quality improvement team and educational psychology service, analyse a wide range of quantitative data very effectively to ensure there is a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and young people in SIMD 1-2. The creation of family groups of schools has provided headteachers with local comparator schools to share practice through professional dialogue on pedagogy and evidence-informed interventions. As a consequence, there is greater consistency across Inverclyde Council. Staff are engaging in rich professional discussions and meaningful learning conversations with children and young people. Secondary school headteachers and the quality improvement team, working in collaboration with Education Scotland, are confidently accessing and using Insight as a tool for improvement.

Models of leadership, such as the uplifting leadership programme supports a significant number of practitioners to engage in research and critical reflection which is directly impacting on the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom. Heads of establishment feel they are both supported and empowered by the authority and are highly respected as senior officers. They demonstrate very strong collaborative working in partnerships nurtured through a range of powerful professional networks.

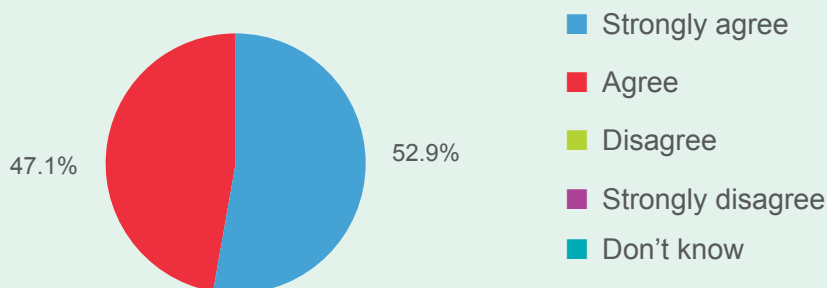
“ Really good course, opened your eyes to what good leadership looks like. ”

primary school teacher

Staff are using improvement methodologies very well to select the right interventions for individuals and specific groups of learners and this, in turn, is resulting in more positive outcomes for children and young people. Small tests of change are integral to a range of professional learning activities, for example, teaching and learning approaches and the newly qualified teachers' induction programme. The council, as part of their empowerment strategy expects participants to share good practice and upscale effective interventions where appropriate. This approach enables staff to consider and evaluate developments using their own research informed by local and national policy.

Pre-inspection questionnaire feedback from 17 chairs of Parent Councils

The education authority actively promotes and supports improving learning in our school.



Inverclyde Council has implemented a range of sector-leading approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap. These approaches are grounded in sound research and have been developed with the strong support of educational practitioners to meet the local needs of Inverclyde’s communities. These highly impactful interventions are advancing professional knowledge and ultimately children’s learning including:

- meeting learning needs through the development of pedagogy;
- shared understanding of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment; and
- progression in literacy and numeracy.

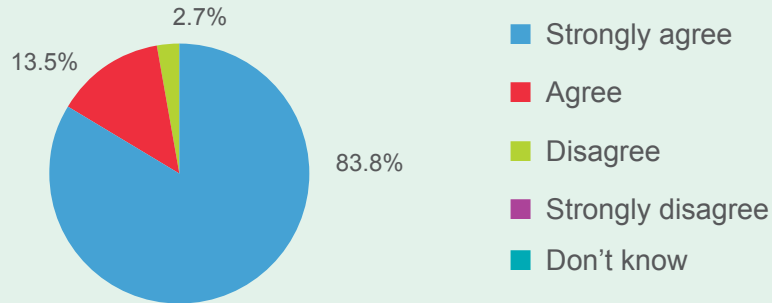
You can access these case studies on the Inverclyde Council website www.inverclyde.gov.uk.

“ Previously professional learning was about evaluating the courses, now it is about evaluating the impact in my class. ”

primary school teacher

Pre-inspection questionnaire feedback from 37 heads of establishment

The Senior Management Team and staff in the education authority show a high level of commitment to improving education.



There is clear evidence from staff at all levels of robust self-evaluation focused on improvement. There is very strong alignment between the strategic vision and the day-to-day practice of staff working in various roles across the service. Staff in education settings feel valued and empowered to be creative and innovative. They are very clear about their role in self-evaluation and establishment improvement and how this links to better outcomes for children and young people. Staff are increasingly taking on leadership for improvement roles at all levels, which has resulted in a strong authority-wide culture of distributed leadership. The highly effective approach developed by the Attainment Challenge leads has ensured that coaching and modelling officers are delivering sector-leading practice in supporting leadership for learning in the classroom. This practice is described in full on the Inverclyde Council website www.inverclyde.gov.uk.

“ There has been a shift in culture with higher expectations of staff and young people. ”

secondary school teacher

The authority has built upon, and further strengthened the impact of partnership working to enhance staff capacity in leading learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Community learning and development is a highly effective partner for schools, working to improve the life chances of children and young people and their families. Community learning and development-led learning sessions are delivered to families in primary schools and direct support is currently being provided for over 150 young people in secondary schools. A range of courses, including those focused on personal development have supported a number of parents to successfully move onto college, university and employment. Parents and carers who met with the inspection team spoke very passionately about the impact of the learning opportunities, on their lives and those of their children, with a few describing the powerful life changing impact of the experiences on themselves and their families.

The authority's clearly articulated approaches to multi-agency professional learning is developing sustainable, collaborative and collegiate interventions which are improving outcomes for children. This work is guiding and directing universal and targeted interventions and facilitating the sharing of good practice. Inverclyde

educational psychology service has developed a range of high-quality partnerships. The service delivers, and in some cases leads, a wide range of evidence-based interventions, for example, Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach and Seasons for Growth.

“ By going to cook school I feel more confident to try out other clubs and activities in school. ”

S3 learner

Family learning

Across Inverclyde Council, establishments have engaged in a wide range of sector-leading family learning initiatives which are enabling establishments to better inform and involve parents in supporting their child's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. A coordinated approach across education, Barnardo's, community learning and development and Inverclyde Council libraries has led to the provision of popular and greatly valued holiday/lunch clubs to tackle the issues of poverty and meet the needs of local families. As a direct result of these interventions, parents report that they are now increasingly confident in supporting their children's learning and are more involved in the life of the school. For example, family drop-ins within schools, family learning clubs after school, family breakfast clubs, the Star café and Seasons for Growth for adults. These initiatives are supporting parents and carers to participate more in their child's learning and to engage in their own personal development. Through support from community learning and development, a number of parents have successfully achieved a wide range of adult achievement awards focused on improving their own communication and literacy skills.

Parents are appropriately provided with, or signposted to, relevant information in areas such as financial support, welfare rights and jobs clubs. The lunch clubs held during summer 2017 were highly successful and provided more than 6,000 lunches to children and families. Pop up libraries and a range of fun and learning activities attracted families with the ambition of improving literacy and actively participating in outdoor learning. The number of children completing the summer reading challenge doubled last year, with significantly higher numbers of boys taking part compared to those in other parts of the country. This initiative, alongside the impact of the summer lunch clubs is motivating boys and girls to read more.

Schools have been highly creative and proactive in making use of partners to enhance their offer of support to families. In particular, the impact of the Nurture Service Inverclyde led by Barnardo's and focused on family support has been far reaching, with 160 families currently involved. Well-informed and targeted interventions have resulted in improved outcomes in children's attendance, motivation and attainment.

How effective is the education service's leadership, governance and management of resources to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap?

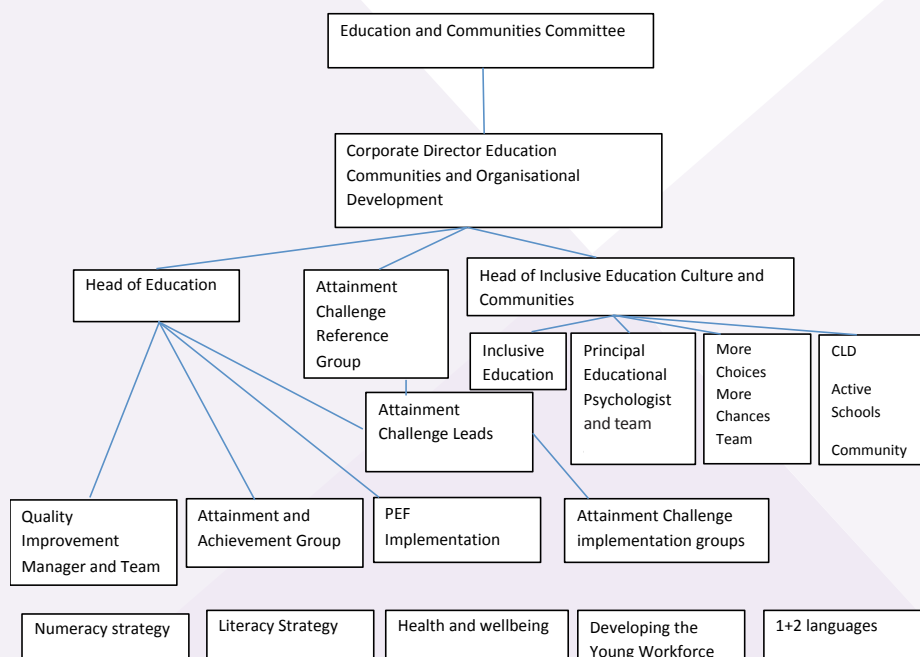
Elected members, the Chief Executive of the council, head of education and the wider education leadership team provide very strong leadership and direction. Through a collective drive to reduce the impact of poverty across Inverclyde Council, they are inspiring educators across the education community to deliver the aspirational goals they have for all children, young people and families.

“ We are using every resource to push, push, push. We are asking what changes can we make in our community, our school and in our class. ”

principal teacher

Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund plans are very well aligned with the council's strategic aims and priorities. These funds are being used effectively to extend the reach of existing and previously planned initiatives. This ensures the council's approach is embedded within their longer-term strategic priorities, and is therefore likely to be more sustainable.

The policy decision-making structure for education in Inverclyde Council



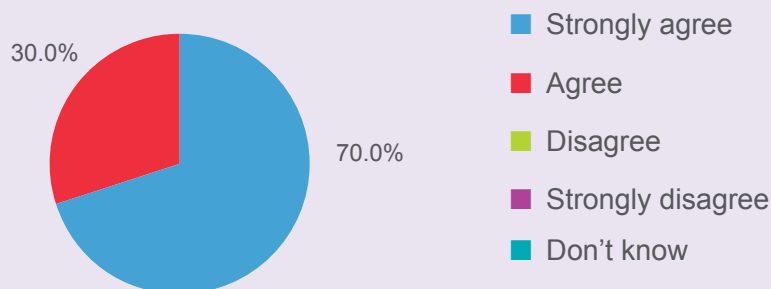
The planning and management of all Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund interventions is robust. The governance framework ensures appropriate methods for scrutiny and challenge are in place, while also supporting the sharing of progress with stakeholders. The wide range of experience among Education and Communities Committee members is an important factor in making the committee work effectively. Through the Education and Communities Committee, senior leaders provide regular updates which ensure members have a good understanding of the priorities for education. Elected members also provide sound support and challenge to the head of education and the wider education leadership team. Going forward, it would be helpful to consider how the voice of the learner could be further strengthened through the committee process.

Inverclyde Council has successfully created very strong conditions across all services, including centrally-deployed staff, educational practitioners, third sector organisations and other partners, to work collaboratively to improve educational outcomes for all children and young people. For example, the strong values-based leadership shown by the Attainment Challenge leads delivering on an ambitious agenda for change across the education sector. Key elements of the raising attainment strategy include a focus on securing robust evidence-based practice and the willingness to look outwards to consider practice from high-performing schools and authorities across the UK. The clarity of strategic direction, the creation of an authorising environment for staff and the strong buy-in from stakeholders are significant strengths which firmly underpin the local authority’s very good progress towards ensuring excellence and equity.

Centrally-deployed staff, heads of establishments and chairs of Parent Councils who completed the pre-inspection questionnaires reported very high levels of confidence in education service senior managers. In focus group discussions, almost all stakeholders, including parents/carers, partners, children and young people spoke very positively about the quality of education and support they received from schools and education services more widely. Leaders, at all levels displayed a deep knowledge and understanding of their local context and the significant barriers to learning experienced by many children, young people and families in their communities. In February 2018, for the third year running, the Clyde Conversation project brought together young people from across the six secondary schools to discuss their concerns and to suggest changes or improvements to services to better meet their needs. They identified three areas of concern: mental health, drugs and alcohol. These will now feed into the health and wellbeing interventions at school, family and community levels.

Pre-inspection questionnaire feedback from 30 centrally-deployed education service staff

Senior managers have established a clear vision for the education authority which has been shared successfully.



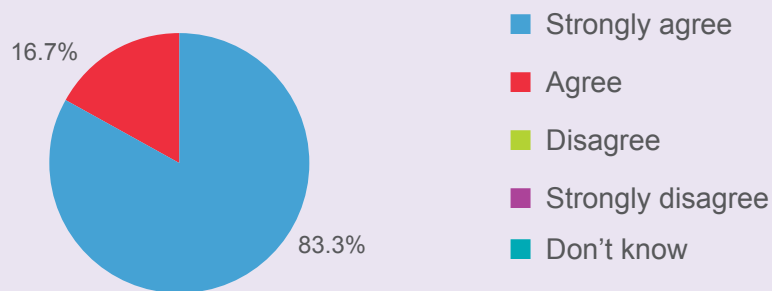
Strong impactful leadership is a powerful feature across the education service at all levels. The head of education, very well supported by her teams, has instilled self-belief and confidence in her staff.

“ Funding has challenged us to think differently. My accountability as a headteacher has increased and I must be able to demonstrate impact. ”

secondary school headteacher

Pre-inspection questionnaire feedback from 30 centrally-deployed education service staff

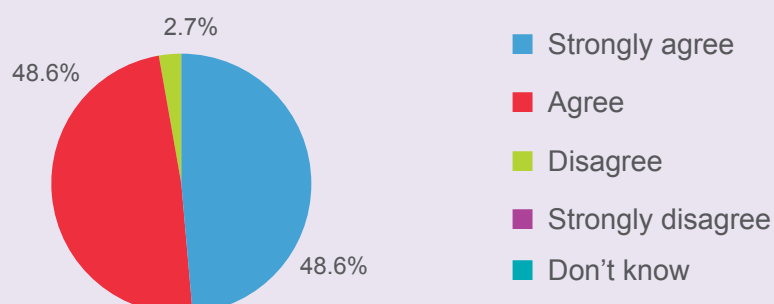
The education authority is well led.



Inverclyde’s arrangements for the ongoing financial monitoring of Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund spending are sound. Robust monitoring and reporting arrangements ensure that the Education and Communities Committee, the education service and headteachers have regular oversight of how and where the funding is being spent. However, risk management arrangements could be further strengthened. The authority recognises that a comprehensive, embedded approach to risk management should now be developed. This includes evaluating, with partners, which initiatives are having the greatest impact on closing the poverty-related attainment gap and planning how these will be sustained going forward.

Pre-inspection questionnaire feedback from 37 heads of establishment

The education authority supports me to be confident and effective in financial management.



The contribution of the Inverclyde educational psychology service to the Scottish Attainment Challenge

HM Inspectors are confident that the educational psychology service is making a very strong contribution to the council's work in closing the poverty-related attainment gap through, for example, the implementation of the Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach programme and trauma informed practice. The authority has provided an effective authorising environment for the educational psychology service to turn theoretical constructs into practice. The service's current improvement plan effectively supports the delivery of national and education authority priorities. It is underpinned by a clearly articulated social justice model and driven by the excellence and equity agenda. The service has overtaken the improvement actions outlined in the Education Scotland's [validated self-evaluation report](#) (2015). The service recognises the need to continue to develop its policy framework and communicate its offer more clearly to stakeholders.

Inverclyde educational psychology service has influenced authority thinking in terms of learning, teaching and assessment by participating in the development of the newly-launched authority policy. The service has effectively used a range of data sets to better identify and target needs. For example, a collaborative review of speech and language therapy and school data was very effective in identifying the need to prioritise restorative approaches and language development skills. The service recognises that further work is required to strengthen their contribution to improving numeracy outcomes. Educational psychologists have invested significant resources in building practitioners' capacity across all sectors by providing high-quality professional learning.

Inverclyde educational psychology service is implementing an effective range of evidence-informed interventions which are positively impacting on the lives of children, young people and families, including:

- nurture
- trauma informed practice
- Seasons for Growth

You can access these case studies on Twitter twitter.com/inverclyde.

The service's use of collaborative action enquiry and implementation science allows them to evidence the long-term impact on practice. The service has led the development of a coping with adversity initiative to develop staff knowledge and skills in trauma informed practice. A robust needs analysis resulted in a detailed training programme which has been positively evaluated. The service, well supported by the authority, will continue to review and expand the range of interventions focused on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

To what extent is the education service improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap?

Through a range of well-chosen and targeted interventions, reflecting sector leading practice, Inverclyde Council is making very good progress in improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap. Through its strong collaborative culture, working with key teams and heads of establishment, the education authority has a clear, evidenced-informed picture of Inverclyde Council's poverty-related attainment gap. There is strong evidence that the approaches being taken across Inverclyde Council, combined with strong leadership and ambitious aspirations to narrow the poverty-related attainment gap are leading to improved outcomes for learners. Commendably, a wide range of practice is shared on the [National Improvement Hub](#), including: uplifting leadership and peer support in community learning and development. HM Inspectors are confident that the evidence and evaluations to date indicate the following strengths and aspects for development.

Strengths

- The very strong vision and shared values which are 'lived by all' across the authority.
- The influential leadership at all levels, from the Chief Executive, head of education through the central teams, and heads of establishments empowering staff to play their part in improving the life chances of children, young people and their families.
- Sector-leading evidence-based professional learning resulting in a culture of strong reflective and confident practitioners.
- Staff and partners working very effectively together to provide sensitive and well-judged support for children and young people, which is improving literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Robust self-evaluation, supported by strong strategic governance, at the heart of Inverclyde Council's practice.

Aspects for development

- Continue to secure high-level outcomes for all children and young people.
- Strengthen exit and continuation strategies for Scottish Attainment Challenge initiatives.

What happens next?

Education Scotland is confident that the evidence and evaluation to date indicates that Inverclyde Council is making very good progress in improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Their self-evaluation processes are robust and demonstrate improvements. As a result we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection.

HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
October 2018

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