Thank you for the invitation to comment on the performance of Education Scotland in relation to their objectives and in relation to the Christie Principles. Bearing in mind that the agenda has been moving apace in the past year with the advent of the National Improvement Framework, the subsequent Education Summit and delivery plan as well as efforts to review CfE related workload we do not think it would be hugely useful to offer a commentary on Education Scotland’s performance against their own plans. Instead, we would like to briefly reflect on three of the Christie Principles:

• Reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use.

• We must prioritise expenditure on public services which prevent negative outcomes from arising.

• Our whole system of public services – public, third and private sectors – must become more efficient by reducing duplication and sharing services wherever possible.

Reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use. Education has, over a number of years, involved AHDS and other key players in discussion and debate about the future of inspection services. There has been open discussion about options for consideration and feedback from try-outs of different approaches to inspection. We welcome this engagement and believe it has been full, genuine and useful.

In relation to the broader curriculum support area of the ES remit there has been ongoing consultation about a range of issues, draft publications and we have worked jointly on a number of development events for school leaders.

With all of this in mind, we feel that Education Scotland is making good efforts to ensure that we are consulted about “the design and delivery of the services” we use.

• We must prioritise expenditure on public services which prevent negative outcomes from arising.

It is debatable whether Education Scotland could be expected to prevent negative outcomes from arising. It’s inspection regime looks at the current position of any school at the time it is visited. So, while we are operating under a sample model that
is expected to result in inspection of each primary school roughly once every eleven years (though schools are not simply inspected on a rotation so the gap between inspections could be significantly smaller or larger for some), heading off potential negative outcomes through inspection would be a coincidence of timing.

It strikes AHDS that the resources of Education Scotland could be much more effectively used to pursue this goal by stopping individual school inspections. Instead, Education Scotland could inspect the capacity and ability of the systems local authorities have in place to know, support and improve schools.

• Our whole system of public services – public, third and private sectors – must become more efficient by reducing duplication and sharing services wherever possible.

We are not convinced that this principle has been fully overtaken by Education Scotland. There is considerable over-inspection of local authority nursery provision. This burden is only partly created by Education Scotland – the much greater element is inspection by the Care Inspectorate. The inspection burden in this sector merits some consideration.

Best regards,

Greg Dempster
AHDS General Secretary
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