



Your Ref:
Our Ref: ES/SG
Contact: Eleanor Sheppard
Location: Marishcal College

Date: 16 October 2026

Dr James Johnston
Clerk to the Education and Gaelic Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Dr Johnston

Local Authority Approaches to School Education

Thank you for your letter of 7 October 2026 inviting an update on Aberdeen City Council's response to the recommendations arising from HMIE's thematic inspection of local authority approaches to supporting school improvement, and on our implementation of the revised national attendance guidance.

Response to the HMIE thematic review

The Council welcomed the thematic review and its recognition that there is much to commend in local authority support for school improvement. When in receipt of the summary report for Aberdeen City Council we reported findings to the Education and Children's Services Committee through our routine Inspections reporting arrangements.

[Inspection Reporting Cover Report](#) [Feedback from HMIE - National Thematic Inspection](#)

In direct response to feedback from the thematic inspection, Aberdeen City Council identified priorities for the National Improvement Framework Plan, particularly around building leadership capacity and capability and updated its Quality Improvement Framework.

The Quality Improvement Framework provides a clear and consistent basis for planning, delivering and evaluating support to schools, while retaining sufficient flexibility to respond to the context and needs of individual school communities. It sets out shared expectations for quality improvement activity, constructive challenge, professional dialogue, evidence-led self-evaluation and proportionate intervention.

The Framework is kept under yearly review. Its operation and impact are considered against the available evidence, including attainment, achievement, attendance, wellbeing and inspection information, together with qualitative intelligence from schools, learners, families and partners. Any proposed revisions are informed by that analysis and are subject to approval by the Education and

Children's Services Committee. This annual, data-led governance cycle is intended to ensure that the Framework remains responsive, proportionate and aligned with national expectations. There is considerable evidence that the Frameworks are driving improvement. Links to the most recent Committee papers are included below.

[Committee Report - Approaches to Quality Improvement 2026
Aberdeen City QIF 2627](#)

Good practice is shared through professional networks such as our various Aberdeen City Networks and meetings and ADES, through peer collaboration (for example the Northern Alliance or the ADES Quads) and engagement with regional and national partners. These arrangements support collective learning and reduce unnecessary variation.

Support for pupils experiencing persistent absence

The revised national attendance guidance has reinforced the Council's focus on attendance as a wellbeing, inclusion and improvement matter. Schools monitor attendance regularly, identify emerging patterns early and respond in a person-centred and proportionate way. Attendance information is considered alongside knowledge of the child or young person's circumstances so that the response addresses underlying barriers rather than absence in isolation. Attendance data is presented to each meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee to ensure effective scrutiny of our arrangements.

Our Education Psychology Service offer targeted support and guidance for schools linked to persistent absence and this continues to be well received by schools. Where persistent or concerning absence is identified, schools work with the pupil and family to understand the causes, agree appropriate actions and review progress. Depending on need, this may include support from education, health, social work, family support and other relevant services. Multi-agency planning is intended to provide coordinated support, clear accountability and timely escalation where risks or barriers cannot be resolved through universal arrangements. Implementation is being monitored through the Council's established performance and quality improvement arrangements. Quantitative attendance data is considered with qualitative evidence about individual experience, the timeliness and coordination of support, and the effectiveness of interventions. This enables schools and the authority to identify patterns, test whether approaches are improving outcomes and direct additional support where it is most needed.

I trust this provides the Committee with a helpful overview of the Council's current approach. We remain committed to continuous improvement and to working with schools, families, partners and other local authorities to strengthen the consistency and impact of support.

Yours sincerely

Eleanor Sheppard
Executive Director - Families and Communities