

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

***Strictly embargoed until 00.01am Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September***

### **Ambitious vision highlighted as Department strength**

The independent inspection carried out by Education Scotland into Guernsey's Education Department has highlighted the improvement in levels of attainment and achievement across all stages of education since 2011.

The Strategic Inspection report, which is published today, acknowledges the very bold political change programme that the Education Board had set itself in its 2013 Vision document and the huge amount achieved in a short period of time.

The team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland set out to answer the following key questions during the course of the inspection:

- What key outcomes have the Education Department achieved?
- What impact has the Department had in meeting the needs of learners, parents, carers and families in the community?
- How effective is the delivery of education services?
- How well is the Education Department led?
- What is the Education Department's capacity for continuous improvement?

'I am pleased that Education Scotland recognised that this has been a period of significant change, competing strategic priorities arising from States-wide decisions, staff changes and budget restrictions,' said Education Minister, Robert Sillars.

'The inspection report has left no stone unturned; the inspectors looked at everything, questioned everything and expected to see firm evidence of the improvements we have made.

'The Board stated that our main priority following the last election was to improve educational outcomes. We have successfully achieved this and the inspectors have recognised and acknowledged that many of these improvements are as a result of the interventions and the support and challenge provided by Department staff working with schools,' said Deputy Sillars.

'We will continue to set ambitious and aspirational targets for raising overall levels of achievement in schools and will continue to develop our robust, rigorous and reliable system for tracking and monitoring children and young people's progress across their education. Further improving educational outcomes remains at the top of our priority list.'

The inspection provided an independent external evaluation of the effectiveness of the Department and was conducted within a framework of quality indicators known as QMIE2 published by HM Inspectorate of Education. QMIE2 involves a process of self-evaluation and scrutiny and is focused on reviewing the quality of a service's impact and outcomes, and its ability to drive forward continuous improvement. This process also mirrors the inspection process for States schools.

States of Guernsey Chief Executive, Paul Whitfield, said the self-evaluation approach being led by the Education Department linked to the aims of Service Guernsey and the recently published plans for the reform of the Public Sector.

'Focusing on those we serve and understanding the needs of our customers can be no better reflected than by successfully educating the Bailiwick's young people; 'our future',' said Mr Whitfield.

'Public Sector Reform clearly sets the ambition to provide access to transparent performance reporting across the provision and quality of public service. The inspection commissioned by Guernsey's Education Department and carried out by Education Scotland strongly endorses the benefits of doing so.'

'This has been a steep learning curve for Department staff but one I am pleased to say they have all embraced wholeheartedly,' said Education Chief Officer, Jon Buckland.

'The self-evaluation process has helped us celebrate and share what we do well but has also encouraged us to look closely at areas where we can improve.

'We know we have further work to do on developing more meaningful ways of consulting, communicating and engaging with parents when we are making key decisions that may affect their children's learning. We also need to make sure we capture the views of our young people, staff and the wider community when considering making any changes to the education system and try to involve them in the co-design of any change at an earlier point in the process. One of our key priorities is to move away from the old days of 'announce and defend' decision-making to a new era of genuinely engaging people by adopting a 'debate and decide' mindset. This supports the customer focused theme within the Public Service Reform agenda.

'We have already begun to work on this and are in the process of developing some exciting and innovative ways to encourage the community to take part in our latest consultation on the future structure of secondary and post-16 education which will be launched soon. The feedback from the consultation will be used to shape the Board's proposals going forward,' said Mr Buckland.

The inspectors also highlight the need to further improve the Department's strategic leadership. The report states that *'too often, members of the leadership team are overly focused on routine administration and operational matters. They now need to focus on key priorities and ensure that important decisions are taken as quickly as possible.'*

'This is something that the Department's leadership team wrestles with on a daily basis, especially at a time of such significant change' said Mr Buckland.

'We are a small team with a wide remit but I am pleased that Education Scotland have recognised that we are a leaner, more outward-looking organisation with an open and empowering ethos and culture. We will continue to develop our leadership capacity across the organisation and devolve decision-making to the appropriate level.

'Our new business planning processes are helping us to link the Vision's strategic outcomes with our priority workstreams and monitor and track progress in real time. We are continuing to devolve greater leadership and management to schools and will seek changes to existing States structures to allow our schools the freedom to make decisions about their schools, albeit within an agreed policy framework. We have already introduced new governance arrangement for the College of Further Education and are devolving more responsibilities to our schools.'

The inspection report identified the need to improve approaches to inclusion to enable all learners to achieve their potential.

'We have already started to restructure the Department and our special needs support services so that we are better placed to ensure that all children and young people are included and supported appropriately,' said Director of Education. Alan Brown.

'The forthcoming Children and Young People's Plan will highlight the importance of the youth voice and we want to work more closely with learners and parents to provide a service that builds on the many examples

of good practice that we have in our schools and services in this area and ensure that all staff are doing their utmost to enable our most vulnerable learners to thrive.

'I am particularly pleased that the inspectors recognised the strong partnerships we have with other groups such as the Sports, Arts and Youth Commissions, and a wide range of voluntary agencies,' said Mr Brown.

'The inspectors acknowledge that our young people have access to a wide range of opportunities both in and out of school to ensure we develop well-rounded, confident and responsible young people who are prepared to fully participate in our own community and beyond.'

These are the quality indicator judgements of Education Scotland

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Improvements in performance	Good
Impact on learners	Good
Impact on parents, carers and families	Weak
Impact on staff	Satisfactory
Impact on local community	Satisfactory
Delivering education services	Satisfactory
Inclusion, equality and fairness	Weak
Improving the quality of services and establishments	Good
Vision, values and aims	Satisfactory
Leadership and direction	Satisfactory
Leadership of change and improvement	Satisfactory

As stated in the Inspection report:

*An evaluation of **good** applies to provision characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of good represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of learners' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the council should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.*

*An evaluation of **satisfactory** applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of satisfactory indicates that learners have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on learners' experiences. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they will constrain the overall quality of learners' experiences. It implies that the council should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.*

*An evaluation of **weak** applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of weak may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish learners' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for structured and planned action on the part of the council.*

**Note to Editors: You are invited to the Education Department's office at the Grange at 4pm on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September where the Minister, Mr Buckland and Mr Brown will be available for interview. Please note all interviews are strictly embargoed for publication until 00.01am Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September.**