

Item: 13

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 4 June 2025.

Education Scotland Inspection – Stromness Academy.

Report by Director Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

- 1.1. In March 2025, Education Scotland undertook a full inspection of Stromness Academy.
- 1.2. The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work:
 - Young people are a considerable strength of the school. They are polite, welcoming and engage well with adults and visitors. They are respectful, articulate and demonstrate pride in their school, local community and heritage.
 - Senior leaders, working well with staff, ensure respectful relationships are evident across the school. This helps to create a calm and positive learning environment, where most young people feel cared for and valued.
 - Staff work with partners effectively to ensure young people experience a range of achievements and learning opportunities. These support young people to develop important skills, including teamwork and communication.
- 1.3. The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the Head Teacher and the Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary Education):
 - Senior leaders should improve strategic leadership across the school. All staff should be clear on their role in supporting improvements that result in positive outcomes for young people. They should develop well-embedded approaches to measuring and evaluating the quality of the work of the school.
 - All staff need to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school. Teachers need to embed positive classroom routines. They need to be more responsive to the needs of learners, including a majority who require increased pace and challenge in their learning.
 - Middle leaders and teachers need to work together to improve the shared understanding of national standards relating to the broad general education (S1 – S3). Teachers need to use assessment strategies better to measure the progress of learners more accurately.
 - Senior and middle leaders should improve their strategic overview of the attainment of young people over time. They should work with staff to improve their ability to use data effectively to advance their practice and raise the attainment of young people.

- 1.4. The evaluations given to the quality indicators for the school are as follows:
- Leadership of change – weak.
 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment – weak.
 - Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion – satisfactory.
 - Raising attainment and achievement – satisfactory.
- 1.5. HM Inspectors think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvement. They will liaise with the Council regarding the school's capacity to improve and return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of the publication of the inspection findings.
- 1.6. The areas for improvement, outlined above, will be taken forward by the school, supported by the Education Service. A Secondary Improvement Collaborative Group has been established to support this work and ensure that lessons learned from this inspection are applied in all of Orkney's Secondary and Junior High Schools.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
- i. Note the inspection letter in respect of Stromness Academy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, issued by Education Scotland on 3 June 2025.

For Further Information please contact:

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial** – Not applicable.
2. **Legal** – Not applicable.
3. **Corporate Governance** – Not applicable
4. **Human Resources** – Not applicable.
5. **Equalities** – Equality Impact Assessment is not required for performance reporting.
6. **Island Communities Impact** – Island Communities Impact Assessment is not required for performance reporting.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:

- ☒ Growing our economy.
- ☒ Strengthening our Communities.
- ☐ Developing our Infrastructure.
- ☐ Transforming our Council.

8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan: The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:

- ☒ Cost of Living.
- ☐ Sustainable Development.
- ☐ Local Equality.
- ☐ Improving Population Health.

9. Environmental and Climate Risk – Not applicable.

10. Risk – Not applicable.

11. Procurement – Not applicable.

12. Health and Safety – Not applicable.

13. Property and Assets – Not applicable.

14. Information Technology – Not applicable.

15. Cost of Living – Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

None

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Inspection Letter from Education Scotland.

3 June 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2025, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Stromness Academy. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- Young people are a considerable strength of the school. They are polite, welcoming and engage well with adults and visitors. They are respectful, articulate and demonstrate pride in their school, local community and heritage.
- Senior leaders, working well with staff, ensure respectful relationships are evident across the school. This helps to create a calm and positive learning environment, where most young people feel cared for and valued.
- Staff work with partners effectively to ensure young people experience a range of achievements and learning opportunities. These support young people to develop important skills, including teamwork and communication.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Orkney Islands Council.

- Senior leaders should improve strategic leadership across the school. All staff should be clear on their role in supporting improvements that result in positive outcomes for young people. They should develop well-embedded approaches to measuring and evaluating the quality of the work of the school.
- All staff need to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school. Teachers need to embed positive classroom routines. They need to be more responsive to the needs of learners, including a majority who require increased pace and challenge in their learning.
- Middle leaders and teachers need to work together to improve the shared understanding of national standards relating to the broad general education (S1 – S3). Teachers need to use assessment strategies better to measure the progress of learners more accurately.
- Senior and middle leaders should improve their strategic overview of the attainment of young people over time. They should work with staff to improve their ability to use data effectively to advance their practice and raise the attainment of young people.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using four quality indicators from [How good is our school \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Stromness Academy

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Leadership of change	weak
Learning, teaching and assessment	weak
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	satisfactory
Raising attainment and achievement	satisfactory
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our school? (4th edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at:

[Stromness Academy | Inspection Report | Education Scotland](#)

What happens next?

As a result of our inspection findings, we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. We will liaise with Orkney Islands Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Orkney Islands Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school we will write to you as parents/carers informing you of the progress the school has made.

Graham Parry
HM Inspector