Glasgow City Council Internal Audit Section
Committee Summary
Education Services – Staff Census Review

Item 2(e)

26th March 2025

1 Introduction

1.1 As part of the agreed Internal Audit plan we have carried out a review of the Education Services (EDS) teacher staff census process for 2023. The purpose of the audit was to obtain assurance that the processes for conducting the census are adequate and effective to ensure that the data submitted is complete, accurate and timely and that arrangements are in place to address any improvements required.

1.2 EDS conduct an annual staff census exercise in September of each year. The exercise is undertaken through the coordination of a series of activities between Education Services and Customer & Business Services (CBS).

1.3 The census is a legislative requirement that all 32 local authorities are required to undertake and involves the collection of teacher numbers within the Council, along with various additional factors relating to teaching staff, e.g. demographics, contractual information etc.

1.4 Census information is provided to the Scottish Government and is an important factor in determining Local Authority funding. It is therefore essential that the figures provided are as accurate as possible.

1.5 It was previously identified that there were some variances between years that raised concerns about the accuracy of data. A subsequent lessons learned exercise was conducted by EDS to understand the causes of the variances and so that plans could be put in place to address these for future exercises.

1.6 EDS is responsible for managing the census process, including the validation and submission of the data from SEEMIS (a system that holds education staff and pupil data upon which the census is based) to the Scottish Government.

1.7 Responsibility for the routine maintenance of the data within SEEMIS is shared between various parties, including CBS Service HR and local school establishments who are required to update SEEMIS when new staff join the Council or when their circumstances change.

1.8 The scope of the audit was to ensure there are sufficient and appropriate controls in place for the census process and submission. The scope included:
- A review of the lessons learned report from the 2023 exercise, ensuring that the actions identified have been progressed within the agreed timescales.

- The census planning arrangements, ensuring that there are adequate procedures and guidelines for staff to follow when collecting/submitting census data.
- The training and communication arrangements to support staff involved with the management of the census and the collection of census data.
- A sample based review of new and amended teacher records within SEEMIS, to ensure that these updates are completed accurately.
- The arrangements in place for ensuring that data is collected in full and on time, along with the escalation processes in place where this is not complied with.
- The arrangements in place for verifying the accuracy of census data including the detection and remediation of variances and/or errors.
- The arrangements for ensuring that access to census data is suitably controlled throughout all stages of the census process.

2 Audit Opinion

2.1   Based on the audit work carried out a reasonable level of assurance can be placed upon the control environment. The audit has identified some scope for improvement in the existing arrangements and two recommendations which management should address.

3 Main Findings

3.1   The key controls are in place and generally operating effectively. A working group was set up to review the issues identified following the 2023 census submission and included all key stakeholders. The outcome of the formal lessons learned exercise discussions helped to shape an improvement plan that outlines key activities for the census planning process.

3.2   The census working group is responsible for reviewing workstreams within the census improvement plan and ensuring that planned actions remain on track. The plan is monitored by EDS directorate with appropriate escalation plans in place to manage actions that have not been progressed.

3.3   A series of routine activities are in place within EDS which has an annual programme of work for data quality within SEEMIS. The activities include monthly bulletins to clerical staff reminding them about priority tasks that must be undertaken. Currently, EDS are working on producing a standardised custom report for schools to run to provide data quality reports that will highlight potential errors in data.

3.4   EDS implemented a large-scale pre-census data cleanse exercise in time for the 2024 submission (that will be undertaken annually) and requires Head Teachers to complete a digital sign off to confirm that their data is accurate for all staff records on SEEMIS.

3.5   National procedures are provided by the Scottish Government in the run up to the census which provides data validation requirements within the census data by specifying required data fields. The procedures are uploaded to the Glasgow Online portal in August each year for relevant staff to access.

3.6   SEEMIS profiles are created for each user with the minimum permissions required to carry out the required role. Appropriate controls are in place to ensure users amend records only in their establishments.

3.7 Our audit testing also identified some opportunities for improvement. Although we were advised that local data quality checks were performed throughout the year by running a comprehensive custom report of all staff in school establishments, validation checks were not performed regularly, as only an interim (Business Intelligence) BI Staff Forecast report was available before the census and the complete report could only be run during census time.

3.8 EDS use SAP as its core staffing system, however, as in other Local Authorities, schools use SEEMIS to maintain their data for day-to-day management of their school including the staff census. However, data fields in the two systems did not fully correlate and challenges in merging and matching data were experienced by staff during the reconciliation process.

3.9 An action plan is provided at section four outlining our observations, risks and recommendations. We have made two recommendations for improvement. The priority of each recommendation is:

Priority	Definition	Total
High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	2
Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	0
Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	0
Service Improvement	Opportunities for business improvement and/or efficiencies have been identified.	0

3.10 The audit has been undertaken in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

3.11 We would like to thank officers involved in this audit for their cooperation and assistance.

3.12 It is recommended that the Head of Audit and Inspection submits a further report to Committee on the implementation of the actions contained in the attached Action Plan.

4 Action Plan

No.	Observation and Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response
Key Control: Data validation checks are conducted routinely and during the staff census.				
1	Although we were advised that local data quality checks were performed throughout the year by running a comprehensive custom report of all staff in school establishments, validation checks were not performed regularly, as only an interim (Business Intelligence) BI Staff Forecast report was available before the census and the complete report could only be run during census time. We were informed that a change request has been submitted to the SEEMIS Group to allow the team to have the BI teacher staff record report available 2 more times in a year, January and April. If appropriate data validation checks are not undertaken at a suitable time, there is an increased risk that data used in the census will not be accurate.	EDS should continue to liaise with the SEEMIS Group to seek to obtain more regular access to BI teacher staff reports to support data reconciliation and validation. Thereafter they should ensure the reports are utilised for routine data validation exercises.	**High**	**Response:** Accepted. Change request for report has been approved through the SEEMIS Governance Board. However, developments around SEEMIS are dependent on the 'Next Generation' rollout. **Officer Responsible for Implementation:** Strategic Support Services Manager **Timescales for Implementation:** Expected by June 2025

No.	Observation and Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response
Key Control: The data reconciliation exercise is accurate and complete to allow the detection and resolution of errors.				
2	EDS use SAP as its core staffing system while the SEEMIS system is used in all local authorities for routine pupil and teacher data management and for submission of census data. However, data fields in the two systems do not fully correlate and there are challenges in merging and matching data across the systems. We were advised that SEEMIS is the key data set that needs to be correct, as this is ultimately what is submitted during census. However, in some instances it was not the most up to date dataset and SAP may be more accurate in certain fields e.g. General Teaching Council (GTC) number which is validated by HR with the GTC. We noted a range of errors through SEEMIS and SAP reconciliation including missing data fields (records found in one system and missing in the other). EDS is aware of the issues and are addressing them through the census improvement plan and we were informed that a dialogue is ongoing with the Scottish Government asking them to consider allowing the submission of the staff census directly from SAP rather than SEEMIS .	EDS should review the arrangements for keeping data held on SEEMIS up to date and determine what improvements could be made to ensure key fields are accurate.	**High**	**Response:** Accepted Individual schools are responsible for the operational management of SEEMIS data. CBS Hub are responsible for inputting teaching staff data in August each year. A programme of work to develop a data validation tool to support this will commence shortly. This will help the accuracy of the key fields required. Regular reminders will continue to be circulated to relevant staff. **Officer Responsible for Implementation:** Strategic Support Services Manager Support Services Manager **Timescales for Implementation:** June 2025

No.	Observation and Risk	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response
	The current arrangements increase the risk that some information submitted as part of the census is not accurate.			

Internal Audit | Education Services | Education Staff Census Review