



East Lothian
Council

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2013
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)
Councillor S Brown
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor D Grant
Councillor J Gillies
Councillor W Innes
Councillor M Libberton
Councillor P MacKenzie
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor M Veitch
Ms G Gillan
Mrs M Goldsmith

Council Officials Present:

Mr D Nightingale, Head of Education
Ms K MacNeill, Corporate Legal Adviser
Ms J Ogden-Smith, Communications Officer

Clerk:

Miss F Currie, Committees Assistant

Visitors Present:

Mr P Raffaelli, Head Teacher, Dunbar Grammar School
Mr C McLellan, Pupil, Dunbar Grammar School
Ms C McArthur, Pupil, Dunbar Grammar School
Ms S McGillivray, Former Head Teacher, Stoneyhill Primary School
Ms R Fyfe, Pupil, Musselburgh Grammar School
Mr C Bain, Pupil, Musselburgh Grammar School
Ms A Hume, Olivebank Child & Family Centre Co-ordinator
Ms A Harrison, Acting Principal Educational Psychologist

Apologies:

Mr S Bunyan
Mr M McHugh

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. INSPECTION OF DUNBAR GRAMMAR SCHOOL BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of the report by Education Scotland on the inspection of Dunbar Grammar School.

Head Teacher, Paul Raffaelli, presented the report together with pupils Connor McLellan and Caitlin McArthur. They outlined a range of initiatives throughout the school which helped to encourage and support learning at all levels. Mr Raffaelli praised the skills and commitment of staff, parents, pupils and community partners who had worked together to achieve such excellent results. He acknowledged, however, that there was always scope for further improvement and the school, as a whole, was keen to keep moving forward.

In response to a question on development of literacy skills, Mr Raffaelli confirmed that the school continues to work closely with its cluster primary schools to encourage and develop literacy from an early age. In addition, it is their aim to include literacy skills work in all subjects, not just English. In relation to the Learn to Succeed programme he indicated that the school remained committed to ensuring that the more vulnerable pupils have the support they need to continue with their education and to achieve academically and through life skills work such as the John Muir Award.

When asked to comment on the statistic 93% of pupils agreed that “staff encourage me to do the best I can”, Caitlin McArthur said she felt that her teachers did not just teach but supported and encouraged her to learn.

Councillor Veitch congratulated the school on an excellent inspection report and expressed his hope that the innovative practice developed at Dunbar Grammar School would be shared elsewhere. Councillor Currie concurred with this view and praised the leadership shown by Mr Raffaelli and his staff. The Convenor thanked Mr Raffaelli for his attendance and presentation.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Note that, as a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, Education Scotland will make no further evaluative visits in connection with the inspection.
- (iii) Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the contents of the report.

2. INSPECTION OF STONEYHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of the report by Education Scotland on the inspection of Stoneyhill Primary School and Nursery Class.

Former Head Teacher, Seonaid McGillivray, presented the report as she was in charge at the time of the inspection. Also involved in the presentation were former P7 pupils Regan Fyfe and Cameron Bain. Together they gave Members a sense of

the work undertaken at the school both in the classroom and through after-school activities and community partners such as Queen Margaret University. They described the additional responsibilities P7 pupils had been given including being involved in the inspections, organising sports activities and running skills clubs for the younger children. Ms McGillivray highlighted two key areas of development - the introduction of cursive writing and the use of moderations (national assessments) - where their work had impressed the inspectors. She praised the skills and teamwork of her staff and the commitment of her pupils.

Following a question on the introduction of cursive writing, Ms McGillivray explained that it had made a huge difference to pupils, particularly those with dyslexia and had helped with their spelling. Cameron Bain said it had made his work neater and he now formed his letters more clearly. On being asked if the extra responsibilities given to P7 pupils had helped at High School, Regan Fyfe said it had made them more grown up and helped them deal with any negative behaviour from S1 peers.

Councillor Currie welcomed the report and praised the high quality work of the staff, parents and pupils. Councillor McAllister concurred, describing the work and contribution of the pupils as most impressive. Both Members expressed their hope that this good practice would be shared with other schools. The Convenor echoed this view and thanked Ms McGillivray for her presentation.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Note that as a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, Education Scotland will make no further visits to the school in connection with the recommendations of the report.
- (iii) Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the contents of the report.

3. INSPECTION REPORT OF OLIVEBANK CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of the report by Education Scotland on the inspection of Olivebank Child and Family Centre.

Centre Co-ordinator, Ann Hume, presented the report indicating that the inspection process had been a very positive experience for everyone at the centre. She highlighted some of the areas which were given specific praise including the use of "floor books" to help children become involved in their own learning and the introduction of a learning toolkit and group activities, such as cookery classes, for both children and parents. She reminded Members that the Centre was not a Nursery and that families were accepted on a referral basis. The report highlighted the 'positive learning experience' delivered by staff and commented on particular areas of innovative practice. Ms Hume concluded by saying that she and her staff team would continue to work hard and make further improvements to their service.

Councillor Mackenzie commented that he had been very impressed when he visited the Centre in the spring and he congratulated Ms Hume on an excellent inspection report. The Convenor also offered her congratulations.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Note that as a result of the very good quality of education provided by the Centre, Education Scotland will make no further visits to the school in connection with the recommendations of the report.
- (iii) Congratulate the Centre Coordinator and staff on the contents of the report.

The Committee agreed to take Item 6 next to accommodate Members who had to leave the meeting early.

6. SCHOOL SESSION DATES 2014/15

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to obtain the Committee's approval for School Session dates for 2014/15.

Head of Education, Darrin Nightingale, presented the report drawing attention to the five key points taken into account when preparing the school session dates. There were no questions or comments from Members.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Approve the school session dates for 2014/2015 as outlined in Proposal 1 (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Authorise notification to Head Teachers, Teachers' Associations, Heads of Establishments and Parent Councils.
- (iii) Authorise notification to the Scottish Government Education Department.

Councillor Veitch and Ms Gillan left the meeting.

4. PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE FOR LOOKED-AFTER PUPILS AT RISK OF EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOLS IN EAST LoTHIAN

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) asking the Committee to approve the recommendations within the report entitled "Promoting Good Practice for Looked-After Pupils at Risk of Exclusion from Schools in East Lothian".

Acting Principal Educational Psychologist, Anita Harrison, presented the findings of the report. She explained that the research had been carried out in 2011/12 by a multidisciplinary group involving young people, parents, carers, school staff and other professionals involving in supporting the young people. The aim of the research was to identify current good practice and reduce the number of exclusions. The report's recommendations included actions at Authority, school and professional levels.

In response to questions, Ms Harrison acknowledged that while some exclusions were unavoidable, the time out of school should always be kept to a minimum. She indicated that there was more work needed to build better relationships between, young people, carers and school staff to help reduce exclusion time. However, it was equally important to ensure that these young people were ready and able to return to

learning and that this did not disrupt the learning of other pupils. The research was undertaken to develop awareness of these issues and to identify the best way of achieving a successful outcome for all concerned.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the recommendations of the report entitled "Promoting Good Practice for Look-After Pupils at Risk of Exclusion from schools in East Lothian" (Appendix 1).
- ii. Approve the recommendations contained within the report (Appendix 1).

5. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of the Head Teacher appointments made by the Appointments Sub-Committee.

Mr Nightingale presented the report indicating that there were appointees both from within and out with the local authority area. A total of eight appointments had been made between March and August 2013. He also shared comments from some of the appointees on their experiences of working within East Lothian.

Councillor Currie asked whether there had been any difficulties in filling vacancies, particularly within Primary Schools, given the problems faced at a national level. Mr Nightingale confirmed that every vacancy currently being advertised had received at least two applicants, one of which was out of area. While this was not necessarily the case four months ago, numbers of applications were gradually increasing.

Decision

The Committee noted the Head Teacher appointments.

7. EAST Lothian COUNCIL PLACING REQUESTS

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of the outcome of East Lothian Council's Placing Appeals in 2013.

Mr Nightingale presented the report indicating that the Education Appeals Committee considered thirteen appeals and agreed to uphold the Education Authority's decision in respect of twelve appeals and to overturn the decision in respect of one appeal. There were no questions or comments from Members.

Decision

The Committee noted the outcome of East Lothian Council's placing appeals.

Signed

Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Convener of the Education Committee