



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 2014
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)
Councillor S Currie
Councillor J Gillies
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor D Grant
Councillor W Innes
Councillor M Libberton
Councillor P MacKenzie
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor J McNeil
Councillor J Williamson
Mr S Bunyan
Mrs M Goldsmith
Ms G Gillan

Council Officials Present:

Mr D Nightingale, Head of Education
Ms J Ogden-Smith, Communications Officer
Ms A Hood, 16+ Learning Choices Officer
Ms P Homer, Lead Officer-Early Years and Childcare

Clerk:

Ms A Smith, Committees Officer

Visitors Present:

Ms K Fleming, Head Teacher, Musselburgh Burgh Primary School (and pupils)
Ms G Whitford, Head Teacher, West Barns Primary School (and pupils)
Mr R Summers, Head Teacher, Musselburgh Grammar School (and pupils)
Ms J MacKinnon, Head Teacher, Cockenzie Primary School (and pupils)

Apologies:

Councillor D Berry
Councillor L Broun-Lindsay
Councillor S Brown
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor M Veitch
Mr M McHugh

Declarations of Interest:

None

Prior to commencement of business the Convener, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated Stephen Bunyan, who had recently been awarded an MBE.

1. MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 25 MARCH 2014

The minute of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 25 March 2014 was presented for approval.

Decision

The Committee approved the minute of the Education Committee of 25 March 2014.

2. INSPECTION OF MUSSELBURGH BURGH PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

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 Musselburgh Burgh Primary School and Nursery Class.

The Head Teacher, Karen Fleming, introduced the report, informing Members that the inspection process had been a positive experience and feedback had also been positive. She praised the commitment of the staff. Partnership working had been acknowledged by inspectors; this work had been instrumental in moving the school forward. The school was committed to core skills. One key feature had been building children's confidence by involvement in expressive arts; this promoted positive learning. The Service Improvement Plan was based on the advice of the Inspector. The pupils gave Members their impressions of the school.

Councillor McNeil praised the articulate and confident pupils and commended the commitment of all school staff, pupils and parents.

Councillor Currie made reference to the Head Teacher's clear sense of purpose and direction, as evidenced by the Inspector. He referred to the key strengths of the school. He stated that the Parent Council was well respected; the school had strong partnerships in the community. This was an inspiring report.

The Convener read a statement on behalf of Councillor Forrest. He praised the inspection report. The Management Team continually looked for new ways to improve and encourage learning, assisted by an active and committed Parent Council. Staff and parents had worked hard to improve not just the educational aspects but also the fabric of the school building.

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 OF WEST BARNES PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

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 West Barnes Primary School and Nursery Class.

The Head Teacher, Gillian Whitford, introduced the report. She referred to the particular strengths of the school as identified in the inspection report. She drew attention to the areas for further improvement and outlined the steps taken to address the main points for action. All staff were involved in some form of development. Programmes were in place to improve attainment. There was a shared vision, values and aims. A rigorous self-evaluation process had been introduced. The school had made tremendous progress this year and continued to move forward. The pupils then added their experiences of the school.

Councillor MacKenzie made reference to the Inspector's comment that the newly appointed Head Teacher had made a very strong start. He agreed that children responded well to learning that was challenging. He commented on Mandarin being taught in P1 and also the whole school health week. This inspection report bode well for the future of this school.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Note the particular strengths of the school, its recent good progress and the strong start made by the new Head Teacher.
- (iii) Note that Education Scotland will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within eighteen months of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

4. INSPECTION OF NORTH BERWICK NURSERY SCHOOL

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 North Berwick Nursery School.

The Head of Education, Darrin Nightingale, introduced the report. He informed Members that the nursery school was linked to Law Primary School but the nursery school had been inspected on its own for this particular inspection. He made reference to the key strengths identified, including the strong links with partners. The nursery school had a definite sense of community and had good, committed staff.

Councillor Goodfellow stated this was an excellent inspection report of an excellent nursery school. He was pleased that the Inspector had recognised the strong links

with partners and community groups developed during the tenure of the last Head Teacher.

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.

5. INSPECTION OF MUSSELBURGH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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 Musselburgh Grammar School.

The Head Teacher, Ronnie Summers, introduced the report. He referred to the inspection report, outlining the key strengths identified. He drew attention to the areas for further improvement and explained in detail how the Service Improvement Plan would address these areas. Staff would work with the Council's Quality Improvement Officer and the Area Lead Officer from Education Scotland. The plan included improving and broadening the curriculum, tracking progress more effectively, raising attainment and expectation, working on positive destinations, having a sharper focus on teaching and learning practices and building links with partners. He stressed that the school had the capacity to move forward. The pupils then outlined their observations and experiences of the school.

Mr Summers responded to questions regarding building capacity for improvement and making progress. He expressed confidence that by this time next year Education Scotland would have signed off their inspection. Mr Nightingale agreed; he assured Members that the school and Head Teacher would be supported by the Department.

Mr Summers responded to further questions regarding positive destinations and reference made to the recent Wood Commission report (Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce). He agreed that the Wood Commission report was very important. Vocational education was the best option for many young people; it would be a challenge for Scottish schools to get routes opened up for pupils. It was also important to consider the correct exit point from school for each child. Pupils should have a positive school experience and gain skills for both education and work. The pupils also responded to questions from Members about their experiences of the largest secondary school in East Lothian.

The Convener stressed the importance of teaching and learning and embedding this in best practice. She requested a copy of the Service Improvement Plan. Mr Summers advised that this was only in broad outline at present, more detail would be added in due course; a copy would be provided as requested.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Note the good quality of education provided by the school.
- (iii) Acknowledge the efforts of the Head Teacher and staff in the planned improvements.

6. INSPECTION OF COCKENZIE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

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 Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Class.

The Head Teacher, Jacqui MacKinnon, introduced the report, informing Members that she had taken up the post in August 2013. She had carried out a consultation exercise in September and by October/November had a clear picture of the areas requiring improvement. By the time of the inspection in February 2014 she was in a position to explain what work had been done and what was still required to go forward. The inspection had been a helpful and worthwhile experience. Following publication of the inspection report an open forum meeting for parents had been held. The school had an excellent group of children and teachers and a committed parent body; there was huge potential to improve the school. An extensive Action Plan had been prepared to address the Inspector's findings; she outlined several of the points within this plan. The pupils responded to questions from Members regarding their experiences of the school and aspects of the curriculum.

Councillor Libberton referred to previous concerns about the school but stated that following the appointment of Ms MacKinnon, the school had improved and would continue to do so. There were positive comments now from the wider community regarding the school. The restoration of the Parent Council was welcomed; the enthusiasm for taking the school forward was evident. She referred to the strengths identified by the Inspectors, highlighting in particular the well mannered children.

Councillor MacKenzie echoed these comments. He paid tribute to Ms MacKinnon for the swift emergence of a very strong Parent Council. He had confidence that Ms MacKinnon would take the school forward.

Councillor Currie agreed. He made reference to the inspection report, noting that one of the strengths was the confidence expressed by the Inspectors regarding the new Head Teacher. Good leadership was required and Ms MacKinnon demonstrated this; she gave the Committee confidence that the school was moving in the right direction.

Mr Nightingale thanked the Members for their support. He endorsed Councillor Currie's comments regarding Education Scotland's faith in Ms MacKinnon.

The Convener praised the excellent progress made by Ms MacKinnon in less than a year in post.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Note the particular strengths of the school, and the strong start made by the new Head Teacher.

- (iii) Note that Education Scotland will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of their report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

The Convener thanked all the Head Teachers and pupils for their attendance and contribution to the Education Committee.

7. POSITIVE SCHOOL LEAVER DESTINATIONS AND MCMC

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) updating the Committee regarding positive school leaver destinations using the recent School Leaver Destination Report (SLDR) and employability activity within East Lothian.

Alison Hood, 16+ Learning Choices Officer, introduced the report. She informed Members that East Lothian continued to have strong links with partners and the post 16 provision had been further developed to include the Employability Fund. There was a larger range of training providers offering a wide range of opportunities including providers focusing on specific vocational areas to providers offering more generic opportunities. Referring to additional support into positive destinations, she drew attention to particular programmes, including Caring for People-‘Men can do it too!’, TWO (Targeting Work Opportunities), Business Coaching and Community Benefits. She reported on Activity Agreements and Modern Apprenticeships. She also made reference to the Wood Commission report and its links to this report.

In response to questions Ms Hood gave further details of some of the programmes referred to earlier. She responded to other queries regarding engaging with employers, improving the destination figures classed ‘not known’ and Modern Apprenticeships. Mr Nightingale indicated, in relation to a question about the financial implications specified in the report, that he would respond outwith the meeting.

Councillor MacKenzie agreed that positive destinations for school leavers linked into the Wood Commission report, which aimed to put vocational education on the same status as higher education in Scottish schools in a way it had not been beforehand. He made a request for a briefing to be arranged for Members regarding the Wood Commission report.

Councillor Currie stated that it was crucial to raise awareness of vocational education and to highlight that higher education was not the only option. It was important to identify routes for young people wishing to go into vocational education. He would welcome further discussion on this issue.

Decision

The Committee noted the contents of the report and recognised the wide range of activities being undertaken to improve positive leaver destinations in East Lothian.

Sederunt – Councillor Innes left the Chamber

8. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (SCOTLAND) ACT

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of changes to ante- pre-school and pre-school provision as detailed in Part 6 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, passed on 19 February 2014 and received Royal Assent on 27 March 2014.

Pauline Homer, Lead Officer - Early Years and Childcare, introduced the report. She outlined the background to the changes to ante- pre-school and pre-school provision. She informed the Committee that a Steering Group, involving representatives from Cluster Groups, Human Resources and the trades unions had been set up last September to take this forward. She gave details of the information issued to parents advising of the proposed changes and other forms of publicity undertaken. She gave Members a thorough explanation of the recommendations in the report.

Ms Homer responded to questions from Members, clarifying a number of matters, including the set criteria in relation to “workless households”, and aspects relating to the financial resource from the Scottish Government.

Ms Gillan indicated that she had been a member of the Steering Group; she advised that in comparison to many other local authorities East Lothian was well prepared for these changes.

Councillor McLennan welcomed the investment by the Scottish Government.

Councillor Grant appreciated that East Lothian was well prepared for the changes. He expressed concern however that new legislation was sometimes brought in too quickly, rather than time being taken for thorough consideration of all issues.

Councillor Currie stated that these changes were hugely positive and welcomed. It was important to move forward, he added that the provision however needed to go beyond 600 hours; people needed early support.

The Convener thanked all those involved in the Steering Group. She informed Members of concerns highlighted by the CoSLA Education Children’s Group.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) An increase of 125 hours for all eligible ante-pre-school and pre-school children from August 2014. This increases the number of hours from 475 to 600 hours.
- (ii) An “eligible pre-school child” now includes a child aged 2 or over and is or has been at any time since the child’s second birthday – Looked after by the authority concerned or by another authority or the subject of a kinship care order or a child falling within section 7(3)(f) “*an eligible child who has a guardian by virtue of an appointment under section 7 of the Act.*”
- (iii) The Scottish Government have proposed secondary legislation to include provision of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare for 2 year olds from “workless households” providing families meet the set criteria.
- (iv) The term Early Education has been changed to Early Learning and Childcare, defined as “*a service consisting of education and care, of a*

kind which is suitable in the ordinary case for children who are under school age, regard being had to the importance of interactions and other experiences which support learning and development in a caring and nurturing setting”

- (v) East Lothian Council proposes to meet the increase in Early Learning and Childcare by offering extended nursery hours.
- (vi) To enable the Council to extend the hours as proposed an additional 23.67 full time equivalent nursery nurses are required. The additional posts/hours will be temporary until the longer term staffing requirements become clear.
- (vii) Eligible 2 year olds, in particular those from “workless households” will, in the first instance (2014 – 2015), be offered a place within community childcare settings rather than within Local Authority nurseries. This is to ensure that their individual needs are met and that children and families are supported within their own community. This may include Olivebank Child and Family Centre and Wraparound Care.

9. LITERACY IN EAST LOTHIAN SCHOOLS

The Convener asked that this item be postponed until the next meeting in September; the Committee agreed.

10. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS

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

Decision

The Committee noted the appointment as detailed in the report.

Signed

Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Convener of the Education Committee