



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

**TUESDAY 8 MARCH 2016
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)
Councillor D Berry (Items 2 - 5)
Councillor S Brown
Councillor S Currie
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor D Grant
Councillor J Gillies
Councillor J Goodfellow (Items 1 – 4)
Councillor M Libberton
Councillor P MacKenzie
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor J McNeil
Councillor M Veitch
Councillor J Williamson
Mr S Bunyan
Mrs M Goldsmith

Council Officials Present:

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive – Resources & People Services
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strat. & Ops)
Ms A Mitchell, Service Manager – Education (ASN & Early Years)
Mrs F Brown, Principal Officer (Business Unit)
Mr B Moody, Head Teacher, Dirleton Primary School
Ms L Penman, Communications Officer

Visitors Present:

Ms F Robertson, Education Scotland

Clerk:

Ms F Currie, Committees Assistant

Apologies:

Provost L Broun-Lindsay
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor W Innes

Declarations of Interest:

None

The Convener welcomed Fiona Robertson to the meeting and advised Members that she would shortly take up her post as the Council's new Head of Education.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2015 FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 10 November 2015 were approved.

Councillor McLennan referred to Items 2 and 4 and asked if there would be updates provided to Members.

Alex McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive, confirmed that an update on the 600 hours of early learning and childcare for priority two year olds would be on the agenda at the next meeting of the Committee. He also indicated that the letter to the Cabinet Secretary on the Scottish Attainment Fund was currently in draft form and Members would receive an update before the next meeting.

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

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

Mr McCrorie presented the report drawing Members' attention to the areas of improvement identified by Education Scotland and the areas where further work was required.

Councillor Libberton welcomed the report and the progress made since the appointment of the present Head Teacher. She also commented on the strong support provided by the parent council.

Councillor Mackenzie concurred with his colleague. Quoting from sections of the report, he paid tribute to the work of staff and parents in bringing about the improvements noted by Education Scotland.

Councillors Forrest and Brown also commended the report and the leadership shown by the school's Head Teacher.

The Convener concurred with the views of her colleagues in welcoming the improvements made since the original inspection report.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i) note the content of the Education Scotland report;
- ii) thank the Head Teacher and staff on the very good progress that had been made by the school since the return visit by HMIE in October 2015; and
- iii) note Education Scotland's view that the Head Teacher's appointment of a new Depute Head Teacher and two Principal Teacher posts, along with an entirely new team in the nursery, means that it is too early to measure the full

impact of these positive staff changes. The school needs more time to further raise attainment and implement the improvement priorities. Education Scotland's Area Lead Officer will work with East Lothian Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Education Scotland will return to make an extended visit with the Local Authority before the end of this school session, and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

3. INSPECTION OF DIRLETON PRIMARY SCHOOL BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) on the inspection of Dirleton Primary School by Education Scotland.

Brian Moody, Head Teacher at Dirleton Primary School, presented the report outlining the key findings of the inspection report, published in January 2016, and the progress made since the inspection took place in September 2015.

He responded to questions from Members on some of the statements included in the report, recent progress within the school and the arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate these improvements.

Councillor Berry considered the report to be very unsatisfactory. He challenged its content and said that it lacked the evidence to justify its conclusions. He referred to the excellence of the teaching within the school and to the staff and parent involvement all of which were, in his view, examples of good practice for other schools to follow.

Councillor Currie expressed concern over the report which, he said, lacked clarity and did not appear to reflect the reality at the school. He said he was puzzled by the hint of criticism within the report as there appeared to be no evidence to support this. He suggested that this may raise a broader issue for the Committee, in term of scrutiny.

Councillor Goodfellow remarked on the strength and involvement of the parent council, something which had not, in his opinion, been adequately reflected in the report. He concurred with Councillor Currie regarding the overall tone of the report but noted that it contained many excellent statements about the teaching and ethos within the school. He reiterated his support for the staff and their ability to address any concerns.

The Convener assured Members that their comments would be taken on board and she thanked Mr Moody for presenting the report and updating the Committee on recent progress.

Councillor Berry declared that in other circumstances he would object to the inclusion of recommendation iii but, as he was confident that the staff at the school could address the issues raised, he would accept the paragraph as stated.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i) note the content of the Education Scotland report;

- ii) thank the Head Teacher and staff on the good practice identified and the recent good progress by the school; and
- iii) note Education Scotland's view that the school needs additional support and more time to continue making improvements. Education Scotland's Area Lead Officer will work with East Lothian Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Education Scotland will return to carry out a further inspection within twelve months of publication of the letter to parents. It will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

4. UPDATE ON COMMUNICATION PROVISION – KNOX ACADEMY

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to update the Committee on progress regarding development of a new Communication Provision at Knox Academy.

Alison Mitchell, Service Manager – Education (ASN & Early Years), presented the report outlining the background and progress on the new provision. She also updated Members on the delays with the renovations, the timetable for the facility becoming operational and the arrangements for admission and enrolment of pupils.

Responding to questions from Members, Ms Mitchell advised on the implications for pupils attending existing facilities at Ross High School and the Cove, pupil capacity at the new facility and the increase in the number of children being diagnosed with autism. She also welcomed Councillor Libberton's suggestion of a visit to the facility prior to it becoming operational on 25 April.

Stephen Bunyan remarked that this new centre underlined the importance of having such facilities within East Lothian.

Councillor MacKenzie observed that physical environment was so important for children with autism and that having this quality provision was to be welcomed.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note progress regarding development of the new Communication provision in the former Haddington Infant School building, following approval at Cabinet on 9 June 2015.

Sederunt: Councillor Goodfellow left the meeting.

5. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (EDUCATION) 2014-18

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to update and inform the Committee on the development and implementation of the Department's Service Improvement Plan 2014-2018.

Mr McCrorie presented the report summarising the key points. He drew Members' attention to the recommendation that the Head of Service would provide updates to the Committee on progress made by schools, as and when appropriate.

Mr McCrorie and Ms Mitchell responded to questions from Members relating to the information provided in the report and appendices. Members highlighted errors in one of the appendices and the Convener agreed that this should be amended and the correct information circulated to Members before the next Committee meeting.

A short debate followed during which several Members referred to the importance of regular and detailed progress reports. Councillor McLennan suggested that a small, cross-party group of Committee members might be convened to discuss and agree the focus of future reviews and the frequency of reporting to the Committee. The Convener agreed to discuss this with officers and take forward any action points.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note:

- i) the Department's Service Improvement Plan 2014-18;
- ii) that the document had been disseminated to Head Teachers; and
- iii) that the Head of Service would report back to the Committee as and when appropriate on the progress made by schools in relation to the Service Improvement Plan (Education).

Sederunt: Councillor Berry left the meeting during Item 5.

6. ROLL CAPPING IN EAST LOTHIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SESSION 2016/17

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to ask the Committee to approve the S1-S4 intake levels for East Lothian's secondary schools in session 2016/17.

Fiona Brown, Principal Officer (Business Unit), presented the report highlighting the main principles for managing secondary school rolls in the county and the factors influencing these decisions, such as pupil population and migration, current and future housing developments and maximum class sizes.

Mrs Brown responded to questions from Members on the proposals for Musselburgh and Dunbar Grammar Schools and arrangements for reserving places.

Decision

The Committee agreed to a maximum intake level in S1-S4 for session 2016/17 in the schools specified in the report.

7. RESERVING PLACES IN SCHOOLS FOR CATCHMENT PUPILS WHO MOVE INTO THE CATCHMENT AREA DURING ACADEMIC YEAR 2016/17

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to obtain the Committee's approval for reserving places for incoming catchment pupils to the schools specified in the report for session 2016/17.

Mrs Brown presented the report referring to the proposals for primary and secondary schools and outlining the factors influencing decisions on reserving places. She also

responded to a question from Councillor Veitch on the proposals for East Linton Primary School.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i) hold in reserve places for incoming catchment pupils for session 2016/17 as detailed in the report; and
- ii) delegate any changes to the number of places held in reserve to the Head of Education in consultation with the Convener of the Education Committee.

8. ST MARY’S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL: ROLL CAPPING P1 FOR SESSION 2016/17

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to ask the Committee to approve the capping of P1 at St Mary’s RC Primary School for session 2016/17.

Mrs Brown presented the report outlining the background and reasons for the request.

Decision

The Committee agreed to roll cap the number of pupils admitted to P1 in session 2016/17 to a maximum of 17 pupils.

Signed

Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Convener of the Education Committee