



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

**TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2017  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)  
Councillor F Dugdale  
Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor J Findlay  
Councillor N Gilbert  
Councillor J Goodfellow  
Councillor S Kempson  
Councillor K Mackie  
Councillor B Small  
Councillor J Williamson  
Ms G Gillan  
Ms E Malcolm  
Ms T Sharp

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)  
Ms F Robertson, Head of Education  
Mr R Parker, Service Manager, Strategy and Operations  
Ms L Brown, Quality Improvement Manager  
Ms P Smith, Principal Officer, Information and Research  
Ms C Booth, Communications Officer  
Ms C Graham, Head Teacher, St Mary's RC Primary School

**Clerk:**

Ms F Currie, Committees Officer

**Apologies:**

Mr S Bunyan  
Councillor W Innes

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

## **1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 13 JUNE 2017 FOR APPROVAL**

The Convener noted that Mr Colin Gerrie had been incorrectly recorded as being Head Teacher of Dunbar Grammar School and that this should be amended to 'Musselburgh Grammar School'.

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting on 13 June 2017 were approved, subject to this amendment.

## **2. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF ST MARY'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to report to the Committee on the inspection of St Mary's RC primary School and Nursery Class by Education Scotland.

Lesley Brown, Quality Improvement Manager, introduced the report and outlined the key inspection findings. She also explained the changes to the inspection model for schools including the selected Quality Indicators and the impact of the National Improvement Framework.

Claire Graham, Head Teacher of St Mary's RC Primary School, described the inspection process. She said that while there had been a high level of scrutiny she and her staff had been well-supported by the inspection team from Education Scotland. She felt that they had gained a sense of the ethos of the school and its nurturing and respectful environment. She concluded that the inspection had identified many aspects of very good practice and she and her staff would continue striving to improve the school's overall grade.

Ms Graham responded to a number of questions from Members regarding the grading levels, the length of the inspection process, the outcomes for individual Quality Indicators, the amount of work required to move from a 'good' to 'very good' grading and the likely impact of the increase in hours for early learning and childcare.

Fiona Robertson, Head of Education, added that there were many elements of good practice identified by the inspection team but that these needed time to have a wider impact within the school. She said that one area for improvement was the need for a curriculum framework to support teachers to plan their lessons and she advised that action had already been taken to address this.

Councillor Goodfellow expressed disappointment at the format of the Education Scotland report and the lack of feedback from parents, carers and children. He said that this was a fundamental part of the inspection and their views should be reflected in the report.

The Convener congratulated Ms Graham and her staff on a positive inspection report and said that this reflected the importance of having good leadership in schools.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report.

- (ii) Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings (SIF) lodged in the Members' Library.
- (iii) Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on a positive inspection and on the good practice identified by Inspectors.
- (iv) Note that as a result of the inspection findings Education Scotland is confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve. Inspectors will make no further visits to St Mary's RC PS in connection with this inspection. East Lothian Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

### **3. INSIGHT LOCAL BENCHMARKING MEASURES TO 2017**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of trends in attainment and achievement of S5 and S6 pupils in the Senior Phase in East Lothian using the "Local Benchmarking Measures" from Insight.

Ms Brown, spoke to the report, advising that the data represented the authority's performance over the five year period between 2013 and 2017, focusing on the three "Local Benchmarking Measures" from Insight: improving attainment in literacy and numeracy; improving attainment for all; and tackling disadvantage. These three measures focused on the cumulative achievements of all young people at the end of S5 and S6. The report also provided an overview of the authority's performance in graded courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels. The Insight tool indicated that attainment in East Lothian had improved overall in the five year period to 2017 but that further improvements could still be made.

In response to questions from Members, Ms Robertson provided additional context in relation to some of the figures contained in the report, outlining the variations in presentation from school to school and how these might impact on the overall results. She also confirmed that the Virtual Comparator results came from pupils and schools out with East Lothian and that some of these may have been in receipt of Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) fund monies. She explained that SAC funding had only recently been extended to secondary schools and that, to date, no schools in East Lothian (primary or secondary) had received SAC funding. However, the authority had made additional funds available to its six secondary schools to assist them in subject areas with the most significant challenges.

Ms Robertson also responded on questions relating to early intervention and how the information in this report linked into the Standards and Quality report, the Local Improvement Plan and individual schools' improvement plans.

Elizabeth Malcolm observed that there had always been considerable stress placed on learning support departments within secondary schools but that this did not address the issue of early intervention. In her view, increasing the numbers of learning support staff in primary schools was one of the keys to seeing improvements in attainment.

Ms Robertson advised that the authority had recently undertaken a review of support for learning and the 12 recommendations for improvements, which included reviewing funding within primary schools, were now being taken forward.

Councillor Small commented that early intervention was very important and as was giving parents the message that all of the necessary action was being taken to improve attainment. He added that reading, writing and numeracy should remain a priority for resources.

Councillor Goodfellow said that the Scottish Government must recognise that attainment or equity funding should follow the child rather than the local authority. He also welcomed the new funding coming to secondary schools.

The Convener said that it was important to recognise the overall improving trend. She assured Members that the necessary resources would be allocated to support the initiatives coming forward.

### **Decision**

The Committee considered the report and agreed to note the contents.

## **4. SCHOOL SESSION DATES 2018/19**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to obtain the Committee's approval for School Session dates for 2018/2019.

Richard Parker, Service Manager – Strategy and Operations, spoke to the report. He explained the reasons for preparing school session dates for only one academic year instead of two and outlined the points taken into consideration when setting the dates. He provided details of the responses to the consultations on the proposed dates and indicated that a meeting would be taking place with neighbouring education authorities to look at session dates for 2019/2020 and beyond.

Replying to questions from Councillors Williamson and Small, Mr Parker outlined the dates within the proposals for 2018/19 which did not align with Edinburgh and Midlothian and explained that the dates for the October holiday were set to align with these neighbouring authorities. However, he agreed to include consideration of using week 42 within the discussions for future sessions.

Councillor Findlay asked whether the teaching staff felt that the number of in-service days allocated was sufficient. Ms Robertson stated that head teachers had raised the question of additional in-service days during their national conference last session and the Deputy First Minister had agreed to consider the possibility. In the meantime, she felt that there were sufficient days in the session although she conceded that where there were changes to the curriculum additional training days would always be welcome.

Gael Gillan advised that the EIS had discussed the issue and motions to request additional days were frequently put forward in response to new initiatives or changes to qualifications and these requests were relayed to the Deputy First Minister.

The Convener asked if any thought had been given to preparing session dates for three years rather than one or two.

Mr Parker indicated that while the education authority had previously moved to preparing dates for two years, because of the changes being considered by Edinburgh this had been reduced to one year. He said that the authority would

continue to keep a close eye on developments and to try to work with Edinburgh and Midlothian to put longer term dates in place.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Approve the school session dates for 2018/2019 as outlined.
- (ii) Authorise the Head of Education to notify Head Teachers, Teachers' Associations, Heads of Establishments and Parent Councils.
- (iii) Authorise the Head of Education to notify the Scottish Government Education Department.

## **5. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENT**

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

Mr Parker spoke to the report, outlining the recent appointment to Windygoul Primary School.

The Convener welcomed the appointment and considered it to be a positive reflection on the standard of the county's schools that they were able to attract high quality candidates from outside of the local authority area.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note a recent Head Teacher appointment.

## **6. EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL EDUCATION APPEALS 2017**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of the outcome of East Lothian Council's Education Appeals in 2017.

Mr Parker spoke to the report, outlining the number and outcome of the appeals.

In response to questions from members, Mr Parker advised that the Education Appeals Committee was comprised of an independent chairperson (usually an ex-head teacher), a parent representative and an Elected Member, in this case Councillor Akhtar.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the outcome of the Education Appeals.

## **7. EDUCATION SERVICE STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2016/17**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to provide the Committee with the Education Service Standards and Quality Report 2016-2017 and to inform the Committee of the education authority's success in meeting the improvement objectives set out in the Education Local Improvement Plan and Strategy 2014-2018.

Ms Robertson spoke to the report. She outlined the statutory requirement for the report and highlighted some of the key information contained within it.

Councillor Small asked how the self-evaluation exercise was validated and Ms Robertson explained that Education Scotland would scrutinise it and provide feedback and she agreed to bring their report to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Mackie raised concerns about suggestions of slippage with the completion date for the new secondary school at Wallyford. She asked that parents be kept informed of any changes to the timescales. Ms Robertson advised that an update would be going out this week to parents, schools and elected members.

Ms Robertson also responded to questions from Councillor Mackie regarding the use of monies provided under the Pupil Equity Fund and the information shared with head teachers. Ms Robertson advised that the total funding for East Lothian was £1.35 million.

Members also raised questions regarding priorities for modern languages, outdoor learning and the availability of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Ms Robertson responded to these points and, at the request of the Convener, she outlined some of the key actions that had already been taken to improve outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

Councillor Mackie urged a culture of openness and transparency. She added that when things were not clearly communicated concerns were likely to appear and she encouraged officers to be as open as possible with teachers, parents and pupils.

The Convener said that this was an important report which showed that the Council had a relentless focus on improving attainment. She asserted that the recent assessment by Investors in People had provided validation that the service was heading in the right direction and she thanked the staff for their efforts.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to approve the Standards and Quality Report 2016-2017.

## **8. EDUCATION SERVICE LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-2018**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to provide the Committee with the Education Service Local Improvement Plan 2017-2018.

Ms Robertson spoke to the report outlining the background to the improvement plan and the key areas identified for improvement. She advised Members that the plan had been submitted to Scottish Ministers but that she had yet to receive feedback.

Councillor Small referred to the section on raising attainment and early intervention regarding improvements in literacy and numeracy. He maintained that the key

stakeholders should include parents and that a specific reference to literacy and numeracy should be included in the parental engagement strategy. Ms Robertson agreed to do this.

In response to questions from Councillor Forrest, Ms Robertson confirmed that the plan was supported by head teachers and that they would be involved in the implementation and evaluation of the plan. She advised that parent bodies had also been consulted and had given their support to the plan.

At the request of the Convener, Ms Robertson provided further information on the 2017-2018 theme of 'Know your gap, know your impact' which emphasised the importance of identifying those pupils that need additional support, putting appropriate strategies in place and then evaluating the impact of that additional support.

Councillor Goodfellow welcomed the emphasis on classroom learning as well as on making use of East Lothian's "natural health service – the outdoors."

The Convener reflected that previous agenda items had focused on a range of issues and this plan demonstrated how key actions would be taken forward. She looked forward to receiving progress reports at future meetings.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to approve the Education Service Local Improvement Plan 2017-2018.

Signed

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Councillor Shamin Akhtar  
Convener of the Education Committee