



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

**TUESDAY 19 JUNE 2018
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

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

Council Officials Present:

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)
Ms F Robertson, Head of Education
Mr F Parkinson, Principal Inclusion and Equality Officer
Dr L Binne, Principal Educational Psychologist
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strat. & Ops.)
Ms L Brown, Quality Improvement Manager
Ms P Smith, Principal Officer (Information and Research)
Mr S Cooper, Team Manager Communications

Clerk:

Ms F Currie, Committees Officer

Apologies:

Councillor W Innes
Mr S Bunyan

Declarations of Interest:

None

The Convener advised Members that Stephen Bunyan was standing down from his role as religious representative on the Committee. She wished to formally express the Committee's thanks to Mr Bunyan for his many contributions over the years.

The Convener also noted the retirement of Val McIntyre who had had considerable involvement in the Parental Engagement Strategy.

Councillor Small raised the issue of requesting reports for the agenda and whether it would be possible to have more scrutiny reports coming forward. Councillor McLennan supported this request and also suggested the creation of a work plan to schedule reports for future meetings.

Alex McCrorie, Deputy Chief Executive, reminded Members that the Council already had two scrutiny committees and any reports for the Education Committee had to sit within its existing policy remit.

Fiona Robertson, Head of Education, also indicated that potential issues could be addressed as part of the new cluster attainment meetings, involving Elected Members, planned for next year.

The Convener noted the points raised and agreed to take these into consideration and respond to the Members in due course.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 13 MARCH 2018 FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting on 13 March 2018 were approved.

Councillor Dugdale asked if there was any update on the Regional Improvement Collaboratives. Ms Robertson reported that a number of workstreams had been agreed with the Partners and the Council was making good progress in working with other local authorities. She said that feedback at the recent Head Teacher conference had been positive and the next stage of the work would be to take things to classroom level.

Councillor Findlay asked if any further clarification had been provided on the statutory duties to be placed on Councils as a result of the new Bill. Ms Robertson advised that the Cabinet Secretary for Education was to make an announcement the following day regarding the Bill and she agreed to update Members on the content of that statement.

2. ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE (CfE) LEVELS IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY 2016/17

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of achievement in the Broad General Education (BGE) in schools across East Lothian through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and in numeracy in 2016/17.

Ms Robertson presented the report outlining the background to the gathering and assessment of Achievement of CfE Level statistics and summarising the key results. She stated that, although pleased with the improvement, the Education Service was not complacent and was taking steps to address the gaps in attainment. She advised that she would shortly be appointing an officer to undertake further work on literacy across the county and she highlighted a CfE Data Analysis tool which the Service had

developed, at the request of local schools, is being used to assist senior management teams in analysing their data using a range of pupil characteristics.

Ms Robertson responded to a number of questions from Members providing further information on the range and reliability of the statistics, comparability with other local authorities and the frequency of assessments. She outlined some of the work currently underway to further improve attainment, to address areas where additional support was required and to share good practice with other schools. She added that at the recent Head Teacher conference it had been noted that a 'one size fits all' approach was not always appropriate and that different schools tackled the attainment gap in different ways.

In response to further questions, Pauline Smith, Principal Officer (Information and Research) explained the development of the CfE Data Analysis Tool and said that it could be expanded to look at other areas of assessment.

Ms Robertson acknowledged the need to intervene at the transition between early learning and Primary 1 and advised Members of proposals to recruit an additional officer to look at this area and address gaps not just in learning but also in children's readiness to learn. She also confirmed that, at present, East Lothian schools did not qualify for support from the Scottish Government's Attainment Fund but they did have access to Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).

Councillor Goodfellow welcomed the report and congratulated teaching staff that they had closed gaps in attainment in primary schools across the county without access to additional funding when, nationally, the gap continued to widen.

The Convener echoed her colleague's remarks and looked forward to seeing further progress through the steps outlined in the report.

Decision

The Committee agreed to consider and note the contents of the report and to endorse the next steps.

3. INSIGHT NATIONAL BENCHMARKING MEASURES TO 2017

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of trends in attainment and achievement of school leavers in East Lothian using the 'National Benchmarking Measures' from Insight.

Ms Robertson presented the report outlining the background to the benchmarking tool and summarising the performance of East Lothian schools, which had improved since the previous year and were in line with the Virtual Comparator. She advised that Lesley Brown, Quality Improvement Manager, was meeting with Head Teachers to discuss how individual schools could make improvements. She reminded Members that Insight did not quantify all awards and qualifications, such as those related to vocational courses, so not all pupil information would be included in the data.

Ms Robertson concluded that overall schools were making progress in closing the gap between pupils in the least and most deprived areas. However, there was no room for complacency and she outlined further steps for improvement.

The Members asked a number of questions: querying the statistics and their implications for performance across schools; seeking reassurance that proposed improvement actions would deliver as intended; and asking about the impact of pupils moving to private school and the absence of additional Government funding.

Ms Robertson agreed that performance did affect the quality of school leavers' destinations and she stated that only by understanding the data and knowing its pupils could the Service develop measures to improve opportunities for young people.

She advised that the Virtual Comparator did not take account of whether schools had additional funding and that some of the data could be coming from schools with access to such funding. With regard to pupils leaving to attend private schools, she indicated that the numbers were declining and she believed that this demonstrated an increased confidence in the quality of local schools.

Ms Robertson said she was confident that the steps being taken would address the gaps in attainment but that this action had to begin at the early learning stage and progress through to the Senior Phase. In addition, next year would see the introduction of cluster meetings to look at ways of further improving attainment and these would involve Elected Members.

The Convener welcomed the report and the overall improving trend in performance. She said that the Committee would closely monitor progress with the next steps.

Decision

The Committee agreed to consider and note the contents of the report and to endorse the next steps.

4. POSITIVE SCHOOL LEAVERS DESTINATIONS 2016/17

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) informing the Committee of trends in the initial destinations of pupils who left East Lothian schools using the 'Increasing post-school participation' measure from Insight.

Ms Robertson presented the report summarising the background to data gathering, the results for East Lothian in 2016/17 and the next steps. She explained that the results would be used to inform both the schools' and the authority's annual Standards and Quality Reports, and that positive school leaver destinations remained a key target within the Education Service Improvement Plan.

Ms Smith responded to questions on data gathering and advised the Members that follow up data would be published in August 2018. Several Members raised the issue of tracking information on the number of young people who drop out of employment or college courses, as well as those who maintain their positive destination. Ms Robertson advised that the Service did follow up on everyone and continued to look at the reasons behind drop outs. She said that they had identified work to be done on resilience, building confidence and encouraging young people to be independent and that within some communities PEF money had been set aside for work at P7 level.

Councillor Goodfellow said it would be useful if a report could be brought to the Committee providing further information regarding sustained participation at FE college courses.

Ms Robertson outlined work that was being done in partnership with Edinburgh College and other partners on supporting young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN) as well as supporting individual students to maintain their college courses and go on to access either further learning or employment opportunities.

In response to further questions, Ms Robertson disagreed with the suggestion that young people may go on to Higher Education simply because they didn't have the qualifications to gain employment. She said that Higher Education often improved employment prospects and, while Members were right to question the figures, she was confident that schools were working to identify appropriate pathways for their pupils. She accepted that terminology was important and that there was work to do on improving the perceptions and parity of esteem in relation to vocational qualifications.

Councillor Small observed that the length of time young people stay in positive destinations was an important issue. He agreed with his colleagues that further information was needed to show if these were being maintained. He added that the quality of the destination was also key and that the Council should be aspiring young people to get to a higher level.

The Convener thanked officers for the report and noted that this was just one piece of a wider jigsaw which was coming together to increase opportunities for young people to achieve positive destinations.

Decision

The Committee agreed to consider and note the contents of the report and to endorse the steps being taken to improve further school leavers' positive destinations.

5. INCLUDED ENGAGED AND INVOLVED: A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PREVENTING AND MANAGING SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) asking the Committee to consider the draft 'Included Engaged and Involved: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions' following further consultation.

The report was also to make the Committee aware of the updated East Lothian Council Policy for the prevention and management of exclusion from school in line with Scottish Government guidance and the legislative framework.

Lynne Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist, presented the report outlining the background to the policy and summarising the responses to the recent consultation exercise.

In reply to a question from Councillor Goodfellow, Dr Binnie confirmed that the consultation had sought views from young people who had been excluded from school.

Councillor Small asked about the costs incurred by exclusions and when officers expected to see a reduction in East Lothian's exclusion rate. Dr Binnie advised that costs, such as parents taking days off work and pupils missing school days and opportunities for learning, had been reflected in the policy. She hoped to be able to report a reduction in exclusion rates in a year's time.

Councillor Forrest asked if information was available showing the impact on those pupils who were not excluded. Dr Binnie said that it was very difficult to gather that data but that the policy was a 'whole school' policy which included support for pupils who were affected by incidents but not directly involved.

Responding to a question from Councillor Dugdale, Dr Binnie outlined the key principles of the nurturing approach which had been introduced in the last 12 months and which was now seen to be delivering benefits for pupils.

Councillor Findlay agreed that any policy needed to take into account the views and the impact on those young people who were not excluded, and to ensure that their voices were heard. He referred to recent issues within schools in North Berwick as an example.

Councillor Forrest welcomed the report but reiterated the importance of taking the views of the children into account to ensure that the policy would benefit them in the longer term.

Councillor Goodfellow said that it was a testament to the quality of the policy that there had been so much positive feedback.

The Convener concurred with the views of her colleagues and said that the Committee would look again at the statistics in a year's time.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Approve the draft Policy 'Included Engaged and Involved: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions'; and
- ii. Note specifically the guiding principles, legislative context, exclusion procedures, procedures prior to exclusion and procedures for appeals against exclusions.

6. SCHOOL SESSION DATES (2019/2020)

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to obtain the Committee's approval for School Session dates for 2019/2020.

Richard Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strat. & Ops.), presented the report summarising the discussions which had taken place with neighbouring local authorities and the responses to the Education Service consultation. He advised that the draft dates for 2019/2020 aligned with both Edinburgh and Midlothian in relation to the main holiday periods. For session 2020/2021, discussions would take place with Scottish Borders and Midlothian over proposed dates and cognisance would be taken of those dates already set for Edinburgh and Fife.

Mr Parker responded to questions from Councillor Goodfellow and Councillor Williamson regarding in-service days and the slight variance in dates between authorities.

Councillor Kempson commented that to say there were 190 pupil days was misleading as a significant number were half days. Mr Parker suggested changing the wording to '190 openings'.

Councillor Small noted the problems with discussions between authorities and the inability to align all dates. Referring to the Regional Improvement Collaborative, he said he would be concerned if this was a sign of things to come.

Councillor Goodfellow welcomed the calendar format included in the report and recommended that this be placed on the website alongside the list of dates.

The Convener thanked officers for their efforts but she too registered her disappointment that it had not been possible to coordinate the dates across all five local authorities.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Approve the school session dates for 2019/2020;
- ii. Authorise the Head of Education to notify Head Teachers, Teachers' Associations, Heads of Establishments and Parent Councils; and
- iii. Authorise the Head of Education to notify the Scottish Government.

7. ROLL CAPPING INCREASE – SECONDARY 1 (S1) AT NORTH BERWICK HIGH SCHOOL

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) asking the Committee to approve an increase in the S1 capping level at North Berwick High School for school session 2018/19.

Ms Robertson presented the report outlining the background and reasons for the requested increase in the S1 capping level. She confirmed that the school was able to revise the timetable to accommodate 180 pupils.

Replying to a question from Councillor Gilbert, Ms Robertson indicated that there would be a need for additional staff but not more than 3 full-time equivalent posts.

Councillor Goodfellow asked about the costs of the increase in school roll and whether the decline in pupils going to private schools was a factor. Ms Robertson advised that there was investment available for school expansion and that the number of pupils was expected to increase gradually throughout the year rather than the full 180 starting in August. She added that families moving into the catchment area and the size of the current P7 roll were the main factors for the increase.

Councillor Findlay asked about increases in other years within the school and whether Ms Robertson anticipated coming back to the Committee next year seeking a further increase. He also raised the issue of capacity in the catchment primary schools and whether sufficient space existed for pupils entering these schools.

Ms Robertson stated that it was difficult to predict the exact numbers of pupils moving into catchment but spaces were reserved at other levels. She said that the Education Service brought forward reports to the Committee every year regarding roll capping and reserving places. She confirmed that they would continue to track growth in key areas such as North Berwick and Haddington and plan accordingly. She acknowledged that primary schools in North Berwick had seen pressures but she

referred to recent expansion work and confirmed that the Service would continue to monitor the situation and respond as necessary.

Councillor Small commented that it was be interesting to see the impact of the new housing in the months and years to come. He said that the impact may be quite stark but that remained to be seen.

Councillor Goodfellow observed that the increase in demand may be a reflection of the quality of education in East Lothian.

Decision

The Committee approved an increase in the S1 capping level at North Berwick High School for session 2017/18 from 160 to 180 pupils; and to continue to hold 12 places in reserve for incoming catchment pupils.

8. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS

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

Ms Robertson presented the report inviting the Members to note the recent appointments and advising them that a replacement had already been found for the resulting vacant Head Teacher post at Elphinstone Primary School.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointments.

Signed

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Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Convener of the Education Committee