



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

**TUESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 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 (Items 2 – 10)
Councillor W Innes
Councillor S Kempson
Councillor K Mackie
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor J Williamson
Ms G Gillan

Council Officials Present:

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)
Ms F Robertson, Head of Education
Dr L Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education
Ms L Brown, Chief Operating Officer (Education)
Ms P Smith, Principal Officer (Information and Research)
Ms L Grant, Education Support Officer ASN
Ms J Allen, Communications Adviser

Clerk:

Ms F Currie, Committees Officer

Apologies:

Councillor B Small
Ms E Malcolm

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 19 JUNE 2018 FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting on 19 June 2018 were approved.

Item 1 - Councillor Fiona Dugdale referred to the Scottish Government's decision not to bring forward an Education Bill and asked what this meant for East Lothian.

Fiona Robertson, Head of Education, said that this would be addressed in Item 10 but that the Scottish Government had published a document in June 2018 - Education Reform Joint Agreement – to support local authorities in moving forward with the school empowerment agenda.

2. EDUCATION SERVICE LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2018-2019

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) seeking the Committee's approval of the Education Service Local Improvement Plan 2018-19.

Ms Robertson presented the report summarising the background to the Plan and the statutory duty placed on local authorities. She advised that as well as focussing on the Education Service's own identified areas for improvement, the Plan also set out the Service's contribution to the delivery of the Council's strategic plan. Ms Robertson explained that progress with improvement actions would be monitored through a range of means including Key Performance Indicators and that an update on progress would be provided to the Committee at a later date.

Ms Robertson responded to questions from Members on the reasons for the increase in the number of pupils with additional support needs, how the Plan reflected the priorities for action outlined by the Best Value Assurance Report and the Education Service's commitment to moving forwards with improvement actions. She also explained how the Service was contributing to other areas of the Council such as the Strategic Plan on Poverty.

Responding to further questions Ms Robertson provided details on the promotion, funding and uptake of free school meals, the arrangements for monitoring and measuring progress with the Plan, and maximum class sizes and the planning for projected school roles. She also outlined some of the work being done to tackle childhood obesity and partnership working to encourage learning and to provide positive destinations for disengaged young people.

The Convener commented on the Council's vision for education set out in the Plan and acknowledged the importance of measuring progress and of working closely with external partners to deliver key outcomes.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. To approve the Education Service Local Improvement Plan 2018-2019; and
- ii. To note a pupil and parent friendly version of the Education Service Local Improvement Plan 2018-2019 will be produced.

3. EDUCATION SERVICE STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2017-18

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) seeking the Committee's approval of the Education Service Standards and Quality Report 2017-2018 and providing a summary of the quality of education provision and standards of attainment and achievement across schools in East Lothian.

Ms Robertson presented the report outlining the statutory background and the range of evaluative activities which had taken place. She summarised the main findings of the report in relation to policies, attainment, achievement and external scrutiny. She highlighted several projects which were also referenced in the report and added that the Service would continue to focus on pupil empowerment and attainment.

Ms Robertson responded to questions from Members providing further details on the capacity of partnership providers to meet the increase in early learning and childcare to 1140 hours and the potential role of childminders. She also outlined changes to in-year assessment of the National 5 qualification and the arrangements being put in place to manage this and to address the dip in results.

In reply to further questions, Ms Robertson confirmed that attendance rates in areas of deprivation were closely monitored along with the intervention strategies used by individual schools. She also outlined some of the interventions being used to address exclusion rates, such as restorative practice and the inclusive classroom.

Dr Lynne Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist, added further detail on the approaches being used to manage pupils with significant complex needs and the work being undertaken with CAMHS and the Children's Strategic Partnership.

Councillor Jim Goodfellow congratulated staff on what he considered to be a phenomenal change in the performance of 'care experienced' school leavers.

Councillor Willie Innes welcomed the report which he said showed a continued improvement over a wide range of measures. He was particularly pleased to see the work on exclusions and absences and the work of officers in the centre to support schools across the county.

Councillor Dugdale also welcomed the report and echoed Councillor Innes' comments. She referred to the challenges posed by East Lothian's growing population and said she was especially pleased to see the level of partnership working.

Councillor Katie Mackie thanked officers for an interesting and thorough report. She noted the good work on exclusions but expressed concern about the drop in National 5 results.

The Convener said that the report demonstrated the continuing improvement within the Education Service. She referred to some of the recent work including the Youth Summit and the feedback this had provided. She said that, overall, the Committee should be heartened by the progress and she hoped to see further details in the coming year on the impact of poverty on learning and how this was being addressed.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the overall positive progress being made by the Education Service in delivery on the Council's Plan and the priorities within the National Improvement Framework;
- ii. Approve the Standards and Quality Report 2017-2018 and agree the improvements contained in the Standards and Quality Report; and
- iii. Note that a draft Standards and Quality Report has been submitted to the Scottish Government in line with the Local Authority's statutory duty, pending Committee approval.

4. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF PINKIE ST. PETERS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

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

Lesley Brown, Chief Operating Officer (Education), presented the report outlining the inspection model, framework and details of the Quality Indicators (QIs) assessed during Education Scotland's visit. She summarised the findings and informed Members that all QIs were assessed as 'good', except one which was assessed as 'very good'. She explained that there had been a delay in the publication of the results due to further discussions with Education Scotland and the presentation of additional evidence.

Responding to a question from Councillor Andy Forrest, Ms Brown confirmed that the areas for improvement identified in the report had been included in the school's improvement plan and would be followed up by the Quality Improvement Officer.

Councillor Mackie said that she was impressed by the relationship between the parents and teachers at the school who worked well together to support the school. She also noted the use of Pupil Equity Fund monies to recruit a social worker into the school.

Councillor John Williamson concurred with Councillor Mackie's comments. He welcomed the report and congratulated the school on a good report.

Councillor Forrest said that it was an excellent report which showed that the school continued to go from strength to strength. He was particularly pleased that the inspectors had highlighted the school's positive ethos and its commitment to support the needs of its children.

The Convener acknowledged the contributions of current and former staff and expressed the hope that the good practice identified in the report would be taken up by other schools.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter;
- ii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings (SIF);
- iii. Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on a positive inspection and on the good practice identified by Inspectors; and
- 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 Pinkie St. Peters Primary School 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.

5. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF ELPHINSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

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

Ms Brown presented the report outlining the inspection model, framework and details of the QIs assessed during Education Scotland's visit. She summarised the findings and informed Members that all QIs were assessed as 'good'. She said that there had been very positive feedback on the school's work with parents and families in the community and that the Head Teacher had only been in post four days when the inspection was announced.

In response to questions from Members, Ms Brown provided further information on the length of the inspection, the process for self-evaluation and the discussions that should take place prior to the school choosing a QI to be assessed as part of the inspection.

Councillor Dugdale said that she was delighted with the report and in particular the positive feedback regarding family learning. She looked forward to seeing further positive developments.

The Convener welcomed the report and concurred with Councillor Dugdale's remarks. She acknowledged the contributions of the staff and said she looked forward to seeing further progress.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter;
- ii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings (SIF);
- iii. Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on a positive inspection and on the good practice identified by Inspectors; and
- 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 Elphinstone Primary School 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.

6. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF PRESTONPANS PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

Ms Brown presented the report advising Members that Education Scotland had undertaken a short inspection lasting two days and assessing only two QIs - self-evaluation for self-improvement and raising attainment and achievement. She informed Members that both the letter to parents and the Summary of Inspection Findings (SIF) had now been published, although the SIF was delayed due to an error in the original text. She outlined the main findings indicating that the self-evaluation QI had been assessed as 'satisfactory' and raising attainment was assessed as 'weak'.

Ms Brown informed the Members that the areas identified for improvement were being taken forward through the School Improvement Plan with support from the Education Service. She confirmed that Education Scotland would make a return visit in due course to review progress. Ms Brown also reminded Members that a report would be presented to Council in December regarding the recent consultation exercise on the future of Prestonpans Infants School and Primary School.

Ms Brown responded to questions from Councillor Neil Gilbert regarding progress since the inspection, the timescale for implementation of the improvement plan and the likely timing of the return inspection visit.

Councillor Innes said that this was clearly a disappointing report which needed to be taken seriously and the necessary support given to the school to help it make improvements. He acknowledged the dedication of the staff and noted that the report had highlighted some positives within the school. He referred to the consultation on the future structure of the school and its impact on future development. He concluded by saying that Prestonpans Primary was a good school where the staff were committed to doing their best for the children in their care.

Councillor Gilbert echoed Councillor Innes' remarks and noted that there was some good and excellent practice within the school which should not be brushed aside. He said that the solutions lay within the school and with proper support and direction it would improve.

Councillor Mackie concurred with her colleagues but expressed concern about some of the findings. She welcomed the package of measures being put in place and said she hoped that all parties would work together to make improvements.

The Convener agreed with all of the comments and asked that Members have an update on progress in due course.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter;
- ii. Note that as a result of the inspection findings Education Scotland think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Education Scotland will liaise with East Lothian Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. Education Scotland will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within one year of the publication of the report; and
- iii. Note the steps being taken by the Education Service to improve the quality of provision at Prestonpans Primary School.

7. INCLUDED ENGAGED AND INVOLVED: IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING AND PROVIDING FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) seeking the Committee's approval of the draft policy Included, Engaged and Involved: Identifying, Assessing and providing for Additional Support Needs of Children and Young People.

Dr Binnie presented the report informing Members that the new policy was designed to ensure a consistent approach across East Lothian and to ensure that the local authority complied with legislation and the Scottish Government's 'National Approach'. The new policy would replace four existing policies which were now out of date.

Responding to questions from Members, Dr Binnie provided further details on the funding available to schools for reasonable adjustments for disabled students, teacher training on additional support needs and the procedures for assessing when extra support staff are required in a school.

In response to further questions she explained the Education Service's approach to flexi-schooling and outlined the local authority's responsibilities in relation to children who were home-schooled. Dr Binnie also provided further detail on the training and professional development of support staff.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Approve the draft policy Included, Engaged and Involved: identifying, Assessing and Providing for Additional Support Needs of Children and Young People; and
- ii. Note specifically the guiding principles, legislative context, and procedures for assessing and providing for the additional support needs of children and young people.

8. INCLUDED ENGAGED AND INVOLVED: MANAGING DISTRESSED AND CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) asking the Committee to consider and approve the draft Included, Engaged and Involved: Managing Distressed and Challenging Behaviour following initial consultation.

The report also made the Committee aware of the updated East Lothian Council Policy for the management of distressed and challenging behaviour in line with Scottish Government guidance and the legislative framework.

Dr Binnie presented the policy and advised Members that a year-long implementation plan had been agreed with the Trade Unions.

She responded to questions from Members providing further details of the strategies in place to develop positive relationships between staff and pupils. She also confirmed that Parent Councils had been involved in the consultation on the draft policy.

Dr Binnie also responded to questions on the issue of seclusion. She informed Members that the Education Service was taking a strong stance and would not tolerate the use of seclusion in East Lothian's schools. She acknowledged the recent media reports and said she was not aware of it being used in other areas of Scotland. She confirmed that the new policy was fully compliant with Scottish Government guidance.

Ms Robertson added that representatives from the Scottish Government would be visiting in December and were pleased with East Lothian's focus on inclusion.

Gael Gillan commented that challenging behaviour was increasingly a major concern for teachers at all levels. She welcomed the policy and her very positive discussions with officers regarding the approach and timescale for implementation.

Councillor Jeremy Findlay referred to the media reports on the use of seclusion and said he hoped that East Lothian would continue to fight against the practice.

Councillor Innes welcomed the policy which he said covered a complex and sensitive area. He commented on the importance of having procedures in place to keep staff and pupils safe and was pleased to hear that the Trade Unions were supportive of the policy.

The Convener also welcomed the policy and the positive engagement with the EIS.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Approve the draft policy Included, Engaged and Involved: Managing Distressed and Challenging Behaviour; and
- ii. Note specifically the guiding principles, legislative context, links with East Lothian Council's Child's Planning Framework and guidance on the use of restrictive physical intervention, seclusion, withdrawal and managing incidents involving weapons.

9. 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.

Richard Parker, Service Manager – Education, presented the report inviting the Members to note the recent appointments.

The Chair welcomed all of the new Head Teachers and thanked all of the parents and Councillors who had been involved in the appointments process.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointments.

10. SOUTH EAST IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) providing the Committee with an update on progress with the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC); and asking the Committee to approve the SEIC Phase 2 Plan and the steps taken to support improvement between schools and local authorities and strengthen the support for school improvement.

Ms Robertson presented the report outlining the background to the development of the SEIC and its Phase 1 Plan which had received positive feedback from the Chief Inspector, Education Scotland, was submitted to the Scottish Government in June 2018. She advised Members that the Phase 2 Plan, presented for approval today, had also received a positive response from Education Scotland and that the priority actions it contained had been informed by local and school improvement plans. She added that a request for financial resources had been submitted and approved by the Scottish Government.

Responding to questions from Members, Ms Robertson providing further information on how East Lothian could make the most of its involvement with the SEIC and the importance of engaging with partner authorities to ensure that it adds value to work already taking place in the county's schools. She also outlined the impact on staff hours and explained that the funding which had been granted would last only until June 2019; further funding arrangements would form part of future Steering Group discussions.

She advised Members that the Phase 2 Plan was being presented to the Education Committee for approval, as a result of a previous agreement by Council, and that other local authorities each had their own approval process.

Councillor Goodfellow said that he was still concerned that the benefits of the SEIC might not outweigh the resource implications of staff being taken away from their core duties within East Lothian.

Councillor Innes concurred with his colleague and added that he feared that the control of schools would move further away from the Council. However, he was pleased that local authorities and CoSLA were involved in shaping the policy. He supported the Plan but stressed that the Council must ensure that their primary concern remained schools in East Lothian.

Ms Gillan thanked officers for keeping the Trade Unions updated on progress. She indicated that her counterparts in other areas had received very little information and she appreciated being kept informed.

Councillor Paul McLennan welcomed the document which he said was about shaping best practice and which he believed would improve the quality of education in East Lothian.

The Convener commented on the need to ensure a level of scrutiny and accountability, and to monitor how the SEIC impacts on schools and staff. She also agreed that funding needed to continue in the longer-term.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the ongoing commitment to and progress with enhancing support for our schools through the South East Improvement Collaborative;
- ii. Approve the SEIC Phase 2 Plan given that the planned actions set out within the Plan enhance the support to schools through engagement and collaboration;
- iii. Note the positive feedback from the Chief Inspector, Education Scotland, in relation to the SEIC Plan; and
- iv. Agree that the Head of Education provides further reports on progress with the SEIC Plan and its impact to future Education Committee meetings.

Signed

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Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Convener of the Education Committee