



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

**TUESDAY 22 MARCH 2022  
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor F Dugdale (Convener)  
Councillor S Akhtar  
Councillor J Findlay  
Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor N Gilbert  
Miss G Gillan, EIS  
Councillor S Kempson  
Councillor J Williamson

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms L Brown, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services  
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education  
Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services  
Ms F Brown, Principal Officer – Education  
Ms L Byrne, General Manager – Children's Services  
Mr N Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager  
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager - Governance  
Ms K Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer  
Ms F Macartney, Education Support Officer  
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations)  
Mr N Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer  
Ms J Allen, Communications Adviser  
Ms R Crichton, Committees Officer

**Head Teachers Present:**

Ms A Cameron, Elphinstone Primary School  
Ms C Graham, St Mary's Primary School  
Mr J Revell, Macmerry Primary School

**Clerk:**

Ms J Totney, Team Manager – Democratic and Licensing

**Apologies:**

Councillor J Goodfellow  
Councillor J Henderson  
Councillor C Hoy  
Councillor P McLennan  
Ms E Malcolm  
Councillor F O'Donnell

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

Prior to the commencement of business, the Clerk advised that the meeting was being held remotely in accordance with the Scottish Government's guidance on physical distancing; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. She stated that the Council is the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for up to six months from the date of the meeting.

The Clerk recorded attendance of committee members by roll call.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting, stating that this was the final meeting of the current committee. She extended her welcome to the Head Teachers who were present at the meeting.

**1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 23 NOVEMBER 2021 FOR APPROVAL**

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 23 November 2021 were approved.

**2. UPDATE ON THE ONGOING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCHOOLS AND THE WIDER EDUCATION SERVICE DURING SESSION 202/21**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services providing an update on the impact of COVID-19 on schools and the wider Education Service, along with an update on the lessons learned including areas which the service and schools plan to build on and areas where further support will be required as a result of any negative impacts of COVID-19.

Nicola McDowell, Head of Education, explained that the report provides updates subsequent to the last Education committee meeting in November 2021 and provides an overview of the academic session to date. She highlighted the key points which included Covid case numbers, the increase in home learning, the current situation regarding the wearing off face coverings in schools, the restarting of day trips and residential trips, teacher and support staff recruitment, and the role of the early intervention support team. She informed members that there are issues with antisocial behaviour in some locations and explained that the Education Service is working in collaboration with Police Scotland and the third sector in this regard, then went onto talk about the recent Head Teachers' conference, the exam diet, further funding that had been received to support learning, and the progress with the statutory installation of CO2 monitors. She stated that the Education Recovery Group continues to have a critical role, and that despite the significant challenges that continue as a result of the pandemic, essential working continues with communities and families to build on nurture and recovery and to identify where further support is required.

Councillor Gilbert enquired about the CO2 situation and asked if there are any heating or ventilation issues in schools. Ms McDowell advised that some issues had been encountered but had been resolved and confirmed that every training and learning

space had been fitted with a CO2 monitor. She agreed to inform Elected Members if any learning spaces were withdrawn from use due to heating or ventilation issues.

In response to Councillor Forrest, Ms McDowell provided additional information about the Head Teachers' conference. She stressed that the Head Teachers are at the heart of resolving issues and key actions had been identified in relation to the upskilling of teaching and support staff which include a comprehensive induction programme for new staff and the creation of an annual training programme. She advised that the outcomes from the conference would be progressed in conjunction with Children's Services, communities and partners.

Answering a question from Councillor Findlay, Ms McDowell advised that the delivery of school meals had not been impacted by the staff shortages within Facilities Services. Jonathan Revell, Head Teacher - Macmerry Primary School, confirmed that the delivery of school meals had been maintained and that the school dining hall was now being used again.

Councillor Akhtar sought an update in relation to the health and wellbeing of learners and teachers, and asked if this had any impact on attainment; she also enquired about central support in relation to wellbeing. Ms McDowell assured members that the mental health of children and young people is the priority and described the range of targeted and extra supports that can be put in place for children who are experiencing difficulties.

Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer, informed the Education Committee about the recent and imminent recruitment campaigns which would see the appointment of additional Principal Teachers who would be based in school for a period of six to eight weeks. She explained that their remit would cover data analysis, target setting, and curriculum and that their work with individual schools would inform strategies for further support and interventions.

Councillor Williamson asked how many children were involved in the antisocial behaviour and enquired about the ongoing plans to address this. Ms McDowell advised that a number of different schools were involved and advised that some very robust action had already been taken in conjunction with Police Scotland, Children's Services and communities. She added that it was often the case that the same individuals were showing challenging behaviour in the classroom and in the community, commenting that antisocial behaviour issues were a national problem and had increased as a result of the pandemic.

In response to a question from Gael Gillan, EIS, regarding the health and wellbeing of staff, Ms McDowell advised that there would be an annual conference for all secondary and primary staff, with clear focus on health and wellbeing. She explained to members that the conference would be supported by the Education Service's Professional Learning and Development Officer. She added that she had delivered a keynote presentation on health and wellbeing at the recent Head Teachers' conference, at which time she had encouraged staff to look after themselves, and had signposted appropriate reading and online resources. Claire Graham, Head Teacher - St Mary's Primary School, commented that this had been a very beneficial session and highlighted the importance of networking between Head Teachers.

In response to Councillor Dugdale, Education Committee Convener, Ms McDowell provided an update on the financing that had been provided for additional teaching and supply staff and outlined the plans for recruiting to these permanent positions. She advised that there had recently been the highest level of staff absence so far during

the academic year, and outlined the actions that had been taken to keep schools open and to ensure that remote learning a case of last resort.

Nick Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer, responded to the Convener regarding the Easter Study programme which would support learners who are taking exams. He explained that funding had been made available by the Scottish Government or this programme which would provide targeted support for senior phase pupils whose attendance or attainment had been effected by Covid-19.

Councillor Akhtar commented on the challenges that the Education Service had been dealing with and which had been clearly presented in the report. She expressed her thanks to all colleagues in Education and Children's Services together with parents and carers, and also highlighted the high level of leadership, communication and guidance that had been provided to all stakeholders.

Councillor Dugdale recorded her thanks for all the work that is taking place in schools and across the Council to help young people do well in their lives, and looked forward to seeing this being sustained in a creative way. She commended the strong partnership working and the fact that nurture is at the heart of all that is being done to provide children and young people with the very best experience in and out of school.

### **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note:

- i. the considerable work continuing to be undertaken by the Education Service and school staff in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in session 2021-2022.
- ii. the lessons learned including positive developments that the Education Service plans to build on and areas where further support is required.

### **3. VISIT OF MACMERRY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services on the recent visit of Macmerry Primary School and Nursery Class by Education Scotland to learn more about: the support for children and their families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; the approach to supporting children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress; and the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from the inspection which took place in June 2019.

Ms Haspolat presented the report and highlighted the salient points which included the purpose of the re-visit, the key areas under review, improvements that had been put in place following the June 2019 recommendations, the positive comments about the leadership from the Head Teacher, and the positive comments about nurturing relationships and the creation of a calm learning environment. She advised that the Education Scotland report acknowledged the impact of the pandemic in relation to addressing the 2019 actions points, and that to allow further time to address the 2019 recommendations, a further inspection visit would take place within one year.

Councillor Akhtar commented that the visit would be particularly challenging during the pandemic. Ms Haspolat agreed that it has been a challenging period of time to take forward improvements but that the views of Education Scotland were always welcomed

and that it is important that schools also carry out self-evaluation to inform ongoing improvements.

Mr Revell outlined some of the changes and initiatives that had been put in place and advised members that the school now has a blueprint for excellent learning.

Councillor Dugdale expressed her thanks to the Head Teacher and staff, and all their partners, for their hard work.

*Sederunt: Mr Revell left the meeting*

## **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to:-

- i. note the content of the Education Scotland's letter to parents dated 14 December 2021 (Appendix 1 to the report).
- ii. congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the support provided to children and families through the COVID-19 pandemic and the approaches to supporting children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress.
- iii. congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the progress that has been made since the inspection visit by Education Scotland in June 2019.
- iv. note that the inspectors identified that the school needs more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection and that they will carry out another visit to the school within one year of the publication of the letter to parents/carers to further report on progress the school has made.

## **4. VISIT OF WHITECRAIG PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services on the recent visit of Whitecraig Primary School and Nursery Class by Education Scotland to learn more about: the support for children and their families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; the approach to supporting children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress; and the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from the inspection which took place in June 2019.

Mr Trussler presented the report and highlighted the key points which included the purpose of the re-visit, the key areas under review, improvements that had been implemented following the June 2019 inspection, the positive comments about the leadership skills of the acting Head Teacher, and the positive comments about the high levels of trust and empowerment that had been created. He stated that staff have been well supported by the Head Teacher, there has been good progress with raising attainment, and children are very clear about the purpose of lessons. He advised that there would not be a further visit from Education Scotland in relation to the 2019 inspection. In closing, Mr Trussler introduced Fiona Macartney and Claire Graham who are, respectively, the outgoing and incoming Head Teachers (since January 2022).

Answering questions from Councillors Akhtar and Dugdale, Mr Trussler advised that processes would be put in place to share high level best practices, as identified by

Education Scotland, with other Head Teachers, and explained what is meant by “team teaching”.

Ms Macartney stated that she was delighted with the result of the Education Scotland visit and listed the areas that were particularly positive and pleasing.

Ms Graham advised Members that best practices are well embedded, that staff are totally committed, and that a robust school improvement plan was completed by Ms Macartney in August 2021. She committed to continuing the good work that had been done so far by a very strong team.

Councillor Forrest recorded his appreciation for the strong leadership and other positive findings that had been highlighted in the report. He especially commented on the connections that the Head Teacher and staff had made with the local community.

Councillor Dugdale, extended her congratulations to Ms Macartney and all school staff for the progress made. She thanked both Ms Macartney and Ms Graham for attending today’s meeting.

## **Decision**

Education Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i. note the content of the Education Scotland’s letter to parents dated 11 January 2022 (Appendix 1 to the report).
- ii. congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the support provided to children and families through the COVID-19 pandemic and the approaches to supporting children’s health and wellbeing, learning and progress.
- iii. congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the progress that has been made since the inspection visit by Education Scotland in June 2019.
- iv. note that the staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, Education Scotland will make no further visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. East Lothian Council will continue to inform parents about the school’s progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

## **5. REDESIGNING CHILDREN’S SERVICES FOR BETTER OUTCOMES**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children’s Services updating the committee on the strong links and joint working across the Education and Children’s Services Directorate. The report seeks to update the committee on the rationale for the review, the aspirations and intended outcomes of the whole-service review of children’s social work service: Redesigning Children’s Services for Better Outcomes.

Lindsay Byrne, General Manager – Children’s Services, provided members with a comprehensive summary of the report. In doing so, she highlighted the ongoing budget challenges, the continuous links with the Education Service, the key changes that had been implemented as a result of the redesign, and the benefits of these changes which had been structured to support The Promise. She added that there will

continue to be close partnership working with a range of agencies with the focus on early intervention with a child and their family.

Responding to questions from Councillor Gilbert, Ms Byrne provided information on the number of care places provided outwith East Lothian, commented that the budget did not allow for this number of places to be sustained, and explained that it was not possible to be certain about the reduction in the number of external places that would result from the service redesign.

Judith Tait, Head of Children's Services, expanded on the responses to Councillor Gilbert by advising that the pandemic has changed the nature of children's needs and an unprecedented level of concern is being experienced by children. She commented that it is difficult to be specific about a reduction in external places; however, there needs to be a tight control of planning and decision making to reduce these by as many as possible. She advised that there are twelve residential places available in East Lothian which is considered to be the correct number for the East Lothian local authority area. She advised that the priority is to develop the foster carer network along with locality based interventions which would all support the objective of a child not leaving East Lothian.

Councillor Forrest sought further information about the Joint Early Intervention Support Team and partnership working. Ms Byrne explained that this was new to East Lothian Council and was an upstream early intervention aimed to prevent social work and high cost referrals and interventions. Ms Tait outlined the range of mental health services available in schools and through the single Point of Contact and confirmed that the third sector are willing partners regarding children's wellbeing. She added that it was important to work with Adult Social Care Services such as substance abuse, and indicated that an effective partnership response is important for children with emerging needs. Ms Byrne stated that a child-centred trauma informed approach is important.

Replying to Councillor Dugdale, Ms Byrne advised that there is a commitment to relaunch and improve staff training to support families to find internal solutions to reach a sustainable place of safety and that such solutions will rely heavily on the voice of the child. Ms Byrne offered to provide members with additional information by way of a briefing for Elected Members.

Councillor Akhtar indicated that she would welcome a move toward more partnership working, especially stronger links with the Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Lothian, thereby maximising on the skills and expertise that would enable children to stay in East Lothian. Councillor Forrest echoed these comments and praised the work that is being done to give young people in East Lothian the best start in life.

Councillor Dugdale thanked officers for the report which encapsulates a holistic solution based approach that focuses on the child at the earliest opportunity.

## **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note the report.

## **6. RESERVING PLACES IN SCHOOLS FOR CATCHMENT PUPILS WHO MOVE INTO THE CATCHMENT AREA DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services seeking approval to reserve places for incoming catchment pupils at the schools

detailed in 2.1 of the report, for session 2022/23. The report also sought to obtain delegated authority to deal with any future changes should the number of pupils requiring a place at the school significantly increase or decrease.

Fiona Brown, Principal Officer, outlined the key points and purpose of the report and explained the factors that were taken into account when determining the number of places.

In response to a question from Councillor Forrest, Ms Brown advised that the number of places for Pinkie St Peter's Primary School is sufficient.

At the request of Councillor Findlay, Ms Brown undertook to advise all Elected Members, if there are any changes to the numbers of reserve places.

In response to Councillor Gilbert, Ms Brown explained the rationale behind setting the number of reserve places for Cockenzie Primary School and Blindwells Primary School.

Ms Brown explained the catchment area situation to Councillor Williamson in relation to the new build homes at Craighall, and she informed Councillor Akhtar that based on projections, the figures for Haddington were robust.

Councillor Dugdale commented on the large growth in housing in East Lothian and the importance of being able to attend a local school.

### **Decision**

Following a roll call vote, the committee unanimously agreed to:

- i. hold in reserve places for incoming catchment pupils for session 2022/23 as outlined in the report
- ii. delegate any changes to the number of places held in reserve to the Head of Education in consultation with the Education Convener, should the number of pupils requiring a place at the school significantly increase or decrease.

### **7. ROLL CAPPING IN EAST LOTHIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SESSION 2022/23**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services seeking agreement for a maximum intake level in S1-S4 for session 2022/23 in the schools listed in the report. The report also sought to obtain delegated authority for any future changes that might be required.

Ms Brown briefly summarised the content of the report.

There were no questions or comments from members of the committee.

Councillor Dugdale thanked all staff involved in producing the detailed report.

### **Decision**

Following a roll call vote the committee unanimously agreed to:



- i. a maximum intake level in S1-S4 for session 2021/22 in the schools, as listed in the report
- ii. delegate any changes to the maximum intake level in S1 – S4 to the Head of Education in consultation with the Education Convener, should the number of pupils requiring a place at the school significantly increase or decrease.

## **8 POSITIVE SCHOOL LEAVER DESTINATIONS 2020/21**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children’s Services updating the committee on the current School Leaver Destination Return and Participation Measure, including an overview of the interventions implemented to sustain and improve East Lothian Council’s positive destinations.

Neil Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager, reported on the key points in the report which he advised painted an exceptionally positive picture. He expanded by saying that East Lothian Council has bettered its pre-pandemic position within the Scottish Local Authorities league table and has improved to above the national average. He provided committee members with information on innovative interventions, referenced the Workforce of the Future, and reported on modern apprenticeships and well developed strategies which align with East Lothian industries.

Responding in turn to questions from Councillors Findlay, Forrest, Akhtar and Dugdale, Mr Craik-Collins provided figures on the numbers of leavers who had gone onto university and agreed to provide additional detail about this after the meeting; advised that there is strong engagement with a range of employers and partners; outlined the support available for leavers with disabilities, and referred to the Employability Plus programme; and advised that further pathways are developing across the county in relation to construction and rural skills. He added that some of the pathways, such as accountancy, would be delivered by East Lothian Council in conjunction with schools, thereby enabling leavers to be trained and ready to go into industry.

Councillor Forrest commented on the fantastic result, especially given the size of the county.

Councillor Akhtar congratulated the East Lothian Works team for their extremely hard work which would reassure parents and carers about the support that is available for children and young people in relation to educational attainment and employment.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener of the Education Committee, added her appreciation for the excellent results that are being achieved for the young people of East Lothian.

### **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note the report.

Signed .....

Councillor Fiona Dugdale  
Convener of the Education Committee