



**East Lothian**  
Council

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

**TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2022  
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor F Dugdale – Convener  
Councillor L Allan  
Councillor L Bruce  
Councillor J Findlay  
Councillor N Gilbert  
Councillor N Hampshire  
Councillor C McFarlane  
Councillor L Menzies  
Councillor B Ritchie  
Councillor T Trotter  
Councillor C Yorkston – Depute Convener  
Ms G Gillan (EIS)  
Mr R Lesso (External Rep)  
Rev G Sheridan (External Rep)

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms L Brown, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services  
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education  
Dr L Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Mr D Campbell, Solicitor  
Mr N Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager  
Ms K Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer  
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations)  
Ms B Skirrow, Principal Officer (Education Service)  
Mr N Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer  
Ms J Allen, Communications Adviser

**Head Teachers Present:**

Ms L Blair, Sanderson's Wynd Primary School  
Ms C Bonnar Pinkie St Peter's Primary School

**Clerk:**

Ms R Crichton, Committee Officer  
Minute produced by Ms J Totney – Team Manager – Democratic and Licensing

**Other Elected Members present:**

Councillor A Forrest

**Apologies:**

Councillor S McIntosh  
Ms E Malcolm (External Rep)

**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, extended a welcome to the Head Teachers who were present at the meeting.

**1. UPDATE ON THE ONGOING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCHOOLS AND THE WIDER EDUCATION SERVICE DURING SESSION 2021/22**

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 Education Committee meetings in March and November 2021 and indicated that she expects that this will be the final Covid report to committee. She highlighted the key points which included the fact that schools can make local decisions about retaining Covid mitigation measures; communication remains ongoing with parents and carers; and thanked trade union colleagues for their huge support. She reported that nurture remains the priority approach and that Scottish Government funding has been used to create a Pedagogy team. She informed members that antisocial behaviour in some locations remains an issue in a small cohort and outlined the ongoing measures that are in place to address this. She stated that the Education Recovery Group met for the final time in May, and that despite the significant challenges that have been faced as a result of the pandemic, the Service will build on opportunities to strengthen collaborative working and focus on attainment and use of resources.

Councillor Hampshire asked if there are enough places for pupils who are struggling with being back in the classroom. Ms Mc Dowell acknowledged this important question and explained the range of supports that are in place, including the Early Intervention Support Team who will engage with families and learners, and the increased number of youth workers who are in schools. In relation to the anti-social behaviour issue, she advised that this is happening in the community and that the Service is working with Police Scotland, communities and Children's Services in this regard.

Lyndsey Blair, Head Teacher, Sanderson's Wynd Primary School, gave an account of the return to school experiences at Sanderson's Wynd, which had been challenging for some children, and commented that it had been empowering as a Head Teacher to have a steer and support from the Local Authority. She advised that guidelines on how to support children and young people have resulted in clear boundaries being put

in place; that the school has bought into the building resilience programme; and that positive feedback is being received from parents and children.

In response to questions from Councillor Bruce, Ms McDowell explained that the schools that were retaining Covid mitigations were doing so as they had proven to be successful in the smooth operating of the school; advised that in the main, enhanced cleaning measures will not continue beyond August; confirmed that four schools are currently benefitting from the Pedagogy team, but that will change according to need; and stressed that all schools will benefit from universal professional learning from the Pedagogy team.

Councillor Allan asked about the supports available to children and young people in relation to mental health. Dr Binnie comprehensively covered the extensive list of supports and range of options which had been developed during the last two years, and advised that it is hoped that capacity will increase further due to additional funding and new supports coming on-stream. She advised that support is available from partnership working and within the Local Authority, and that recent data indicates that waiting times for support have reduced due to the focus over the last two years, and that the interventions are already having a positive impact.

Gael Gillan, speaking on behalf of the EIS and SSTA unions, spoke of their appreciation for the collaborative working between the trade unions and Council and thanked officers for the immense amount of work that had been carried out during a challenging and difficult time. She added that trade union attendance at the Education Recovery Group had been particularly important and looked forward to continued engagement with the Education Service.

Councillor Hampshire echoed these comments and commended and thanked everyone involved for their fantastic work to support, and to continue to support, children who have been affected by schooling arrangements during the pandemic.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, commented on the unprecedented period of challenge over the last two years, the impact of which has been well documented, and commented most positively on the rigorous planning that has taken place to bring the Service out of this period and ready to embrace new and future challenges.

## **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.

## **2. IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR ALL – RAISING ATTAINMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services providing an update on the work underway across Education and Children's Services to improve outcomes for all, through raising attainment and achievement and reducing the poverty related attainment gap and to provide some high level messages about the impact of recovery work upon pupil attainment in East Lothian schools in response to

COVID-19 related school closures in previous years and the related ongoing challenges presented this current school session 2021-22.

Nick Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer, presented the report and highlighted the salient points which included high level messages on high level recovery work, background details from a local and national perspective, summary of pupil attainment, the impact of the pandemic on the use of data, an overview of improvement priorities for 2022/23 for schools and the Education Service. In addition he reported that schools have made significant progress towards returning to pre-pandemic attainment levels, and advised that a Short Life Working Group will plan for the use of equity funding. He concluded by informing the committee that Ms Blair and Ms Bonnar were still present at the meeting and that equity studies for their schools were available in the Members' Library Service.

In response to a question from Councillor Ritchie, Mr Trussler confirmed that the Service is on track to gather data for June 2022 which would be submitted to Scottish Government in August and presented to a future meeting of the Education Committee.

Replying to several questions from Councillor Bruce, Mr Trussler provided information on what was being measured and what the data would be used for. He added that work is being done with schools to drill down to individual pupil level; to identify barriers to learning; and to monitor the impact of interventions at school and at Local Authority level. He explained that a significant gap has been identified between boys and girls, especially for literacy, and that this data meant that schools could plan targeted interventions and support. Regarding areas where progress is required, he stated that there is relentless focus on addressing the poverty related attainment gap, especially within the quintile 1 cohort.

In response to Councillor Yorkston, Ms McDowell advised that £2million of new funding would be available over the next four years in respect of schools' attainment challenge. She added that the multi-disciplinary Short Life Working Group is yet to meet but that there has been engagement with other Local Authorities regarding priority setting and use of funds, with other Local Authorities showing keen interest in the approach used by East Lothian Council. Collaboration with Children's Services and communities would also be key to ensure that the funding has the intended impact.

Replying to Councillor Findlay, Mr Trussler explained the early level measurement used for the attainment of Primary 1 children.

In relation to the earlier contributions regarding behaviour, Ms Gillan, thanked Dr Binnie for her informative update. However, she advised that many EIS Members are concerned about attainment where classes are experiencing day-to-day low levels of disruptive behaviour. Mr Trussler acknowledged the different challenges faced by pupils returning to full-time schooling and outlined the approaches, including the Pedagogy Team, that are being deployed to support teachers with pupil engagement and learning.

Addressing a question from Councillor Gilbert about the administration fee for Pupil Equity Funding that is levied before the schools receive the funds, Mr Trussler advised that he would obtain updated information and share this with Committee Members.

With regards to the question from the Convener about Pupil Equity Funding interventions, Mr Trussler invited Ms Bonnar and Ms Blair to give overviews of the impact of their projects on learners.

Ms Bonnar shared some of the work at Pinkie St Peter's Primary School which included the introduction of the Pinkie Way which linked into school priorities, improvements in social and oral language skills, and the intelligent use of data to inform self-improvement initiatives.

*Sederunt: Mr Trussler left the meeting (as a result of connectivity issues)*

Ms Blair reported on the experiences at Sanderson's Wynd Primary School in relation to readiness to learn, additional support needs (both recognised and hidden), the establishment of a nurture group which resulted in a whole of school nurture approach, educational psychology support, speech and language therapy, and a learning den.

Councillor Allan commented positively on having trauma informed teaching and the development of a resilience and growth mind-set.

Councillor Dugdale, Convener, thanked Mr Trussler for his report and extended her thanks to the Head Teachers for sharing their interventions and experiences with the Committee. She welcomed the fact that so much multi-disciplinary work is taking place and that data is being used intelligently to improve attainment for children and young people.

## **Decision**

The Education Committee agreed to note:-

- (i) the contents of this report and the positive impact of recovery work in East Lothian schools on achievements of East Lothian learners.
- (ii) the key successes, areas of progress and actions being taken by schools and the Education Service to improve pupil attainment during the current school session 2021-22.
- (iii) the key areas of focus and priorities within the Raising Attainment Strategy for 2022-23 to support a relentless focus on improving outcomes for all across East Lothian schools.

### **3. UPDATE TO THE SCHEME OF DEVOLVED SCHOOL MANAGEMENT – APRIL 2022**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services regarding the updated guidelines for the Scheme of Devolved School Management (DSM) (Appendix 1) in line with new national guidance, effective from 1 April 2022.

Richard Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations) presented the report and explained the background to the reviews and consultation in relation to the updated guidelines and guidance for the DSM Scheme, referring Members to the main changes which are covered in detail in the report. He stated that benchmarking had taken place with neighbouring Local Authorities to better enhance the DSM scheme; there would be a report back to Scottish Government and that a user friendly version would be published on the Council's website.

Replying to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Parker advised that it is not anticipated that the new scheme would result in an increased workload for Head Teachers and that the focus is on transparency regarding the explicit allocation of budget and reporting on spending decisions. He pointed out that as more than 90%

of the funding allocated for DSM relates to staffing costs, local spending decisions relate to the remainder of the funding.

Councillor Findlay sought additional information about the review of management structures in Primary Schools. Mr Parker advised that this would be of a general nature as management structures had not been reviewed for some time.

Regarding the Convener's enquiry about future reporting of Additional Support Needs funding allocations, Mr Parker explained the methodology for allocating resources consistently across the Local Authority area. He advised that a questionnaire has been issued to schools regarding the fairness and equity of funding allocations in relation to meeting the needs of all learners. He added that this collaborative working with Head Teachers is part of a Short Life Working Group and that the work would be ongoing until December 2022. He committed to reporting back on this work at a future meeting of the Education Committee.

The Convener thanked Mr Parker for his update and stressed the importance of fairness, consistency, equity and transparency which are all demonstrated in this ongoing work.

### **Decision**

Education Committee agreed to note:

- i. The Scottish Government directed local authorities to review their Scheme of Devolved School Management (DSM) for compliance with new national guidance issued in 2019. The local authority is required to report back to the Scottish Government the review is complete and implemented by August 2022.
- ii. Short life working groups for each sector, primary and secondary, reviewed and updated our DSM scheme between June and December 2021.
- iii. No substantial changes to the methodology of the DSM scheme were adopted from April 2022.
- iv. Two strands of the new DSM scheme were identified as requiring a "deeper dive" by two newly formed and focussed short life working groups to look at the impact of alternative methodology and make recommendations in relation to management time allocations and Additional Support Needs funding allocations. This work will take place between June and December 2022.
- v. The DSM scheme and associated documents should reflect current policy and practice and will be reviewed annually by Education & Children's Services. A three year local authority peer review of the DSM scheme, as detailed in the national guidance, will be required.
- vi. Local authorities are required to publish their full schemes and a user-friendly summary version on their public facing websites by August 2022.

Signed .....

Councillor Fiona Dugdale  
Convener of the Education Committee

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