



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

**TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2023
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor F Dugdale – Convener
Councillor L Allan
Councillor L Bruce
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor N Hampshire
Councillor C McFarlane
Councillor B Ritchie
Councillor T Trotter
Councillor C Yorkston – Depute Convener
Ms G Gillan (EIS)
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 N Craik-Collins - Education Service Manager
Mr R Parker - Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations)
Ms B Skirrow - Principal Officer (Education Service)
Ms J Allen - Communications Adviser
Ms J Boyle – Quality Improvement Officer (Equity)
Ms A Cameron – Service Manager – Early Years and Childcare
Ms A Hood – Team Manager (Education & Employability)
Ms J Tait – Head of Children's Services
Ms R Crichton, Committees Officer
Ms L Byrne – Group Service Manager, Children's Wellbeing
Mr N Trussler – Quality Improvement Officer, Education
Mr C Grilli – Service Manager, Governance
Ms F Brown – Principal Officer, Education
Mr D Reid – Education Support Officer, Digital Learning

Head Teachers Present:

Gill Gardner – Head Teacher, East Linton Primary School

Clerk:

Ms M Scott, Committee Officer
Ms R Crichton, Committee Officer

Other Elected Members present:

Councillor A Forrest
Councillor C Cassini

Apologies:

Councillor L Menzies
Mr R Lesso

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. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 22 NOVEMBER 2022 FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting of 22 November 2022 were approved.

2. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION REPORT FOR EAST LINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY CLASS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to report to Committee on the outcomes of the Education Scotland inspection of East Linton Primary School and Nursery Class.

Nicola McDowell, Head of Education explained the report provided details of the inspection carried out at East Linton Primary School and Nursery Class and at the end of the inspection process the outcomes were published in a letter to parents and carers outlining the key strengths and areas for improvement. Ms McDowell added that the letter provided a statement of the confidence inspectors had in the school's capacity to continue to improve the quality of its work which meant inspectors would not be returning to East Linton Primary School. Ms McDowell stated that a summary of key inspection findings could be found within the report and that it would be intended staff use this when progressing their school improvement plan. Ms McDowell noted East Linton secured grade 4s for all of the quality indicators inspected within the school and the nursery class. Ms McDowell highlighted the key strengths found during the inspection and outlined the areas for improvement. She added that Ms Haspolat, the school's Quality Improvement Officer would continue to work closely with the Head Teacher of East Linton and the staff to provide professional advice and support. Ms McDowell expressed her delight that the hard work of the Head Teacher, her staff and the children of East Linton Primary School had been recognised within the report.

Councillor Yorkston asked how schools were chosen for an inspection and how it was decided which type of inspection would be carried out. He also asked how detailed the involvement and support from the Quality Improvement Officer would be. Ms McDowell explained there were three kinds of inspections schools could be involved in and being chosen for an inspection was largely based on the length of time since the previous inspection but also if the school had been chosen to be part of the National Improvement Framework sample that Education Scotland takes each year for their evaluation of quality indicators. Ms McDowell explained Education Scotland also take factors such as the location and size of schools into consideration so they can create a representative sample each year. Gill Gardner, Head Teacher at East Linton Primary School added the school worked very closely with their Quality Improvement Officer meeting on a regular basis throughout the year to look at attainment data, the progress the children were making and quality assuring school improvement plans. Ms Gardner stated East Linton was in a school team group with Pencaitland, Yester and Gullane Primary Schools and QIOs provided self-evaluation tasks so they were able to validate work other schools were doing.

Answering questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms McDowell explained the development of writing was in the current improvement plan and a lot of work was going into the development of writing across East Lothian. Nick Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer for Education added writing attainment appeared to be lower than other areas which impacted overall literacy in pupils. It was also identified a particular focus was required at the end of Primary 4 so East Lothian have engaged with the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative and Education Scotland to work on the National Writing Improvement Programme. Mr Trussler added there are plans to engage with a third cohort of schools next session due to the significant improvements it had made.

Alison Cameron, Service Manager – Early Years and Childcare reported she would be working with David Reid, Education Support Officer – Digital Learning and his team around digital technologies in the earliest years to ensure it can support learning. Ms Cameron added they want to look at technology as a tool for learning and it is high on the agenda to look at new early learning and childcare settings to think of creative ways to use digital technology with our children. Ms Cameron stated she would bring this topic back at a later date to present how they were taking this forward. Councillor McIntosh stated she was specifically interested in where the report said there would be the possibility of a platform for communication with parents using digital technology and asked if this was also on the agenda. Ms Cameron explained at this point that had not been discussed but would take it forward as a possibility for the future.

Councillor Forrest asked if the film produced by the school would be available to share to other schools to show can be done with technology. Ms Gardner stated film making had become part of sustainable learning within East Linton and the Primary 7s learned to film, edit and produce their own end of school film which has been shared on Edu Hub the last couple of years. Ms Gardner said she was hopeful this would now be a part of the curriculum rationale which helped make East Linton unique.

Councillor Trotter asked how to move up from “good” to “very good” as he felt reading the report it was full of things that presented as “very good”. Ms McDowell explained that the quality indicators within the How Good Is Our School framework show level 5 illustrations which is what “very good” would look like. Ms McDowell said schools were encouraged to look at the level 5 illustrations to see where they were at the moment and what changes could take them to the next level and she was confident that would be what Ms Gardner was doing for East Linton.

Councillors Yorkston, McIntosh and Trotter all congratulated Ms Gardner and her staff on such a positive report.

Councillor Hampshire stated the report was excellent and congratulated the work done by the Head Teacher and her staff through the challenging few years we have had and to still get such a positive report was a huge achievement. Councillor Hampshire added he was confident the staff within East Linton would provide the best education possible for the children in the area they support.

Councillor Dugdale echoed the comments from other Members and thanked Ms McDowell for bringing the report to Committee. Councillor Dugdale added it was great to see children experiencing a warm and positive ethos to play and learn and to see them sustaining good levels of progress across a whole range of areas. Councillor Dugdale gave her sincere thanks to Ms Gardner and her staff who had worked so hard and achieved a really positive inspection.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland letter
- (ii) Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Primary School and Nursery Class
- (iii) Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class
- (iv) Note that Education Scotland are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so will make no more visits in connection with this inspection
- (v) Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on a positive inspection and on the key strengths identified by the Inspection Team.

3. UPDATE TO THE SCHEME OF DEVOLVED SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to advise the Committee of the findings of two short life working groups arising from changes to the Devolved School Management (DSM) national guidance, effective from 1 April 2022 and as reported to Education Committee on 21 June 2022.

Richard Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations) explained the report provided updates subsequent to the report submitted to Education Committee in June 2022. Mr Parker noted as part of the review of our guidance it was agreed that two strands of the revised DSM scheme were identified as requiring a "deeper dive" by two focussed short life working groups to make recommendations in relation to management structures and ASN funding allocations. The working group on Primary School Management structures identified and modelled 12 potential changed approaches and the working group looking at the ASN allocation identified the current model of ASN funding allocation no longer reflected current needs. It was agreed the funding model should be changed to reflect a measure of children and young people with ASN in each school. He added the national guidance which had clearly defined categories of ASN was found to be the most appropriate to use in the new funding model. The group agreed annual moderation would be required within the new model to ensure consistency and equity across schools and Mr Parker made Members aware the new model may lead to a change in allocation of funding and consequently may impact on staffing compliments in some schools. The impact of this would need to be considered and consulted upon with Head Teachers and other stakeholders before an implementation plan is proposed.

The implementation plan would be brought back to the Education Committee during 2023/24 academic year.

Councillor McIntosh asked what about the current way funding was allocated was seen as not fit for purpose and what the impact would be for young people with the changes that are being proposed. Dr Lynne Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist reported the changes being made were to the way financial resources were allocated to schools therefore the impact to children and young people may be felt through staffing and resources available to them in order to meet their needs. Dr Binnie explained how the current funding model worked and that it was unanimously agreed that was an outdated way to allocate and instead the percentage of children with ASN would be the key criterion. Answering a further question from Councillor McIntosh, Dr Binnie explained her team is at the early stages of creating an implementation plan to see where there would be a shift in resource allocation. Councillor Hampshire asked if officers had looked at best practice across Scotland and local authorities where changes had been made that have made improvements. Mr Parker stated benchmarking had been done across other local authorities but at the time a lot of them were also addressing the outcomes of their revised guidance and looking at models. Mr Parker added it was very mixed how other local authorities structured their schools and ran their DSN schemes but there were links with other authorities and officers would continue to work with them with regard to the structures and to identify best practice in other authorities we could learn from and adopt.

In response to a question from Councillor Yorkston, Dr Binnie explained they had not yet modelled the potential changes and that would be the next phase of this work. She added the ASN working group was made up of Head Teachers from different locations in East Lothian and there had been a unanimous agreement that the funding model should be based on percentage of children with ASN within the school which meant some would benefit from that and some would receive less funding than the current model. Dr Binnie stated officers would need to think carefully how implementation was done and it may need to be phased over a number of years. Mr Parker added there was not a standard model across the country and each authority determined its own model so the approaches noted within the report were decided from discussions at the working group.

Councillor Ritchie asked how officers would ensure the funding would follow the children and not the other way around ending up with specific schools having more children with ASN. Dr Binnie stated the model used supported all children with ASN and explained the totality of funding in East Lothian was made up of 2 parts, predictable needs funding and exceptional needs funding which was allocated to individual children and young people. Dr Binnie added the predictable needs funding would not only be based on the percentage of children and young people with ASN but also on school role which ensured there would be fair funding to schools in terms of their size. Dr Binnie stated all East Lothian schools were equipped to support children and young people with their needs which should be met within their catchment school. Dr Binnie stated predictable funding enabled this, then schools could also apply for exceptional needs funding for individual children who had more severe and complex needs.

Councillor Trotter asked how confident officers were that there wouldn't be any financial implications. Dr Binnie explained there would be financial implications for some schools as some would receive a larger pot than they were currently receiving and some would receive less but as yet officers had not done the modelling to determine how big those amounts would be or which schools would win or lose from the change in the funding model. Dr Binnie noted there had been a unanimous

agreement that the current model of resource allocation wasn't the best way to allocate to schools and officers would need to take forward sensitively. Councillor Trotter said the report stated there would be no financial implications and felt until there was a final paper on this that statement should have been left off. Ms McDowell explained that the totality of the budget would not change but the dissemination of resources would be different to what they were at the moment.

In response to a question from Councillor Dugdale, Dr Binnie explained they would need to look at a process of moderation as children who suffer loss or bereavement for example and need additional support for that time would be deemed as having ASN.

Ms Gillan stated EIS were involved in the DSM working group meeting and it was heartening to see the union, management and Head Teachers were in agreement all the way which showed how much changes were needed.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Mr Parker for his report and was pleased to see the new model to help to ensure funding for children and young people with ASN was focussed on and related to the number of children and young people with ASN and looked forward to further reports being presented to committee about this implantation.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note:

- (i) The findings of the Primary management structures working group which had agreed that no substantial changes to the financial methodology of the DSM scheme in respect of management structures in Primary Schools be adopted from April 2023. This would be kept under review pending the impact of any recommendations by the Additional Support Needs (ASN) working group should there be any significant change to the funding to schools.
- (ii) The findings of the ASN working group which agreed to the principle of changing the methodology used to determine the allocation of predictable needs funding to reflect roll and ASN percentage measures. The mechanism to implement this change in methodology would require a moderated process and a workforce plan to manage the staff resources. It is therefore not recommended to implement this from April 2023, but to work towards a change for April 2024.

4. RESERVING PLACES IN SCHOOLS FOR CATCHMENT PUPILS WHO MOVE INTO THE CATCHMENT DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/34

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to obtain Committee approval for reserving places for incoming catchment pupils at the schools detailed in 2.1 for session 2023/24.

Fiona Brown, Principal Officer – Education 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 Gilbert, Ms Brown explained that there would be no need for a Blindwells class this year as the number of pupils within the Blindwells catchment area is low because most of the children at this time already attend schools within the area and have chosen to remain there. The number of

children who require to be hosted at the moment can be accommodated within classes at Cockenzie Primary School. Councillor Gilbert stated he was aware of 8 new primary one starts from Blindwells in Cockenzie this year and if this was to expand further would it effect the 2 reserved Primary 1 places in Cockenzie Primary School. Ms Brown explained the spaces would not be effected as they can only be reserved for families moving into the catchment area, if you are being hosted you are not allocated a reserved place as you are a Blindwells pupil. Ms Brown added that the number of Primary 1 pupils was actually less than 8 as some families had made a placing request to other schools and or decided to defer entry to Primary 1, the expected number is actually sitting at 4 or 5 for August 2023 and this would be monitored throughout the year.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Ms Brown stated updates were given to the property department from developers and they review the impact on projections for August 2023. Next review of the projected role will be done in November 2023 when a full review would be taken. Updates were also given from Housing with any affordable housing released and the families being allocated them so the education department can pre-empt the number of places needed.

Councillor Trotter asked why there were no reserved places for Humbie and Saltoun Primary School. Ms Brown explained it was not a requirement to hold places in reserve at either of these schools as they received very few placing requests and was not deemed necessary. Ms Brown added she was confident they would be able to place pupils within these schools without having any reserved places. Answering a follow up question from Councillor Trotter, Ms Brown stated projections are done for Saltoun and Humbie the same way they are for any other primary school.

In response to a question from Councillor Forrest, Ms Brown explained the number of reserved places had been reduced at Pinkie Primary School due to the migration and house building and it was felt 3 reserved places were enough and in most places there were more than 3 spaces available if they were required. Ms Brown explained the number of reserved places at Stoneyhill were for families moving into the Stoneyhill catchment area and not families who move into the Craighall area and spaces cannot be held for them as they are pupils of Craighall being hosted within Stoneyhill. Ms Brown explained she works closely with the Head Teacher at Stoneyhill to ensure there is capacity for the Craighall pupils at the appropriate points.

Councillor Yorkston asked why there were no reserved places in Preston Tower for pupils between P2 and P6 or in Aberlady Primary School for pupils between P3 and P7. He also asked why the reserved number of places for Knox Academy and North Berwick High School were higher than other secondary schools when they were not the largest on the list. Ms Brown explained that the numbers presented for Preston Tower and Aberlady were due to the number of places available at different stages and it wasn't felt necessary to hold places in reserve as officers are confident children moving into the area would be appointed to their catchment school. Ms Brown added that very few placing requests are received for Aberlady and Preston Tower after primary one. Ms Brown explained the numbers for Knox Academy and North Berwick were higher due to their being more placing requests outside the catchment area for them and the fact they always fill up to the capacity that is available.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms Brown and her team for the report due to the rigorous challenge and growing population in the area.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) hold in reserve places for incoming catchment pupils for session 2023/24 in the named 36 Primary Schools
- (ii) hold in reserve the maximum number of places in S1 and S2 and number of reserved places in S1 and S2 for the 7 named Secondary Schools
- (iii) hold in reserve the maximum number of places in S1 and S2 and number of reserved places in S3 and S4 for the 7 named Secondary schools
- (iv) 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.

5. ROLL CAPPING IN EAST LOTHIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SESSIONS 2023/24

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to ask the Committee to approve the S1-S4 intake levels for East Lothian secondary schools for Session 2023/24.

Fiona Brown, Principal Officer – Education summarised her report updating that North Berwick High School S4 cap be increased from 180 to 200 for 2023/23.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Ms Brown explained it was not unusual to get so many children moving into S4 but that it had been an unusual year at North Berwick High School with many parents getting in touch over the last month or so but there is a robust system in place to ensure children are living within the catchment area.

Councillor Yorkston asked if the number of pupils attending each subject was set at 20 for practical classes and 30 for others or if they could be tweaked if more pupils wished to take this subject. Ms Brown explained classrooms were only furnished for 30 pupils but the teacher's terms and conditions says a maximum of 33. Ms Brown added there had been no issues with maximum numbers within schools but if there was we would discuss with the Head Teacher.

Councillor Hampshire thanked the staff who were dealing with this as it is a huge challenge to keep up with the growth in East Lothian.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms Brown for her report as it is really important for everyone to understand the process.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) a maximum intake level in S1-S4 for session 2023/24 in the 7 named Secondary Schools
- (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.

6. EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL DIGITAL LEARNING & TEACHING STRATEGY

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to inform the Committee of the production of a Digital Learning and Teaching

Strategy 2023 alongside the Action Plan that will formalise approaches to driving forward digital learning and teaching within and across our schools.

Richard Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy and Operations) stated the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy was based on four key priorities; Digital Literacy of Staff, Improving Infrastructure, Digital Learning and Teaching and Digital Distance Learning. Mr Parker gave a detailed overview of his report highlighting the five key sections of the strategy document; Rationale for Change, Current Position, Digital Strategy Overview, Key Strategy Actions and Links to Online Resources and Documentation. Mr Parker explained three working groups would be established in line with the strategy; the Oversight Group, the Digital Development Group and the East Lothian Digital Community. It is planned for these groups to be established in the first half of 2023.

Councillor McFarlane asked if there was a robust system for repairs and maintenance of digital devices in schools. Mr Reid explained that all windows devices, Chromebooks and Chrome tablets that were used by teachers were part of the refresh programme which ensured devices within schools were consistently refreshed in line with software and hardware updates to ensure they were efficient and effective. Mr Reid explained there was also an IT service desk to allow schools to report any damages, breakages or issues directly to East Lothian Council which was then filtered down to ICT officer who would contact the school to deal with the issue.

In response to a question from Councillor Yorkston, Mr Reid explained the Digital Strategy would be put to Head Teachers for consideration for their school improvement plans and one of the main bits of feedback received was Head Teachers wanted to increase autonomy of staff with regards to their own professional development.

Answering questions from Councillor McIntosh, Mr Reid explained officers would be looking at the subscription model they used across East Lothian and looking at the safety implications of all options. As well as that the development in the infrastructure team to look at the filtering primarily with Google and how we can make that as safe as possible. Mr Reid stated this would be an ongoing project that was just at the start of development so hopefully more updates would be available in future. Councillor McIntosh stated she was more concerned about the privacy of the user and what information could be taken from their habits and then used somewhere else. Mr Reid confirmed these concerns would also covered in the project the infrastructure team were doing.

Councillor McIntosh asked if there was scope for distance learning so people all over Scotland, including our own learners would be able to catch up on lost learning. Mr Reid explained there were two national platforms, esgoil and West OS. West OS has now been developed into being a distant learning platform and a classroom tool. Mr Reid added that all pupils within East Lothian have access to these tools and part of the digital strategy will be to encourage schools to make even more use of these. Mr Trussler explained secondary schools were exploring the digital provision of courses such as Advanced Highers as these can be difficult to staff due to the number of pupils doing them. Mr Trussler stated other local authorities across Scotland are currently exploring how to use different methods used to try and provide a wider option of Advanced Highers in schools on a shared basis across our secondaries. Councillor McIntosh explained she was keen to see how this could be of benefit to people who have now left school and were looking to get back into Education. Neil Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager stated from an East Lothian Works perspective they have supported winter leaver programmes and interventions such as the Aspire programme in S2 in two pilot schools looking at early intervention to support learners in a transition

to college and into courses. Mr Craik-Collins stated colleges were doing literacy and numeracy boosters as well as tutor programmes. Post school ,upon immediately leaving school there is the academy model which has been developed by the team looking at different industries such as retail and hospitality.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Reid explained the CLN network within schools allowed personal devices to be connected and the infrastructure team are currently looking to redevelop the Wi-Fi access in schools. This is currently being piloted in North Berwick and then would be rolled out to all schools so the likelihood is the access for personal devices is going to become more accessible than it is now.

Councillor Dugdale asked if we were any closer on delivering the Scottish Government promise to deliver 1:1 devices for all learners. Mr Parker stated there had been no further information from the Scottish Government of funding at this stage.

Councillor Hampshire commented that everyone is aware of the financial difficulty the Council is in and we need to be careful when we go out to purchase new technology If pupils are able to provide technology themselves and wish to use that then is there a justification for buying it for every pupil if they don't need it. Cllr Hampshire expressed a wish to make sure the system within schools is strong enough so anyone bringing in their own technology can access the full suite of information they need to deliver the course they are doing and if that can happen we will have more resource to help the children who are struggling to purchase any digital technology themselves.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Mr Parker for his report and for all the other staff who have commented and given answers. Digital development is ever progressing and it is vital education is at the forefront of this and embracing opportunities to be ambitious and improve children and young people's learning.

END OF AGENDA ITEMS

Councillor Dugdale thanked Richard Parker for all his hard work at East Lothian Council over the past 26 years and wished him well in his retirement. Councillor Dugdale also thanked Judith Tait who was leaving her role as the Head of Children's Services and said it had been a pleasure to work with her.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the work undertaken to date to produce a Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy
- (ii) Approve the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy and the associated Action Plan

Signed

Councillor Fiona Dugdale
Convener of the Education Committee

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