



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
EDUCATION & CHILDRENS SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER, 10:00am  
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES**

---

**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor Bennett  
Councillor Bruce  
Councillor Dugdale  
Councillor Hampshire  
Councillor McFarlane  
Councillor McIntosh  
Councillor Menzies  
Councillor Ritchie  
Councillor Trotter  
Councillor Yorkston  
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  
Mr N Craik-Collins - Education Service Manager  
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 L Byrne – Head of Children's Services, Children's Wellbeing  
Mr N Trussler – Quality Improvement Officer, Education  
Ms K Haspolat – Quality Improvement Officer, Education  
Ms A Hood – Team Manager, Education & Employability

**Teachers Present:**

Ms D Crossan – Head Teacher, Humbie & Saltoun Primary School  
Ms L Davies – Head Teacher, St Martins Primary School  
Ms D Mackenzie – Head Teacher, Windygoul Primary School  
Ms S Skinner – Head Teacher, Longniddry Primary School

**Clerk:**

Ms M Scott, Committee Officer  
Ms R Crichton, back-up clerk

**Other Elected Members present:**

Councillor A Forrest

**Apologies:**

Councillor J Findlay

Councillor N Gilbert

**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 20 JUNE 2023**

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting of 20 June 2023 were approved.

**2. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF HUMBIE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND 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 Humbie Primary School and Nursery Class.

Ms Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer for Education noted the inspection team used the How Good Is Our School 4? (HGIOS4?) quality indicators for primary inspections and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC?) for inspections of Nursery and Early Years provisions to evaluate the quality of provision at Humbie Primary School and Nursery Class.

At the end of the inspection process, the outcomes were published in a short letter to parents and carers outlining the key strengths and areas for improvement. The letter provided a statement of the confidence the inspectors have in the school's capacity to improve the quality of its own work which meant inspectors would not return to Humbie Primary School as a result of the inspection.

Ms Haspolat reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Humbie Primary School secured gradings of 4 or good for both quality indicators inspected in the school, and in the nursery class both related quality indicators were graded as 5 or very good. Ms Haspolat highlighted the key strengths and areas for improvement found during the inspection.

Ms Haspolat confirmed she would continue to work closely with the Head Teacher and staff to provide professional advice and support and challenge in the areas for improvement. She assured Members that the Education Service was confident in the

plans for continued improvement for the next session in the primary school and nursery classes and was delighted the hard work of staff had been recognised.

Councillor Hampshire welcomed the excellent report however noted the children in the nursery class would benefit from more opportunities for independence at snack and lunch and time. He asked what plans were being put in place to allow for this. Mrs Debby Crossan, Head Teacher at Humble Primary School at the time of the inspection explained steps had already been taken within the nursery to make sure learners had more chances for independence as they now serve themselves water, fruit and salad at snack and lunch time and are more involved in choosing their own snacks. The children also help picking food off websites and help unpack and put away shopping when it is delivered.

Councillor Yorkston asked what the challenges were for a small school like Humble to look at and share effective practice with colleagues within and out with the school. Ms Haspolat gave an overview of some of the opportunities provided to schools for sharing their practice out with their school. Mrs Crossan added Humble has worked closely with Saltoun Primary School as she was also the Head Teacher there and have also worked within their School Team Group to allow staff to go out and observe practice within other schools as well as have staff from other schools visit Humble. Mrs Crossan stated through this staff are building positive relationships to look at and improve practice as a two way process.

Ms McDowell and Mrs Crossan responded to further questions from Members. They provided information on why Humble Nursery had been mothballed and the approaches being developed to improve the teaching of reading within the school.

In response to a second question from Councillor Dugdale, Mrs Crossan explained the wellbeing work was continued after the impact of covid and the school have used the RHSP website to make sure what is delivered is correct and appropriate at the time. She added the Zones of Regulation had been introduced to help children recognise and talk about their emotions and begin to build strategies on hold to deal with them and see how they are feeling can impact them as a learner. Mrs Crossan also summarised some of the more targeted approaches the school has taken.

Councillors Trotter, Hampshire and Dugdale all welcomed the positive report and thanked Mrs Crossan and her staff for their excellent work.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter (Appendix 1).
- ii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Primary School and Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 3)
- 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. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF SALTOUN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND 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 Saltoun Primary School and Nursery Class.

Ms Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer for Education noted the inspection team used the How Good Is Our School 4? (HGIOS4?) quality indicators for primary inspections and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC?) for inspections of Nursery and Early Years provisions to evaluate the quality of provision at Saltoun Primary School and Nursery Class.

At the end of the inspection process, the outcomes were published in a short letter to parents and carers outlining the key strengths and areas for improvement. The letter provided a statement of the confidence the inspectors have in the school's capacity to improve the quality of its own work which meant inspectors would not return to Saltoun Primary School as a result of the inspection.

Ms Haspolat reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Saltoun Primary School secured gradings of 4 or good for both quality indicators inspected in the school and nursery class. Ms Haspolat highlighted the key strengths and areas for improvement found during the inspection.

Ms Haspolat confirmed she would continue to work closely with the Head Teacher and staff to provide professional advice and support and challenge in the areas for improvement. She assured Members that the Education Service was confident in the plans for continued improvement for the next session in the primary school and nursery classes.

Councillor Hampshire asked what actions were being taken to challenge the higher achieving children in their learning. Ms Haspolat reported having good assessment evidence in place for teachers to be able to plan high quality learning and teaching for all learners which includes differentiation in lessons through questioning, support and tasks. Mrs Debby Crossan, Head Teacher of Saltoun Primary School at the time of inspection said staff have been looking at how to stretch more able learners with personalised approaches and encourage learners to challenge themselves as well as through their learning with projects and looking at how and where they can use this information.

Mrs Crossan responded to further questions from Members. She gave information on what the school had been doing to promote the children's emotional and mental wellbeing including how they were helping to prepare the P7 pupils for their move to high school. Mrs Crossan also gave an update on work the children have done to personalise their learning.

Councillor Trotter welcomed the report and congratulated Mrs Crossan on her staff on the positive result. He said as a local Member he was pleased to see two small schools performing so well.

Councillor Dugdale echoed Councillor Trotter's comments and highlighted the positives of outdoor learning, the sense of team work from the report and the focus on health and wellbeing.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter (Appendix 1).
- ii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Primary School and Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 3)
- 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.

#### **4. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF LONGNIDDRY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND 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 Longniddry Primary School and Nursery Class.

Ms Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer for Education noted the inspection team used the How Good Is Our School 4? (HGIOS4?) quality indicators for primary inspections and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC?) for inspections of Nursery and Early Years provisions to evaluate the quality of provision at Longniddry Primary School and Nursery Class.

At the end of the inspection process, the outcomes were published in a short letter to parents and carers outlining the key strengths and areas for improvement. The letter provided a statement of the confidence the inspectors have in the school's capacity to improve the quality of its own work which meant inspectors would not return to Longniddry Primary School as a result of the inspection.

Ms Haspolat reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Longniddry Primary School secured gradings of 5 or very good for all four quality indicators inspected in the school and 4 or good for three quality indicators and 5 or very good for 1 quality indicator in the nursery class. Ms Haspolat highlighted the key strengths and areas for improvement found during the inspection.

Ms Haspolat confirmed she would continue to work closely with the Head Teacher and staff to provide professional advice and support and challenge in the areas for improvement. She assured Members that the Education Service was confident in the plans for continued improvement for the next session in the primary school and nursery classes.

Sheona Skinner, Head Teacher at Longniddry Primary School responded to questions from Members. She gave information on what the school and nursery were doing to meet the areas for improvement highlighted within the report and noted these had already been identified in the school self evaluation and review process . It was noted there was now a stable staff team within the nursery with a strong lead in the new Senior Early Years Practitioner and Centre Manager who was helping to continue to lead improvements. Ms Skinner also explained the nursery gave opportunities to all members of staff to add to the plans for learning as they observe the children play and the Senior Early Years Practitioner compiles a planning document for the next cycle. Ms Skinner reported the nursery has moved to a 3 week planning cycle which is working really well as allows for all staff to be involved in the planning process and the change in the nursery hours and model has allowed for more protected time to have high quality discussions amongst staff. Staff also work

with the Early Years Team from the centre to constantly try to improve and look at next steps for learners and not put a ceiling on what that learning looks like as some learners are already reading and counting.

Councillor Forrest asked all the Head Teachers how having a thorough understanding of the needs of children and families has helped with parental engagement with their school. Ms Skinner reported at Longniddry Primary School herself and the depute head teacher have a visible presence across the school and know all their learners from the nursery through to P7. She explained the school has an open door policy so parents know they can approach staff with any concerns and staff also communicate with parents on a regular basis regarding improvement plans for the school, which parents/carers are involved in. The school has a child friendly School Improvement Plan so the children are involved in detailing what the priorities should be and evaluate those on an ongoing basis which are then tied in with home learning activities so staff are being transparent with parents and carers about their child's next steps. Ms Skinner explained the school also have open mornings for parents and carers and they take a collaborative approach so parents are aware the school know all their learners well and this helps to drive forward improvement.

In response to questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Skinner reported the Eco Club was an example of the children leading learning as 4 pupils wrote to BBC News Round and were filmed as part of what they were driving forward for Climate Club. She added that the children share their passion with keeping our environment tidy with their own class and also at school assemblies. Ms Skinner noted the Climate Club was not linked to an official Eco Group but it is part of their whole school approach and it links in with the schools global goals and sustainability. She also gave Members an overview of the pupil led 'Bubbles Beat Balloons' campaign that the school took part in during lockdown. Ms Skinner explained she was clear with Education Scotland that a second language had not yet been introduced as the focus following lockdown and covid had been on literacy, numeracy and children's overall health and wellbeing. Ms Skinner stated it is looking likely the second language will be sign language as a new learner is joining the school who has a hearing impairment and staff feel it would be a great language for everybody in the school to be able to sign to ensure they are fully inclusive for the new pupil.

Ms McDowell, Ms Alison Cameron, Service Manager for Early Years and Childcare and Ms Skinner answered further questions from Members. Ms McDowell confirmed East Lothian Council do not need to wait on Education Scotland completing an inspection to evaluate the current model and change practice and this is something Ms Cameron, Service Manager for Early Years and Child Care has been looking at closely with her team. Ms Cameron confirmed they are under close review of all settings and continue to work with the improvement service to look at models of delivery in Early Learning and Childcare as a delivery of hours and not place. The team look at feedback from reviews, care inspections, Education Scotland inspections and taking into account the views of staff, children, parents and carers to see what is the best way the entitlement can be delivered. Ms Cameron reported last year changes were made to 6 out of 18 48-week settings and there will be further changes in light of feedback received. She added there is currently a consultation open for parents and carers across East Lothian to comment on the delivery of Early Learning and Child Care which will be collated and help to continue to improve the service. Ms Skinner gave an update on the schools rights respecting journey and explained how the teachers plan for children to learn about their rights including home learning and assemblies.

As a local ward Member Councillor Bruce congratulated Ms Skinner and her staff as well as parents and children of Longniddry for the positive report and noted how respected Longniddry Primary School is within the community.

Councillor Yorkston also congratulated Ms Skinner on a very impressive report and added he thought it was heartening the school had already identified the areas they wanted to improve on before the inspection had taken place. Councillor Yorkston said he is aware of the positive relationship the school has with the community as a whole and the emphasis the school put on children having a voice. He was very pleased about the suggestion of sign language being taught in the school for the pupil who will be joining in January and also for the overall benefit to everyone in the school and community. Councillor Yorkston highlighted the challenges that had been faced at Preston Lodge and thanked the work of all the primary schools to try and accommodate the timetable for the new S1's.

Councillor Dugdale echoed the congratulations of other councillors and highlighted the highly effective leadership of the Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher. She was pleased to hear the Head Teacher inspired learning and that children's rights were so well embedded within the school.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter (Appendix 1).
- ii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Primary School and Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 3)
- 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.

## **5. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF ST MARTIN'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL AND 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 St Martin's RC Primary School and Nursery Class.

Ms Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer for Education noted the inspection team used the How Good Is Our School 4? (HGIOS4?) quality indicators for primary inspections and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC?) for inspections of Nursery and Early Years provisions to evaluate the quality of provision at St Martin's RC Primary School and Nursery Class.

At the end of the inspection process, the outcomes were published in a short letter to parents and carers outlining the key strengths and areas for improvement. The letter provided a statement of the confidence the inspectors have in the school's capacity to improve the quality of its own work which meant inspectors would not return to St Martin's RC Primary School as a result of the inspection.

Ms Haspolat reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted St Martin's RC Primary School secured gradings of 4 or good for both quality indicators inspected in the school and nursery class. Ms Haspolat highlighted the key strengths and areas for improvement found during the inspection.

Ms Haspolat confirmed she would continue to work closely with the Head Teacher and staff to provide professional advice and support and challenge in the areas for improvement. She assured Members that the Education Service was confident in the plans for continued improvement for the next session in the primary school and nursery classes.

Councillor Bennett asked for more information on the leadership roles children have within the school. Lauren Davies, Head Teacher at St Martin's RC explained the main leadership roles the children take part in are the house and vice captains, rights respecting school committee team, the eco team and learning leaders. She highlighted the P7 pupils have specific roles which included working with the youngest learners as part of a buddy scheme, they established a school library, they have a fundraising team and junior road safety officers. Ms Davies explained the learning leaders team consists of pupils from P1 to P7 and they work with her to evaluate and improve the school curriculum. She gave an update on the work the team had carried out over the last year and highlighted the critical feedback the children gave was agreed with by staff. This session the team have decided to focus on interdisciplinary learning within the school and linking that with pupil personalisation and choice.

Responding to a follow up question from Councillor Bruce, Ms Davies noted writing had been on the school improvement plan for a few years and the school has engaged with a lot of professional learning opportunities and the next steps were to focus on the tools for writing as staff had realised some pupils were not experiencing success and that had been identified as the significant barrier to them being on or off track in terms of their learning and attainment. She explained this session staff have been engaging with the National Writing Programme and has been targeted across every class and have identified the first focus point for their learning and teaching. Ms Davies said the children continue to show a strong sense of enthusiasm about their writing and they like having data shared with them so they understand where they are within their learning and their goals.

Ms McDowell, Ms Haspolat and Ms Davies answered further questions from Members. Ms Haspolat gave an overview of what was being done at an authority level to tackle the possible barriers for improvement going forward. Ms Davies noted there were no barriers at present but prior to her joining the school in 2019 the barriers came from staffing inconsistencies and provided information on how the current staff team have tackled this with a core focus being on building capacity and sustainability of all staff within the school so it is not just a select few members of staff who have all the information. Ms McDowell explained there is a robust approach to evaluate how schools use their Pupil Equity Fund and Ms Davies confirmed the Pupil Equity Fund had been spent for this session but and there was a small group consultation around how the money should be spent however this year she will be looking at how the parent and learner involvement can be increased.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed the report and highlighted the positive areas around children's leadership and all the strengths identified within the report. She congratulated Ms Davies and her team for their work.

## **Decision**



The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter (Appendix 1).
- ii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Primary School and Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 3)
- 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.

## **6. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF WINDYGOUL PRIMARY SCHOOL AND 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 Windygoul Primary School and Nursery Class.

Ms Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer for Education noted the inspection team used the How Good Is Our School 4? (HGIOS4?) quality indicators for primary inspections and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC?) for inspections of Nursery and Early Years provisions to evaluate the quality of provision at Windygoul Primary School and Nursery Class.

At the end of the inspection process, the outcomes were published in a short letter to parents and carers outlining the key strengths and areas for improvement. The letter provided a statement of the confidence the inspectors have in the school's capacity to improve the quality of its own work which meant inspectors would not return to St Windygoul Primary School as a result of the inspection.

Ms Haspolat reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Windygoul Primary School secured gradings of 4 or good for both quality indicators inspected in the school and nursery class. Ms Haspolat highlighted the key strengths and areas for improvement found during the inspection.

Ms Haspolat confirmed she would continue to work closely with the Head Teacher and staff to provide professional advice and support and challenge in the areas for improvement. She assured Members that the Education Service was confident in the plans for continued improvement for the next session in the primary school and nursery classes.

Councillor Menzies asked if there were any barriers to prevent further improvement within Windygoul Primary School and what the benefits have been to pupils and staff from engaging in outdoor play and ELPA. Ms Dianne Mackenzie, Head Teacher at Windygoul Primary School reported the school has and will continue to look for potential barriers and come up with the best ways to get around them by looking at what is best for the learners and community. She explained it had been a wonderful opportunity for pupils and staff to look at play in its widest sense to let children's voices shine through as they had a major part to play in all the developments across the school. Ms Mackenzie gave an update on how staff were using more play opportunities and how the Principal Teacher was looking at more outdoor learning throughout the school as staff have seen the positive impact for all learners.

Ms Mackenzie continued to answer questions from Members. She gave information on the children's opportunities to read for pleasure and how this has impacted their attainment and made Members aware of the work Windygoul has done to teach pupils of all ages sign language within the school. Ms Mackenzie explained the sign along leaders introduce new signs to the school during assembly so through the week all staff and pupils can use them through the school community. She confirmed she would be more than happy to link up with Longniddry Primary to look at how they can move forward together.

Councillor Menzies stated these reports show that schools within East Lothian know how to continue improving and that should be celebrated. She gave a huge thanks to Ms McDowell and the whole team, the Senior Leadership Teams at every school and in particular Ms Davies and Ms Mackenzie as they are both Head Teachers of schools in her ward.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed the positive report and highlighted the mention of the warm and inclusive environment across the nursery, school and Woodside and all the celebrations of success. She congratulated Ms Mackenzie, the school and the whole education service as a whole.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the content of the Education Scotland letter (Appendix 1).
- ii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Primary School and Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii. Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 3)
- 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.

## **7. EDUCATION SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT & IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023/24**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services to seek the Committee's approval of the Education Service Progress Report and Improvement Plan on key improvement priorities achieved for session 2022/23 and identification of key improvement priorities planned for session 2023/24.

Nicola McDowell, Head of Education presented the report drawing Members attention to the focus for 2023/34 of Back to Basics – A Relentless Focus on Equity and Excellence. She outlined the key successes, summary of progress over the last year and the next steps specifically highlighting the three recovery focussed priorities of Curriculum, Inclusion and Wellbeing and Leadership. Ms McDowell reported The Scottish Attainment Challenge will continue to provide support for children and young people through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF); the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund (CECYPF) and the Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) and plans for the use of these funds are detailed in the Progress and Improvement Plan. She confirmed the service will also continue to implement the required actions in the five priority areas set out in the National Improvement Framework across the key drivers for improvement. Ms McDowell concluded by saying while there continued to be significant challenges for the education service they remained very ambitious for the

children and young people and their progress and achievement and she hoped this plan reflected the commitment to this.

Councillor Hampshire welcomed the report and congratulated the team on their excellent work and asked if everything detailed in the report will be achievable given the financial situation the Council is in. Ms McDowell said there is no doubt the financial challenges East Lothian Council is facing will have an impact on the education service but as a team they remained committed at looking how best to deliver the service in the most efficient way and remain ambitious for the children and young people and very committed to getting it right for every child. Ms McDowell explained in formulating the report the team were very mindful of the challenges to ensure that we remained realistic and have the resources available to us and kept that in mind when putting together the priorities.

Ms McDowell and Jennifer Boyle, Quality Improvement Manager for Equity and Inclusion answered further question from Members. She made Members aware has delivered a Learning Estates Strategy which was recently approved at Council and as part of that a Learning Estate Improvement Plan is also being formulated which will allow the service to prioritise what needs to be done to school buildings using a decision making map. Ms McDowell explained the condition and suitability facts were important and they would lead discussion on what needed to be done to facilities to make sure they were suitable for purpose. Ms Boyle gave an update on how the department was mitigating and supporting the impact of children experiencing poverty and other adversity including the use of the Strategic Equity Fund which has allowed for the implementation of key staff within leadership roles in secondary schools and Family Support Workers within primary schools. Ms Boyle noted this year the funding had increased so another four schools were able to be supported by Family Support Workers and have committed to establishing Child Planning Framework Locality Teams to provide a forum for other agencies to come together and look at the children facing the most challenge.

Councillor Ritchie asked if Ms Boyle could expand on the work the Family Support Workers are doing and the impact this was having. Ms Boyle said because of the data systems set up with monthly tracking she was already able to see positive impact these staff members were having on attendance and attainment.

In response to questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms McDowell stated the best person to respond about the CAMHS waiting lists would be Ms Harrison, Principal Educational Psychologist and therefore it would be best for this question to be answered offline. In terms of children who find school difficult to attend, Ms McDowell reassured Members the focus on attendance is not on shaming people but understanding why children and young people aren't able to attend school. She explained there are robust reasons why children are not able to attend school which is allowing the department to target resources in the right direction and can support them to be able to come to school, or be educated in whatever way is most appropriate for them. Ms Boyle added that targets for attendance are at school level and not individual level and recognise the inability to attend school as an additional support need which would mean meetings with the family and looking to put bespoke supports in place.

Ms Boyle and Mr Neil Craik-Collins, Education Service Manager continued to answer questions from Members. Ms Boyle provided information on why specific targets are set in relation to the attainment gap. Mr Craik-Collins stated there had been no update from the Scottish Government on any increase to the funding of Foundation Apprenticeships and at the moment all funding is frozen so he did not anticipate any

further funding coming forward. He explained the current contract is rolling so the Council would receive the current numbers we already have but have not received any news on an uplift to enable significant increase in programmes. Mr Craik-Collins reported at present there were 179 pupils on Foundation Apprenticeships and next year he would anticipate real demand in the secondary curriculum for further Foundation Apprenticeships due to the pilot project at Preston Lodge. He Craik-Collins confirmed the completion rates were above 95% with 100% positive destinations.

Gail Gillan, EIS asked about the increase in the pupil teacher ratio. Ms McDowell confirmed the increase was very minimal and we try very hard in East Lothian to manage class sizes and deliver the most efficient service by having robust discussions with Head Teachers, Quality Improvement Officers and with central staff to look at role projections for individual schools. She explained East Lothian has some very large and very small schools and reassured Ms Gillan the size of classes is managed very carefully to ensure pupils get the best experience. Bev Skirrow, Acting Service Manager for Strategy and Operations provided information on how the Strategy and Operations Team currently monitor the class organisation within East Lothian and how they will improve this going forward by holding working groups to look at staffing profiles which will include Head Teachers, Ms Gillan and other representatives from finance, HR and procurement.

Ms McDowell, Ms Boyle and Mr Craik-Collins continued to answer questions from Members relating to flexible learning pathways and the success of MyPass Art Therapy. Ms McDowell confirmed flexible learning pathways had been a key focus for a number of years to ensure we meet the needs of all individual children. She explained children have a range of needs there are a range of pathways they can take as its not feasible to expect every child to be in a classroom all day managing the same as every other child. Mr Craik-Collins provided information on the work he has been doing in secondary schools on flexible curriculum pathways which includes traditional exam based routes and providing opportunities for work based learning and industry experience. He noted there are currently Foundation Apprenticeships available in Business, Accountancy, IT Software, Social Services – Children and Young People and Scientific Technologies all which have highly successful outcomes. Ms McDowell noted the evaluation of the art therapy service falls under the Educational Psychologist who was unable to attend Committee therefore Ms Boyle made Members aware of the process of intervention work with children and highlighted the work the new Locality Teams will be doing to ensure they have the correct supports in place for each children and their family. She explained that the outcomes are tracked and monitored closely to look for possible gaps.

Councillor Hampshire welcomed the excellent report covering all levels of education and which identifies the improvements and the problems within our education service. He added that East Lothian has seen a 25% growth in population which has resulted in a massive expansion of our education estate which means 54% of the overall Council budget is invested in education and the increase in the grant East Lothian Council is receiving is not meeting with the growth we are delivering. Councillor Hampshire highlighted the pressures on the Council as a whole and how this will have a direct impact on the education service and children and young people unless they receive an additional grant. He made it clear East Lothian Council will continue to do everything they can to ensure the education service can continue to deliver for every child through the many available pathways. Councillor Hampshire thanked all the education staff for their hard work.

Councillor Menzies agreed with Councillor Hampshire's comments. She highlighted the positive of hearing of the outcomes for the children and young people within East Lothian and found it heartening to hear of children as individuals and not stats. Councillor Menzies thanked Ms McDowell and her team for their hard work and being ahead of the curve.

Councillor Dugdale highlighted the work on the Foundation Apprenticeships, support for young carers, use of the Strategic Equity Fund, Locality Frameworks and all the individual responses to questions asked at today's Committee. She thanked all staff within the education service for their creative and caring approach to the work that they do.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note:

- i. Note the overall positive progress made by the Education Service in delivery of the Council's Plan, the Education Progress and Improvement Plan 2022/23 and the priorities within the National Improvement Framework.
- ii. Note the steps being taken to secure continuous improvement in session 2023/24.
- iii. Approve the Progress Report and Improvement Plan 2023.24 (Appendix 1).
- iv. Note that this Progress Report and Improvement Plan has been submitted to the Scottish Government in draft, in line with the Local Authority's statutory duty pending Committee approval.

## **8. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services to inform the Committee of the Head Teacher appointments made by the Appointments Sub-Committee.

Nicola McDowell, Head of Education reported the new Head Teacher appointments since the last Committee;

Steven McBride, previous Acting Head Teacher for St David's RC Primary School was appointed as the Head Teacher for Elphinstone Primary School on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

Helen Gardyne, previous Head Teacher for Ormiston Primary School was appointed as the Head Teacher for Haddington Primary School on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.

Lorna McCallum, previous Head Teacher for Acting Head Teacher for St Margaret's RC Primary School has been appointed as the Head Teacher for Loretto RC Primary School and will start on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Sarah Morgan previous Head Teacher for Pencaitland Primary School was appointed as the Head Teacher at Ormiston Primary School on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.

Councillor Dugdale congratulated the new Head Teacher's on their appointments. She also thanked all Parent Council Members and pupils for their time to take part in these recruitments.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointments.

Signed .....

Councillor Fiona Dugdale  
Convener of the Education Committee