



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

**TUESDAY 19 MARCH, 10:00am
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor Bennett
Councillor Bruce
Councillor Dugdale - Convener
Councillor Hampshire
Councillor McFarlane
Councillor McIntosh
Councillor Menzies
Councillor Trotter
Councillor Yorkston
Ms G Gillan (EIS)

Council Officials Present:

Ms L Brown - Executive Director of Education and Children's Services
Ms N McDowell - Head of Education
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 F Brown – Principal Officer, Education

Teachers Present:

Ms Z Diggle – Head Teacher, Wallyford Primary School & Nursery Class

Clerk:

Ms M Scott, Committee Officer
Ms F Currie, back-up clerk

Other Elected Members present:

Apologies:

Councillor Ritchie
Councillor N Gilbert
Rev G Sheridan (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 Teacher, Ms Zena Diggle who was present at the meeting.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 21 NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting of 21 November 2023 were approved.

2. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF WALLYFORD 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 Wallyford Primary School and Nursery Class.

Mr Nick Trussler, 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 Wallyford 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. This was published along with the summary of inspection findings which is a professional report and summarised the findings from all the evidence gathered during the inspection. This document is intended to be used by staff progressing school improvement.

Mr Trussler reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Wallyford Primary School received gradings satisfactory for learning, teaching and assessment and weak for raising attainment and achievement, and in the nursery class both related quality indicators were graded as satisfactory. Mr Trussler highlighted the key strengths and areas for improvement found during the inspection.

Mr Trussler confirmed he would continue to work closely with the Head Teacher and staff to provide professional advice and support and challenge in the areas for improvement.

Councillor McFarlane asked what support was being given to staff to help achieve the attainment objectives. Mr Trussler highlighted the additional supports the Quality Improvement Team had provided to the school including engagement with the National Improving Writing Programme and blocks of support from the Pedagogy Team. Ms Zena Diggle, Head Teacher at Wallyford Primary School and Nursery Class added she had been working with larger schools who had given feedback on the school improvement plan on things that could be done better. Ms Diggle informed Members she had participated in the Scot Group which in her view had been critical in looking at the curriculum offer at Wallyford Primary School as she believes this needs to be reviewed and uplevelled to raise attainment and literacy.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Trussler confirmed the inspection was completed in September when Ms Diggle had only been in post for five weeks. He explained the Inspection Team recognised Ms Diggle's experience as she was able to provide an accurate self-evaluation statement to where the strengths and development needs were within the school and the impact of her leadership even over that short period of her appointment. Mr Trussler agreed with Councillor Hampshire, that time was required to see the impact on pupil attainment which has been evidenced in current tracking of pupil progress for this session. Ms Diggle added that the Leadership Team she has joined were fantastic in allowing her to be very robust in the evaluation she undertook when she started. She explained one of the key reasons the curriculum rationale will be looked at is due to the change in the community so this will need to meet the needs of the community as it develops.

Mr Trussler and Ms Diggle provided information to Members on what the future inspection at Wallyford Primary School and Nursery Class will look like and how the school will be supported in preparing for this. Ms Diggle explained since the inspection she has implemented a whole school tracking system and gave evidence on how this has helped staff to improve levels of attainment. Mr Trussler confirmed parents would be informed when the next inspection will take place.

Responding to questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Diggle confirmed the views of all staff and also the children are taken into consideration as part of the inspection. Ms Diggle provided information on the methods of assessment being used within classrooms to help children understand their progress and goals. Ms Diggle made Members aware the school will continue to strive to be the best it can be, and she is looking at a five-year plan for Wallyford including closing the poverty related attainment gap due to the changing SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) profile of the school.

Councillor Bruce asked if it was unusual for schools to not have a whole school tracker. Mr Trussler explained schools do track progress in terms of achievement of a level and the Quality Improvement Team engages with schools regularly to monitor and evaluate the tracking of that progress. He added the tracking system Ms Diggle has implemented within Wallyford is much more detailed around progress of individual learners, the barriers they may have, and the interventions put in place as a result.

In response to a second question from Councillor Bruce, Mr Trussler stated attainment can be cohort specific and data from Wallyford had not shown good rates of attainment over time however the additional supports put in place over the last three sessions has led to impact. A focus has been maintained on this with use of the Pedagogy Team to support teaching and learning in all classes in order to provide additional support and develop pedagogical approaches. Ms Diggle added she felt the understanding of achieving first and second level needed attention and the

school has worked hard to make sure they are stating accurately if a child has attained that level. She stated a SEF funded pupil support worker and equity administration have been brought in to work closely with families around attendance and funding has also been used to support family wellbeing, both of which will have a positive impact on attainment.

Councillor Menzies stated the difference in the school between when she was elected in May 2022 and now is amazing and has gone through a real transformation. She explained Wallyford is an ever changing and growing community which still has pockets of poverty with families with complex needs and this has to be managed by the school in a constantly changing environment. She noted that although this report is a concern, but things have really improved and are on a positive trajectory and spoke highly of the scrutiny of the Wallyford Parent/Carer Council. Councillor Menzies thanked Ms Diggle and the whole school team.

Councillor Hampshire said he is confident the school is going in the right direction and believes the next inspection report will be excellent.

Councillor Yorkston and Councillor McIntosh highlighted the strengths identified by the Inspection Team and were really encouraged by all the updates Ms Diggle was able to provide at today's meeting.

Councillor Dugdale echoed the comments from other Members and felt reassured the school are working really hard to focus on those areas of improvement. She added she is confident about the progress the school will make by continuing to work with the Quality Improvement Officer, Mr Trussler and thanked Ms Diggle and the whole staff team within Wallyford Primary School and Nursery Class.

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 as a result of the inspection findings, Education Scotland will make a follow-up visit in connection with this inspection within 12 months of publication of the inspection report to allow more time for the school to make necessary improvements.
- v. Note the key strengths identified by the Inspection Team and progress made since the inspection.

3. RESERVE PLACES IN SCHOOLS FOR CATCHMENT PUPILS WHO MOVE INTO THE CATCHMENT AREA DURING ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to report to Committee to obtain approval for reserving place for incoming catchment pupils at the primary and secondary schools detailed in 2.1 for session 2024/25.

Ms Fiona Brown, Principal Officer for 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. She asked Committee to note an update to Yester Primary

School in that the reserve places are for each class not each primary stage which is in line with other schools who have a number of composite classes in academic year 2024/25.

Councillor Hampshire asked if Ms Brown was confident within the reserve places proposed today that with the new build planned for this year all children can be accommodated. Ms Brown confirmed she was confident in the number of places requesting to be held are sufficient for pupils moving into the catchment area as the role projections used are from build rates provided by colleagues in October/November which at that time was the most up to date information available from planning and housing.

In response to a question from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Brown confirmed it would only be pupils out with the catchment area who would potentially be refused as a place as these places are held in reserve for families moving into the catchment area of the school. She noted there are a few schools who may start the academic year with only their reserve places available, but these are held for the entire year to accommodate for new builds and migration into the local school area.

Councillor Hampshire stated a lot of concern is raised by communities because of the level of new builds within East Lothian people that the Council is not creating the infrastructure available, but it is clear officers do everything they can to ensure there is enough capacity within every school so any child moving into the area has a place where they can be educated. He emphasised the challenge of this, especially with the construction industry as the Council is unable to dictate how many houses they build within the year.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms Brown and other officers for their work on ensuring all children and young people have a place to be educated within their local school.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. hold in reserve places for incoming catchment pupils for sessions 2024/25 in the named primary and secondary schools between S1-S4.

A roll call vote was carried out and the decision to support was unanimous.

4. ROLL CAPPING IN EAST LOTHIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SESSION 2024/25

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 2024/25.

Ms Fiona Brown, Principal Officer for Education summarised her report highlighting the main principles for managing secondary school roles within East Lothian are to; provide high quality education at local schools for local pupils, ensure quality of resources throughout East Lothian and commit to a real choice of education inside our schools and not between our schools. Ms Brown noted that practical classes, such as science subjects, are set in multiples of 20 and non-practical classes are set in multiples of 30.

Councillor Hampshire asked if there was a maximum capacity of pupils within schools are there are numerous secondary schools now with over 1000 pupils. Ms

Brown explained colleagues within other services look at school capacity and extensive work has been done around both our primary and secondary schools on what the maximum capacities can be which included looking at the full education estate and proposed house builds. Nicola McDowell, Head of Education added the Learning Estate Project Team are doing a comprehensive piece of work around school capacities at the moment in regard to the local development plan to make sure the current capacities are correctly set for the way the curriculum is delivered. Ms McDowell offered to provide the outcome of this work with Councillor Hampshire when it was completed. In response to a follow up question from Councillor Hampshire, Ms McDowell explained when planning the capacity of a school there is a formula used to allocate the required space for dining which is also taken into consideration should an extension be added to an existing school.

In response to a question from Councillor Menzies, Ms Brown explained parents can still make an out of catchment placing request for Musselburgh Grammer instead of Rosehill. She explained this year the local authority will be noting the families who may make these requests to accommodate them if they have siblings already at Musselburgh Grammer and wish for these siblings groups to stay together.

Councillor McIntosh asked if she could also be sent the information from Ms McDowell. She added that while looking at school estates part of the discussion should cover what the most efficient use of resources that go into building extensions and at what point it becomes more resource sensible to build a new school as well as the energy usage of the current school estate. Councillor McIntosh highlighted the work of the Teach the Future group who are campaigning for schools to be high on the list for retrofitting.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms Brown for all the work that has gone into preparing the report.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. a maximum intake level in S1-S4 for session 2024/25 in the listed schools.

A roll call vote was carried out and the decision to support was unanimous.

5. EXCELLENCE & EQUITY: RAISING ATTAINMENT FOR ALL STRATEGY 2023/24 – 2025/26

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to report to seek the Committee's approval of the draft raising attainment strategy: Excellence & Equity: Raising Attainment for All.

Ms Jennifer Boyle, Quality Improvement Manager for Equity and Inclusion summarised her report and drew Members' attention to the equity principles which were created in collaboration with school colleagues to illustrate our rigorous approach and culture of ambition. She also highlighted the work of the Education Support Officer for Care Experienced Children and Young People, and the stretch aims in relation to improving school attendance and attainment. Ms Boyle drew attention to the eight core plus stretch aims and the scope and inclusivity that they include recognition for a wide range of attainment measures. Ms Boyle noted each school also has a stretch aim in relation to school attendance and East Lothian Council's Attendance Policy has been highlighted by Education Scotland as an example of good practice in a recent publication.

In response to questions from Councillor Bruce, Ms Boyle confirmed the Scottish Attainment Challenge is made of three strands; pupil equity funding which is paid directly to head teachers based on the children in receipt of free school meals, the strategic equity fund which is paid directly to local authorities based on the children and families considered to be in low income and funding for care experienced children and young people. She explained officers work in partnership with schools to ensure they are happy with the approaches they are taking when it comes to the use of the pupil equity funding. Ms Boyle added last year guidance was published on the use of the pupil equity fund with a clear process on how that funding is spent and the details of how that funding is spent is also set out in the school improvement plan which the school would be publishing in advance of their academic session.

Councillor Bruce asked how the Council will use the strategic equity fund to support schools. Ms Boyle reported that fund is primarily being used to fund extra staff within schools including a Principal Teacher of Equity in each secondary school and Family Support Workers into primary schools with the highest number of children in quintile one. Ms Boyle added that officers are currently designing a new service in terms of providing education outreach for the most vulnerable learners.

In response to a follow up question from Councillor Bruce, Ms Boyle provided information on what data is collated from schools and how this would be shared with Members through the Education Progress and Improvement Plan which is published annually.

Councillor Hampshire asked what more could be done for the parents and carers who won't engage with staff through any initiatives. Ms Boyle provided information on the Child Planning Framework Locality Teams she hopes to implement this year to provide school colleagues with a forum to bring families whom they feel they are not getting it right despite the current resources in place. Ms Alison Cameron, Service Manager for Early Years informed Members of the work of Whole Family Wellbeing which will allow everyone to work as a team to manage the requests of support. She confirmed the Families Together Team would also be present at Child Planning Framework Locality Team meetings to show the joined-up approach and planned ways of working compliment the raising attainment strategy highlighted today. In response to a follow up question from Councillor Hampshire, Ms Boyle stated schools have always been creative in making sure everyone feels welcomed and have shown tenacity and don't give up with parents who haven't been willing to engage.

In response to questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Boyle confirmed prior to the family support workers being brought into primary schools Ms McDowell and herself went to numerous schools and families to ask what would make things better for them and that is where many of the newly implemented approaches such as walking buses have come from. Ms Boyle also provided an update on the work our Educational Psychologist is currently doing around attendance in secondary schools.

Councillor McIntosh asked how the pupil voice was included within the attainment strategy. Ms Boyle explained an education support officer is linked into rights respecting school so year the Equity Pupil Group has been formed, made up on 3 to 4 pupils from each secondary school to be a sounding board for all policies going forward.

In response to Councillor McIntosh's questions regarding exclusions, Ms Boyle said she was confident that the current policies in place support staff and is used as a last resort and does not sit in isolation but instead alongside the GIRFEC frameworks

therefore all children who are known to be at risk of exclusion will have positive support plans and risk assessments to make sure staff are aware of triggers and working to mitigate them. She also made Members aware on how exclusions are tracked and how children who have been excluded are supported.

Councillor Dugdale asked how schools are making sure they are aware of hidden poverty and parents having to work multiple jobs to manage finances. Ms Boyle stated having the Principal Teachers of Equity within secondary schools to look at that data and gaps will be hugely beneficial.

In response to a second question from Councillor Dugdale, Ms Boyle explained the stretch aims set out by the Scottish Government look at children achieving level five and six qualifications but we are aware not all children can achieve this level therefore within our core plus stretch aims one was set around the achievement of level one qualifications and above which seeks to scoop up every single learner, including those within specialist provisions to make sure all learners leave school with five qualifications. She added that the team have also looked at literacy and numeracy as a core qualification. Ms Boyle confirmed foundation apprenticeships are covered in the measure of one of more qualification at level five.

Councillor Hampshire said he was pleased about the locality groups that are underway to help families who are struggling to have the best chance at an education, and he looked forward to an update in the future.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms Boyle and all staff who have worked on the report. She saw a genuine focus on raising attainment and attendance to identify children who are at risk of underachieving and to bring everyone together to support children and families.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Approve the draft raising attainment strategy: Excellence & Equity: Raising Attainment for All Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26. (Appendix 1)
- ii. Note the steps being taken to ensure raising attainment for all learners and closing the poverty related attainment gap in sessions 2023/24; 2024/25 and 2025/26.

A roll call vote was carried out for i. and the decision to support was unanimous. Councillor Bruce lost connection at the time of voting but later confirmed his vote via email.

6. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENT

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

Ms Nicola McDowell, Head of Education reported the appointment of Steven Wood as Head Teacher at Gullane Primary School. Mr Wood will leave his current post at Gorebridge Primary School and Early Learning Centre and begin at Gullane Primary on 19 April.

-Councillor Findlay and Councillor Dugdale congratulated Mr Wood on his appointment and thanked parents, carers and pupils for their help with his recruitment.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointment.

7. BELONGING TO EAST LOTHIAN

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services to update the Committee on the progress of the joint work across Education and Children's Services to meet the needs of our children and young people within East Lothian and where possible in their communities and seek to avoid having care and Education needs met out with the authority.

Ms Lindsey Byrne, Head of Children's Services presented her report which outlined some of the key developments across the directorate and key successes including the key development of the outreach service which offers support to families at risk of break down and can be available at evenings and weekends, the introduction of Chances which is a dedicated outreach programme for young people at risk of residential or secure accommodation and the pilot of a new approach to supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. Ms Byrne noted the department are also pleased about the implementation of Child Planning Framework Locality Teams which will become an integral part of the Councils approach to GIRFEC. Ms Byrne confirmed by the end of the school session 2023/24 all locality areas will have been supported to establish their own locality team. She reported a gradual reduction in the number of children being looked after which showed the department are meeting more children's needs within their families and schools which continues to be the overall aim of Belonging to East Lothian. She provided an update on the next phase for collaboration which will include a new targeted campaign to attract more people to care for our most vulnerable young people as well as developing a service to offer flexible education provision to ensure more people can engage with education in a way that meets their needs.

In response to a question from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Byrne stated the department absolutely agree that our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people have the same rights and needs as the rest of the our looked after young people but sometimes it is difficult to ensure one resource can meet the needs of a large group and often the young people coming in via the national transfer scheme have a different set of requirements and are slightly older than the young people cared for in Lothian Villa. She added that it would also mean we have less resources for local young people who may need to be looked after in a residential provision. Ms Byrne reported the department have decided to utilise their close relationship with housing and have reprovisioned some two-bedroom properties to keep unaccompanied asylum seekers in pairs when they arrive with visiting support from staff. She explained this has been seen as more appropriate than 24-hour care given their age and requirements, but this would be based on full assessment and if there was a young person whose needs could be better met within a residential facility then that would also be considered. Ms Byrne confirmed this is a similar set up to the starter flats local young people may move into from Lothian Villa and they will have their own tenancy agreement which is more stability for their future within East Lothian. She noted there is currently one allocated support worker for asylum seeking young people, but their capacity will be monitored as the national transfer scheme picks up.

Councillor McIntosh asked if the potential trauma these young people have suffered is being addressed. Ms Byrne explained the department work closely with the Guardianship National Service which looks at the individual needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and also colleagues within health services. She added

that the department are also starting to create networks of support across Lothian and Borders to share best practice and learning with other local authority areas experiencing similar things.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Ms Byrne explained the department are looking to recruit a dedicated worker for marketing and recruitment who will focus on setting up events for people who are interested in becoming foster carers. She added these events will help people understand there is more than one way to foster and will hopefully be offered online as well as in person to ensure they are as accessible as possible.

Councillor Dugdale asked how children and young people's voices are being heard in the evaluation of these approaches. Ms Byrne reported the department are always seeking ways to enhance to help develop services which is being done through the Pupil Equity Group and Family Together East Lothian as well as the East Lothian Champions Board who have come up with a list of priorities that underpin a lot of the work we are taking forward at the moment. She noted the Champions Board are also involved in the recruitment and training of new foster carers.

Councillor Hampshire thanked the staff for their success on reducing the number of looked after children in East Lothian and hoped in the future all children who require to be looked after can be kept within the local area.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms Byrne and all staff involved with Belonging to East Lothian. She was pleased to see an acknowledgment of some young people requiring a bespoke approach and was pleased to see the increase of foster fees so felt reassured that East Lothian will manage to recruit more foster carers. Councillor Dugdale also thanked all officers involved.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the overall positive progress made by the Education and Childrens Services to avoid placements out with the authority and meet the needs of our young people within East Lothian
- ii. Note the planned joint next steps.

Signed

Councillor Fiona Dugdale
Convener of the Education Committee

DRAFT