



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

**TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER, 10:00am
VIA HYBRID SYSTEM**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor Bennett
Councillor Bruce (remote)
Councillor Dugdale – Convener
Councillor Findlay (remote)
Councillor Gilbert (remote)
Councillor Hampshire
Councillor McFarlane
Councillor McIntosh (remote)
Councillor Ritchie
Councillor Yorkston
Mr S Gilmour-Jack (remote)
Reverend Sheridan (remote)

Council Officials Present:

Ms L Brown - Executive Director of Education and Children's Services
Ms N McDowell - Head of Education
Ms H Barnett – Head of Corporate Support (remote)
Ms J Boyle – Quality Improvement Manager for Equity and Inclusion
Ms A Cameron – Service Manager – Early Years and Childcare
Ms B Skirrow - Principal Officer (Education Service)
Ms J Allen - Communications Adviser
Mr N Trussler – Quality Improvement Officer, Education
Ms A Harrison – Principal Education Psychologist
Ms J Fraser – General Manager, Children's Services (remote)
Ms K Haspolat – Quality Improvement Officer, Education
Ms L Ayton – Principal Officer, Equity & Inclusion
Mr A Stewart – Quality Improvement Officer, SEIC

Teachers Present:

Ms J Mackinnon – Head Teacher, Dunbar Primary School
Mr B Moody – Head Teacher, Athelstaneford & Dirleton Primary School
Mr S Brown – previous Head Teacher, Athelstaneford Primary School & Acting Head Teacher, Yester Primary School
Ms D Mercer – Head Teacher, Campie Primary School
Mr P Reynolds – Head Teacher, Ross High
Ms S Skinner – Head Teacher, Longniddry Primary School

Clerk:

Ms L Gillingwater
Ms F Currie

Other Elected Members present:

Apologies:

Councillor Menzies

Councillor Trotter

Declarations of Interest:

None

Prior to the commencement of business, the Clerk advised that the meeting was being held using the Council's hybrid system and 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 congratulated Bev Skirrow on her appointment as Service Manager for Strategy and Operations and highlighted East Lothian was a finalist in three categories with regards to Wallyford Learning Campus; Client of the Year, Inspiring Learning Spaces and Project of the Year at the Learning Places Awards.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE 2024

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting of 18 June 2024 were approved as an accurate record. Councillor Ritchie asked for her attendance to be added to the minute.

2. EDUCATION SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT & IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, 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 2023/24 and identification of key priorities planned for sessions 2024/25.

Ms Nicola McDowell, Head of Education reported the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 places a duty on the Education Authority to annual prepare and publish a report on it's success in meeting the objectives set out in the most recently published Education Local Improvement Plan. She drew Members attention to the work completed by the Education Service to review progress from last session as a method of self-evaluation as well as officers and peer Head Teachers completing reviews of school standards, quality reports and school improvement plans to ascertain where further improvement is required. Ms McDowell confirmed the focus for session 2024/25 continues to be "Back to Basics – a Relentless Focus on Equity and Excellence" with plans for the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to continue to be amalgamated into school improvement plans to ensure a holistic approach to improvement planning, specifically relating to raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Ms McDowell highlighted the aim of the Education and Children's Services Directorate to continue to develop an integrated service that seeks to get it right for all our children. She also noted the key successes, provided a summary of progress and drew Members attention to the next steps and priorities which are based on the five priorities from the last school session, matching those of the National Improvement Framework. Ms McDowell asked Members to note that while over the last three years priorities have been based on recovery, it is now recognised recovery is the new normal therefore a new year three planning cycle has begun. To support continuous improvement linked to inspection, review and self-evaluation outcomes, the priorities for the next three years will be focussed on the key inspection quality indicators; 2.2 Curriculum, 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment, 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion and 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement.

Councillor Hampshire asked how the Education Service will deliver their plan given the financial challenges the Council is facing. Ms McDowell confirmed affordability is always taken into consideration when building the plan and as a service they work hard to deliver their priorities within the budget they have. She confirmed the priorities reflect the Council's three refreshed priorities which the service is very committed to, in particular the first two which is ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council through the delivery of approved savings and transforming the way services are delivered as well as targeting resources on statutory services to focus on children at the highest risk and those most in need.

Responding to a question from Councillor Bennett, Ms McDowell stated the service made sure to engage with a wider range of stakeholders in terms of improvement planning and explained the template used within schools to do their own improvement planning required them to detail how they were consulting with stakeholders whether that is parents/carers, children and young people, parent councils or a range of professionals. All the information gathered in those forms is then amalgamated to ensure it feeds into the wider service improvement planning process.

Ms McDowell, Mr Nick Trussler, Quality Improvement Officer and Ms Jennifer Boyle Quality Improvement Manager for Equity and Inclusion continued to answer questions from Members providing information on work that had been undertaken to strengthen the pupil voice, the Stand Up and Be Counted Library Service and how young people from the LGBTQ community have participated in helping to create the Gender Recognition Statement. Ms Boyle confirmed the statement was not yet ready for Committee and this would be brought at a later stage when it was finalised.

Councillor McIntosh asked for more information on the Test of Change Project and the impact it will have on young people now that this has completed. Ms Anita Harrison, Principal Educational Psychologist explained there were five National Test of Change sites where the NHS and Education combined to look at ways of making the pathways easier for children, young people and their families to navigate. This included work on the clinical assessment aspect and developing a range of supports and resources for children and young people to support their mental health and wellbeing. Ms Harrison noted the Test of Change project came to an end in March 2024 and a full and robust report was then provided to the Scottish Government which feedback will be provided on. She added that the Education Service will look at how they can take forward learning from the project to focus on training for staff in schools and a broader range of support for children and young people with a single point of access. She added that as part of the report provided to the Scottish

Government, a consultation took place with families asking them what areas they would like to see further support, which included; specific social groups and opportunities, support to access existing social opportunities, post diagnosis support, parenting groups and stay and play facilities. Ms Harrison highlighted the NHS are interested in looking at tech to reduce waiting times for the assessment process and have been linked with a professor at Glasgow University to take this idea forward. She confirmed all five sites included in the project provided a report to the Scottish Government and these will be summarised with feedback provided to COSLA and the Scottish Government Joint Strategy Board in December.

Responding to further questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Harrison explained there are a range of offers within the department such as the Educational Psychology Service would look to provide an assessment and advice around strategies and supports and the mental health and wellbeing single point of access would provide supports and indirect interventions for children and young people who had a difficult time learning within the school setting. She added the Education Outreach Team would also support young people to continue with their educational progress and attainment within a variety of flexible, creative ways. Ms McDowell stated a lot of work is being done on attendance within schools with Educational Support Officers visiting Head Teachers and senior staff on a regular basis. She confirmed a further report on attainment would be coming to Committee in March and she would be happy to provide more information on attendance and ways the team are engaging with children and their families to support them in attending school in some way.

Councillor Gilbert asked if current financial constraints have had any negative impacts on the plan. Ms McDowell stated affordability was at the forefront of minds when creating the plan to make sure the priorities put forward can be achieved within the budget available to the department. She added at the moment there is no perceived negative impact on the plan, but future updates will be provided to Committee on the progress being made.

Responding to questions from Councillor Findlay, Ms Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer provided an update on the numeracy and mathematics work that has been undertaken within schools in East Lothian which included a key focus on numeracy assessment, numeracy pedagogy and putting in place frameworks along with tracking children's attainment through nursery and supporting their transition into primary one. She added that a refresh of the curriculum was happening across Scotland with a national response to improvement being overseen by the Mathematics Board. Ms Haspolat confirmed she is a member of that board therefore anything happening nationally will be used to support East Lothians own strategy. She was happy to provide the data on S3 pupils to Councillor Findlay following the meeting.

Councillor Bruce noted that the combined literacy attainment of P1, P4 and P7 pupils showed East Lothian sitting below the national average and asked what work had been done to improve this. Ms McDowell reported work was currently being done on strengthening systems to track pupil progress and on teacher judgement. She explained pupils in P1, P4 and P7 do not sit tests to show the level they are working at, and this is instead based on teacher judgement therefore work is underway to ensure moderation with staff across schools, sectors and stages to make sure decisions on children's progress is accurate. Ms McDowell confirmed due to this work the baseline is now correct and we should be on the road to showing raised attainment and progress towards stretch aims and she is hopeful to report on these improvements in March. Responding to a follow up question from Councillor Bruce,

Ms McDowell stated in some cases we had underreported on where our attainment was sitting.

Responding to questions from Councillor Yorkston, Ms McDowell provided information on how the department takes account of national and local expectations when developing the progress report and improvement plan including the National Numeracy Group, using the ADES networks to hear from colleagues across Scotland about what other local authorities are doing, visiting other areas to see their good practice, meeting regularly with our Senior Regional Advisor from Education Scotland and our inspection link to discuss inspection results and action plans. She added that through ADES the Heads of Service across Scotland have been put into groups with other local authorities of a similar demographic to support and challenge each other with their improvement priorities and attainment. Ms McDowell confirmed that other local authorities have visited schools within East Lothian as well as staff from here visiting other local authorities.

Councillor Hampshire thanked the team for bringing the improvement plan to Committee and thanked all staff within schools throughout East Lothian. He noted the difficulties the department faces to deliver actions within the plan due to the current financial situation but praised their ability to still deliver a quality education service. Councillor Hampshire highlighted the work being done on children's health and well being within schools and thanked staff for the work being done around this.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms McDowell for her report and was heartened to know work on strengthening the representation of pupil voice was being done to allow as many diverse voices to be heard in each school setting. She welcomed the success and progress being made and valued the development of priorities being on a three cycle but still updated annually as it showed the department were being responsive to changes. Councillor Dugdale looked forward to the report from the Scottish Government on the work undertaken within East Lothian to contribute towards the national knowledge of our neurodiverse learners.

Decision

The agreed to:

- i) Note the overall positive progress made by the Education Service in delivery of the Council's Plan, the Education Progress and Improvement Plan 2023/24 and the priorities within the National Improvement Framework.
- ii) Note the steps being taken to secure continuous improvement in session 2024/25.
- iii) Approve the Progress Report and Improvement Plan 2024/25 (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.

A roll call vote was carried out for the approval of the Progress Report and Improvement Plan 2024/25. This was approved unanimously.

3. CHILDRENS SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN

A report was submitted by the Executive Director, Education and Children's Services to provide an update to Committee about the Children's Services Business Plan 2023-2026, which sets out the key priorities for the service. The Plan was reviewed and refreshed in September 2024 to ensure it aligns to the new Council priorities.

Ms Jennifer Fraser, General Manager – Children’s Services reported the reviewed plan sets out the vision, aims and operating principles within the service and is aligned with the shared ambition of East Lothian’s Children’s Strategic Partnership and Children’s Service Plan. She noted the key successes which included; an increase to East Lothian’s fostering fee, new Family Support and Outreach Service and a new Parent Partner Scheme. She made Members aware that despite the significant increase in demand for services and complexity, the Signs of Safety practice approach to working alongside families and the commitment to meeting the Promise had resulted in a reduction of children requiring accommodation. Ms Fraser highlighted the key outcomes, ongoing pressures and risks within Children’s Services and noted the five priority outcomes of the Business Plan;

- We will ensure our practice and our service prevents the need for children and young people to leave their family where this is safely possible;
- We will build capacity in our internal care resources;
- We will bring children and young people back to East Lothian from external placements;
- We will embed the systemic approach to self-evaluation, performance management and quality assurance and;
- We will have a sufficient, confident, skilled, supported workforce.

She added the service was confident that the plan includes the right actions to meet the Promise, support the Belonging to East Lothian approach, and to ensure that children and young people have the best chance to remain safely within their families and communities when this is possible.

Councillor Ritchie asked to hear more about the Family Support and Outreach and had there been any feedback from this service. Ms Fraser confirmed the Outreach Programme was specifically for families who required more intensive support as it was available seven days a week which is not something the service had been able to offer consistently before. She noted that this service has stopped a number of children from being accommodated and there was now a seamless referral process for crisis check-in support for weekend high risk and positive outcomes have been reported from referrals being received at the right time. Ms Fraser stated there had been an unanticipated level of demand for post-adoption support referrals which have made up 25% of referrals to the outreach team so this is something the adoption and kinship team will be looking at more closely going forward. She explained the key focus of the service at the minute is for social workers to identify families who require the level of support as you can see an escalating picture through their history so the timing for intensive intervention is crucial to having the biggest impact as well as using the team to build relationships with children who have a plan to return home parallel with parenting support to enable the best chance of a return home being sustainable.

Responding to a follow-up question from Councillor Ritchie, Ms Fraser confirmed there was no direct work done with community organisations but the service did work collaboratively with Connected Communities and Families Together East Lothian to complete early intervention work whereas the outreach service is for children who are at significant risk of harm and require crisis intervention which is why there is a tiered approach for intervention at different levels for families to access when they need it.

Councillor Yorkston asked why the service felt like there was a need for a restructure and redesign to take place. Ms Fraser explained that in terms of data more children were being accommodated than before and felt weren’t set up in a way to allow practice in line with The Promise and became a focus and changing needs of children and families. She added that the family support service required clearer

timelines and oversight, children and families were not getting support from right part of service due to blocks and certain things within the service needed to be brought into line with national priorities as well as more focus on youth justice due to increasing demand and risk in particular areas.

Responding to a further questions from Councillor Yorkston, Ms Fraser reported for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people a daily fee was received from home office to provide housing, clothing, education, living costs and staff to support them but often the daily fee does not cover all their needs. She explained this part of the service had grown considerably over the last few year and discussions were ongoing between the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Home Office to address this.

Councillor McIntosh asked for an explanation about the red, amber and green colouring on the action plan. Ms Fraser explained the RAG rating was helpful for monitoring and monthly business meetings and Performance and Care Governance meetings in terms of the actions. She noted the red action mentioned in regard to the Promise was because the Brightspot survey had suffered technical issues.

Responding to follow up questions from Councillor McIntosh relating to formal and informal kinship care and self-directed support payments, Ms Fraser confirmed financial support was offered to those families following the informal route to gain a Section 11 which removes a child from being formally looked after. She advised Members these children would continue to receive the same support, financially, practically and emotionally as children who were in formal kinship care placements. Ms Fraser explained informal kinship arrangements are not classed looked after and accommodated so are not subject to same review process and not in hearing system and they would not be eligible for through care and after care support. She reported that it had been identified challenging for families in current climate to employ their own PA's therefore it was the duty of the service to think of alternatives to that so work with adult services is in the early stages.

Councillor Dugdale asked what we are doing to look after the wellbeing of staff. Ms Fraser reported this field was challenging and management were aware of the impact of stress and burn out on the work force therefore changes had been made to supervision procedures with more focus on support and development. She confirmed adjustments had also been made to the personal review and development process with the addition of a Keeping Well section and the in most recent staff survey social work scored highly for development opportunities and reported staff felt supported and confident which was good reassurance for the service.

Councillor Ritchie commended the really important work of supporting families as this was key to delivering on The Promise and was encouraged to see focus on increasing capacity and that staff are supported and equipped to meet the needs of children especially in light of budget pressures. She added The Promise and delivering on it for our children and young people was one of the most important things we can be doing as a Council so was pleased to see this report brought to Committee.

Councillor Hampshire highlighted the significant reduction in children and young people who were looked after and accommodated and in residential care since 2023 which resulted in a reduction in cost to the service however, they remained under huge pressure financially due to demands increasing every year. He thanked staff for all they do with limited budget but made it clear the service needed urgent new funding due to the harm that can come to children unless resource and support is

available. Councillor Hampshire once again thanked staff for the plan in front of us and for the work they do protecting children and young people across East Lothian.

Councillor McIntosh thanked the staff for the plan and was pleased to see work over the years come to fruition. She also thanked the Champions Board who also input into this work to ensure the voice young people is embedded into it. Councillor McIntosh noted a celebration event for the Champions Board was taking place next Wednesday at Queen Margaret Union and encouraged all to attend.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Ms Fraser and everyone else who worked to achieve all the service does. She highlighted the range of work to support children and families in East Lothian and the demand on services always increasing and complexity of need is greater than ever has been before but even with this being the service have achieved a reduction in number of children and young people who are looked after and accommodated. Councillor Dugdale made Members aware of the recent joint inspection which showed the effectiveness of multiagency approaches to help to meet needs of children, families and young people earlier and noted these innovations take work, time and highly motivated, dedicated staff and all of this is done while also keeping an eye on budgets.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. Note the overall positive progress made by Children's Services and key success to date.
- ii. Note the newly aligned Children's Services Business Plan 2023-26 (Appendix 1).

4. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF DUNBAR PRIMARY SCHOOL

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 Dunbar Primary School.

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 to evaluate the quality of provision at Dunbar Primary School. She noted Dunbar Nursery Class was not part of the inspection process as it was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within 18 months of the school inspection.

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 Dunbar Primary School as a result of the inspection.

Ms Haspolat reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Dunbar Primary School secured gradings of 3 or satisfactory for all quality indicators inspected in the school. 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 was delighted the hard work of staff had been recognised.

Councillor Hampshire asked what supports had been provided by the authority since the inspection. Ms Haspolat confirmed support and challenge were provided to the school pre and post inspection and it has been agreed as part of a service level agreement that the Quality Improvement Officer, Council officers, Head Teachers, other senior leaders and partners such as Education Scotland would continue to offer this support. Ms Haspolat has worked with senior leaders and staff within the school around their understanding of their data and moderation, both of which were areas for improvement identified during the inspection. She noted the school Education Support Officer had been involved in developing and supporting an action plan for the school. Ms Jacqui Mackinnon, Head Teacher at Dunbar Primary School confirmed they had received a huge amount of support pre and post inspection from the whole department which she and staff were extremely appreciative of as well as support from other Head Teachers from matched schools to discuss best practice. She gave specific thanks to Ms Haspolat for her ongoing support and highlighted the benefit to the school of the Pedagogy Team.

Responding to a follow up question from Councillor Hampshire, Ms Mackinnon stated responses from parent questionnaires were low and parent council meetings were poorly attended but parents would always attend events ran by their children and the school wanted to capitalise on this therefore a series of events have been run over the year to allow children to bring an adult from their life into school so they can be educated on how the school is educating children on numeracy so it ties back into the improvement plan. She noted the parent council has now gone from 8 members to 42 after support from Leanne Ayton and Bev Skirrow and this helps provide constant dialogue between the school and the community and the three school priorities all have a parental focus to them. Ms Mackinnon explained if there have been any issues raised by parents, once resolved staff look at how this experience can be used to shape our future.

Responding to a question from Councillor Yorkston, Ms Haspolat explained there is a rolling programme for quality improvement programmes but there is also a service level agreement with each school in East Lothian, so support and challenge is negotiated with Head Teachers and Quality Improvement Officers. She noted post pandemic the Quality Improvement Team have embarked on an ambitious review programme with primary and secondary schools and where reviews were carried out in partnership with each school using various review models to reflect the different context and positions schools.

Councillor Dugdale asked how the key strengths in leadership has continued to develop and how this is supporting improvements within the school. Ms Mackinnon confirmed the Senior Leadership Team had been restructured so the role of the Depute Head Teachers has been changed to improve the relationship between them and pupils and they are responsible for the attainment and support of each child within their campus to allow for smoother transition.

Councillor Hampshire thanked Ms Mackinnon and her staff within the school for their hard work and felt confident the improvements stated within the report would be carried out. He highlighted Dunbar was a strong community and with parental support he felt the school will go from strength to strength.

Councillor Dugdale also thanked Ms Mackinnon for attending today and answering questions from Members and thanked Ms Haspolat for her report. She highlighted

the key strengths from the report and felt reassured after hearing about the work being undertaken for the areas of improvement.

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 (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii. 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.
- iv. Note the key strengths identified by the Inspection Team and progress made since the inspection.

5. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION REPORT OF ATHELSTANEFORD 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 Athelstaneford 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? (HGIOS? 4) quality indicators for primary inspections and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare (HGIOELC?) quality indicators for nursery class inspections to evaluate the quality of provision at Athelstaneford Primary School and Nursery and Early Years provisions.

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 main findings of the inspection team and a summary of the schools capacity to improve the quality of its own work which meant inspectors would not return to Athelstaneford Primary School as a result of the inspection.

Mr Trussler reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Athelstaneford Primary School secured gradings of 4 or good for all quality indicators inspected in the school and nursery class. 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. He assured Members that the Education Service was confident in the plans for continued improvement for the next session in the primary school and was delighted the hard work of staff had been recognised.

Councillor Bennett asked if Mr Trussler could expand on how the Education Service learns from Education Scotland's inspections and how does it use the findings to effect change and improvements across schools. Mr Trussler explained the Quality Improvement Team considers outcomes from a range of inspections even wider than East Lothian to identify effective practice and there are several Head Teachers who are Associate Assessors and support Education Scotland inspections nationally which allows for inspection learning across schools by supporting our own school review programme and sharing non-school specific learning with associated colleagues at associated school group and team level. He also provided an example of how East Lothian has taken learning and applied this to the quality assurance processes used within their schools by the use of quality assurance calendars.

Responding to a question from Councillor Dugdale, Mr Trussler explained post inspection Head Teachers and staff will review their current school improvement priorities and actions against the findings of inspection to support schools to rationalise current improvement focuses and prioritises these moving forward and confirmed Mr Brown and Mr Moody had collaborated to do this. Mr Moody confirmed most of the actions put in place by himself and Mr Brown had been implemented and they had revisited plans to include a clear focus on assessment and these plans were discussed regularly with teachers.

Councillor Dugdale thanked Mr Trussler for his report and thanked Mr Moody and Mr Brown for their attendance at Committee. She noted the many strengths from the report highlighting the children within the nursery and primary school have an understanding of their rights and their voices being heard.

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 (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii) Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 3).
- iv) Note that because of the inspection findings, Education Scotland will not make a follow-up visit in connection with this inspection.
- v) Note the key strengths identified by the Inspection Team and progress made since the inspection.

6. EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION OF CAMPIE 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 Campie 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? (HGIOS? 4) quality indicators for primary inspections and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare (HGIOELC?) quality indicators for nursery class inspections to evaluate the quality of provision at Campie 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 main findings of the inspection team and a summary of the schools capacity to improve the quality of its own work. He stated although most findings were satisfactory across primary classes these were graded as weak across Early Learning and Childcare. The overall grading across the primary school and nursery classes means inspectors will return to Campie Primary School as a result of this inspection within 12 months.

Mr Trussler reported the summary of inspection findings could be found within the report and highlighted Campie Primary School secured gradings of 3 or satisfactory for all quality indicators inspected in the school and 2 or weak for all quality indicators

within the nursery class. 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. He assured Members that the Education Service was confident in the plans for continued improvement for the next session in the primary school and was delighted the hard work of staff had been recognised.

Councillor McFarlane asked since the inspection in April what improvement changes had been implemented and what impact have these had. Mr Trussler since the inspection and before the publication of the report, he and senior leaders had reviewed the summary of inspection findings and drafted an improvement plan for 2024/25 to reflect the main improvement priorities identified in the inspection letter to parents. He confirmed this plan had been shared with staff within the primary school and nursery classes. Mrs Mercer, Head Teacher Campie Primary School reported the implementation of the quality assurance calendar has led to an improvement in teachers planning, the quality of experience and outcomes for children and an increased professional dialogue around the curriculum. She added a great deal of time had been spent identifying support needs across the school, reorganisation of support staff, quality input from the Pedagogy Team, developing Pupil Leadership Groups inline with the Rights Respecting School programme and the school are expected to receive their gold award by the end of the session. Mrs Mercer noted parents and carers now receive a weekly update on what is happening around the school which includes school improvement and Google Classroom is now being updated weekly so all parents and carers have a forum where they can read about their childrens learning as well as the relaunch of the Campie Code and Campie Way and the introduction of the Zones of Regulation. Ms Alison Cameron, Service Manager – Early Learning and Childcare reported she and Mr Trussler had been working alongside Mrs Mercer and her team to look at the service level agreement from an early learning and childcare perspective to focus on four key quality indicators from How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare; Leadership of Change, Learning, Teaching and Assessment, Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion and Securing Childrens Progress. She added an identified Educational Support Officer is leading on this work who is joined by Quality and Equity Leads to work across the nursery with the team. Ms Cameron explained so far this term the early learning and childcare central team have provided training on the four refreshed building high quality and foundations documents; Environment, Observations, Planning and Learning Stories with the initial focus being on developing high quality curricular observations linked to meaningful planning. She provided Members with further information on the work of the Quality and Equity Leads, the Senior Early Years Practitioner and the Education Support Officer within Campie Nursery. Ms Cameron stated as an Early Learning and Childcare Team they would continue to provide advice, support and challenge on evaluation of judgments on all quality indicators and give guidance and support where required.

Responding to questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Cameron stated the Council have to ensure they are meeting their legislative responsibility particularly under safeguarding to make sure all personal plans are in place for children and ensuring equity and inclusion are at the forefront of everything. She added one of the main points have been to support staff to understand how to support children with specific needs or who may become dysregulated and also to ensure the Childs Planning Framework is up to date and strategies are documented to support all children who need them within the setting. Ms Cameron confirmed it was absolutely critical to have all processes followed and that they are documented especially within a nursery setting due to the number of practitioners working with children therefore they need to be

ready, available and understand the needs of children and can only do that if communicating clearly through the child's plan and also with parents.

Councillor McIntosh also asked if we were satisfied or has there been a risk that any child has been placed at risk of harm due to there not being full safeguarding processes in place. Mr Trussler explained as part of inspections the quality indicator for safeguarding and wellbeing is looked at and as a result of the inspection process there were a range of factors which were highlighted during inspection, and these were addressed, and a solution put in place. He added since the beginning of this school session the school has received support from our Educational Support Officer for Child and Public Protection to carry out a full review of the quality indicator on safeguarding and some small improvements have been highlighted and identified so the team are extremely confident that the concerns raised during the inspection have been addressed, the practice has been improved and children are indeed safe and well while in school.

Responding to a question from Councillor Ritchie, Mr Trusser confirmed the Quality Improvement Team provided two reviews to the school prior to the inspection, one in session 2021/22 and then again in 2022/23 which provided additional evidence to senior leaders regarding the areas for priority in terms of improvement and a measure of impact of improvement at that time. He added that additional resource was allocated in terms of enhanced quality improvement support and additional learning support from the Pedagogy Team as well as learning visits from Senior Leaders and the Quality Improvement Team to see the impact upon learners' experiences and outcomes.

Councillor Bennett asked how the Education Service was supporting the school to take improvements forward. Mr Trussler stated additional time from the Pedagogy Team was allocated last term and once again this term to support improvements in terms of planning for teaching, learning and assessment. Mrs Mercer confirmed she has received a lot of support from the Quality Improvement Team since she has been in post and although work has started on the improvement plan this will be done over a three year period but for the remaining part of this session the school will continue to look at the development of play pedagogy in primary one and two, improving the way staff track and monitor the teaching of phonics in primary one and two and a number of staff have been trained in cooperative learning strategies which will be used in the classroom and then these teachers will become the leaders to roll out this learning to staff across the school. She added some staff have been involved in the national improvement work on writing and remaining staff will have received this training by February 2025.

Councillor Hampshire thanked Mrs Mercer and staff for all they are doing at the school, and he was hopeful the improvements being made within the early years facility will bring it in line to where it needs to be, and future improvements will be seen at the school.

Councillor Dugdale noted the significant strengths mentioned within the report and the work underway to address the areas requiring improvement.

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 (SIF) (Appendix 2).
- iii) Note the content of the Summary of Inspection Findings for the Nursery Class (SIF) (Appendix 3).

- iv) Note that because of the inspection findings, Education Scotland will make a follow-up visit in connection with this inspection within 12 months of the publication of the inspection report.
- v) Note the key strengths identified by the Inspection Team and progress made since the inspection.

7. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS (ASN) FUNDING

A report was submitted by the Executive Director – Education and Children’s Services to seek the Committee’s approval for the proposed changes to the allocation of funding to support children and young people with ASN.

Jennifer Boyle, Quality Improvement Manager for Equity and Education reported the current system of funding for ASN comprises of Predictable and Exceptional Needs. Predictable Needs is based on the school role and free school meal entitlement and Exceptional Needs is made via the submission of a Child’s Plan to an annual panel to assess and moderate if the child or young person needs are complex and enduring, if granted exceptional needs are assessed as either low, medium or high and this correlates to a number of ASN Auxiliary hours of support. She explained the current system particularly considers those with a free school meal entitlement or those whose needs are exceptional which is too narrow a definition due to the landscape of additional support needs changing rapidly across Scotland with a significant increase in the number of children and young people with additional support needs. Mrs Boyle stated from 2014 to 2023 the number of children with additional support needs in East Lothian had risen by 84% and the profile of needs has changed, most predominantly in social and emotional needs and those associated with the autistic spectrum disorder. She explained this is due to improved awareness and recording of children and young people with additional support needs, socioeconomic factors such as the cost of living crisis, rising levels of poor mental health and the global 2019 pandemic as well as advances in medicine and neonatal care have improved infant survival rates. Ms Boyle confirmed the policy and legislative approaches to meeting additional needs were not changing and East Lothian was committed to getting it right for every child through our Child Planning Framework and to continue efficiency and effectiveness of ASN funding allocations a working group of school leaders and central staff had been established, led by herself. She drew Members attention to the current constraints the working group found with the current funding system, and they have agreed a set of principles which should underpin the allocation of a revolved additional support needs funding system and provided information on what the new system of funding for ASN would offer. Ms Boyle noted the proposed new model of funding would assume the same overall level of funding as that which is currently available therefore it would be possible that there would be increases and decreases to the funding of individual schools which is also true for the current system, however, to mitigate against significant swings, a smoothing effect would be applied for the first three years of transition to the proposed new system.

Councillor McIntosh asked if funding for special schools or units would be allocated the same way. Ms Boyle confirmed the allocation of funding to specialist provisions is and would continue to be separate and the proposal discussed today was for mainstream school settings only.

Responding to questions from Councillor Ritchie, Ms Boyle explained there had not been a distinct funding stream from the Scottish Government to address needs of ASN children within schools however a range of funding streams into schools and education system which do meet the needs of children with ASN. She added within her own

service schools receive an allocation of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) based on the number of children entitled to free school meals as poverty is recognised as a factor that gives rise to additional support needs, funding under the Scottish Attainment Challenge for ensuring attainment of children who are care experienced and the Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) which looks at closing the poverty related attainment gap. Ms Boyle also provided information on the work of the Early Learning and Childcare and Educational Psychology Teams which also support children and young people with additional support needs. She confirmed that all factors are individual, and modelling had been undertaken to look at individual children to see what they would receive under the current system and what they may receive later and made Members aware all current funding streams were guaranteed until 2025/26. Ms Boyle explained that the proposed model would break the direct relationship between the funding a child gets and would be more about what a school will receive in totality.

Councillor Findlay asked if the new model, or any major elements of it, had been used in other local authority areas and what had the outcomes been. Ms Boyle reported Midlothian were also currently looking at a model similar to the proposed but at the moment she would be unable to provide an update on the evaluation of its impact but confirmed other local authorities were looking to move to a data led approach.

Ms Boyle continued to answer questions from Members, providing information on the percentage breakdown of children with social and emotional additional support needs and children who are on the autistic spectrum and confirmed the Council's legislative duties around ASN funding would not change even if the proposed model was approved.

Councillor Yorkston thanked all staff who had been involved in developing the proposed plan as given the large number of children it would be supporting it is vital to get the correct resource in place and he hoped this would be a good step forward in achieving that.

Councillor Dugdale commented on the huge amount of thought and consideration that had gone into the proposed plan and thanked everyone involved for their work on it. She noted meeting the needs of learners and making sure the allocation of ASN funding is a key component and therefore welcomed the report and the plans for transition to the new system and looked forward to future updates on how this was working.

Councillor Ritchie echoed the comments already made and was excited about East Lothian taking a leading role in changing how we look to allocate ASN funding and meeting children's needs.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i) Approve the proposed changes to the principles for the allocation of funding for children and young people with ASN.

A roll vote was carried out and Members unanimously agreed to approve the proposed changes to the principles for the allocation of funding for children and young people with ASN.

8. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-2028

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Education and Childrens Services to ask Committee to approve the East Lothian Council Parental Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 (Appendix 1) together with the abbreviated document East Lothian Council Parental Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 Summary Document for Parents (Appendix 2).

Leanne Ayton, Principal Officer, Equity & Inclusion reported the Parental Engagement Strategy was launched in 2017 to aim to ensure all parents and carers are encouraged and supported to engage as partners in their children's learning and to become involved in the life of the school. The strategy also ensure the department continue to build on good practice and create further opportunities for our parents and schools to work together. She made Members aware the strategy was reviewed over 2023/24 with the main objectives being; to assess the effectiveness of the strategy and to determine whether our schools are delivering parental engagement effectively. A short life working group was formed to gather views from parents, parent councils, pupils and schools to evaluate the impact of the six strands of the strategy and once analysed school specific reports were shared with head teachers and parent councils to identify areas of strength or development and an authority wide report was shared with East Lothian parent council members which showed good practice across the county. Ms Ayton asked Members to note as the review received mostly positive responses the strategy was deemed to be working well and has therefore not assumed any significant changes and instead only minor amendments have been made. The effectiveness of the strategy will again be evaluated at the end of 2028 and the team will continue to work with schools, parents and parent councils as required over this period.

Councillor Yorkston asked why there was a such a delay on the first Parental Engagement Strategy being issued. Ms Ayton explained there was a review of the Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act 2006 in 2017 conducted by the National Parent Forum of Scotland and around that time school boards became parent councils and it was recommended duties and powers related to parental engagement in children's learning should feature as a more prominent aspect of legislative framework and that parental involvement officers should be identified to take forward this work and the Parental Engagement Strategy was launched following this.

Responding to a question from Councillor Ritchie, Ms Ayton provided examples of good parental engagement including intergenerational groups and East Lothian Works Parental Workshops.

Councillor Dugdale asked for more information regarding the consultation that took place to update the strategy. Ms Ayton explained the school was approached for volunteers to make up a good selection of stakeholders for their views and they met numerous times to discuss what they wished to achieve from the review and as a group compiled questions, we thought best evaluated the effectiveness of the six strands of the strategy. These were then distributed to parents, schools, parent councils and pupils where responses were examined and identified themes were reported to head teachers and parent councils as well as forming an authority report.

Councillor Hampshire welcomed the report and the intergenerational groups as this had benefits to the older people as well as the pupils and strengthened the feeling within the community.

Councillor Dugdale noted the significant engagement with our parents, parent councils, schools and pupils and as a result no major changes were required to the strategy which was a testament to our work with parents across all schools and she would encourage all parents and carers to get involved as much as they can with their childs school.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i) Approve and adopt the East Lothian Council Parental Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 (Appendix 1). A copy of the Strategy will be provided to all schools in East Lothian, out Partner Providers – Early Learning and Childcare Settings and our Parent Councils. The Strategy will also be available on East Lothian Council’s website.
- ii) Approve and adopt the East Lothian Council Parental Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 Summary Document for Parents (Appendix 2). A copy of the Summary Document will be provided to all schools in East Lothian, our Partner Providers – Early Learning and Childcare Settings and our Parent Councils.

A roll call vote was carried out and Members unanimously agreed to approve and adopt both the East Lothian Council Parental Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 and the East Lothian Council Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 Summary Document for Parents.

9. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS

A verbal report was given by the Head of Education to inform the Committee of the Head Teacher appointment made by the Appointments Sub-Committee.

Nicola McDowell, Head of Education reported that Mrs Carol Colville had been appointed the preferred candidate for the Head Teacher post at Stoneyhill Primary School following the announcement of current Head Teacher, Kate Whitley will retire at Christmas. She noted Mrs Colville had spent most of her career at Stoneyhill starting as class teacher, then principal teacher and deputy head teacher and no one could fault her commitment to the school and the community and was delighted with her new appointment.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed Mrs Colville to her new position and thanked all parents and pupils who are involved in the recruitment process.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointment.

Signed

Education Committee – 19.11.24

Councillor Fiona Dugdale
Convener of the Education Committee