

Education Executive
18 August 2009

IRVINE, 18 August 2009 - At a Meeting of the Education Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 1.00 p.m.

Present

John Bell, Tom Barr, Margaret McDougall, Very Reverend Matthew Canon McManus, Peter McNamara, David O'Neill and John Reid.

In Attendance

I. Snodgrass, Chief Executive; E. Murray, Chief Executive Designate; C. Kirk, Corporate Director; J. Ward and M. Docherty, Heads of Service (Educational Services); J. Montgomery, General Manager, Chief Executive Services; P. Shiach, Committee Services Officer and J. Stevenson, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's).

Also In Attendance

K. Cairns, Headteacher, Winton Primary School, Ardrossan and S. Mackie, Headteacher, Irvine Royal Academy, Irvine.

Chair

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Reverend D. Karoon and J. Scott.

1. Ardrossan: Winton Primary School: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on Winton Primary School, Ardrossan.

Winton Primary School was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in May 2009 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages.

HM Inspectors evaluated pupil's achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning and the school's processes for self-evaluation. They examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils and staff. Members of the Inspection Team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council, representatives of local partners and a group of parents.

The Report by HM Inspectors was published on 30 June 2009 and identified the following key strengths:

- The school's inclusive ethos and the arrangements for promoting children's health and well-being.
- Children's wider achievements.
- Children's progress in the early years.
- The school's use of visitors and visits to enrich children's learning.

The following areas for improvement were agreed between HMIE, the school and Educational Services:

- Improve children's attainment in English language and mathematics, particularly by P7.
- Increase the pace and challenge in lessons in order to better meet children's learning needs.
- Involve all staff in improving the work of the school through sharing good practice and developing more systematic self-evaluation.

In consultation with the designated Quality Improvement Officer and staff, the Headteacher has put plans in place to incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE report into the School Improvement Plan. The school's plan to address the recommendations will be submitted to the Head of Service for approval following consultation with staff and the Parent Council and will subsequently be shared with parents and carers.

In terms of revised follow-through procedures, HMIE will make no further visits following this inspection. The District Inspector will maintain contact with Educational Services about the school's attainment at the upper stages. The school's progress will be reported to parents through the normal school and Council processes.

Mrs. K Cairns, the Headteacher of the school was present and answered Members' questions. The Education Executive recorded its appreciation of the positive inspection report.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) approve the proposals made to address the key points for action in the Inspection Report; and (b) note the arrangements for follow-through.

2. Activity Agreement Pilot

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the development of an Activity Agreement Pilot during 2009 to 2011, to increase the number of school leavers entering a positive destination on leaving school.

From August 2009, the Scottish Government will pilot Activity Agreements in ten local authority areas. North Ayrshire has been invited to participate in this initiative. The other pilot areas are Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire.

The report detailed the purpose of an Activity Agreement, which is an agreement between a young person and an advisor, where a young person will take part in an agreed programme to help them become ready for forward learning or employment. The young person may receive an allowance in return for complying with the agreement.

Local MCMC partnerships have the lead role in developing Activity Agreements. Funding has been made available to the ten pilot authorities to assist them develop Activity Agreements. North Ayrshire Council has been offered a grant of £813,792 payable over the financial years 2009-2011 to pilot Activity Agreements.

Activity Agreements will be developed in the context of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and 16+Learning Choices.

Scottish Government guidance on Activity Agreements provides a list of factors, as indicated in appendix 1 to the report, which make young people more likely to disengage from learning. It was recommended that local planning takes account of these factors, albeit it is stressed that Activity Agreements should take account of the individual needs of young people.

The report advised that community learning and development opportunities - in both the public and the third sector - as well as volunteering will be key aspects of Activity Agreements. There is no prescribed length of time for participation in an Activity Agreement, however it is recommended that programmes of activity last for 10-12 weeks. Appendix 2 to the report provided a list of the types of opportunities which might be included in an Activity Agreement.

For the most vulnerable young people, a strong relationship with a trusted professional acting in an advisory and guidance role, will be a crucial element of participating in and sustaining learning. Many young people entering an Activity Agreement will already have established links and relationships with a range of services and agencies including guidance staff in schools, Community Learning and Development youth workers, social work, criminal justice and the voluntary sector. The role of this group of staff in providing advisory support to young people to move to the next steps in learning will be developed during the Pilot.

It was proposed that a Project Manager be appointed, funded by the grant, on a seconded basis to lead the development of the Activity Agreement Pilot. This will involve commissioning as appropriate, learning provision from a range of public, private and third sector agencies, enhancing existing mapping of services and opportunities for young people to support the Pilot, improving the processes by which young people's needs and interests are assessed and assessments are shared with partners, and collecting and sharing information necessary for the evaluation of the Pilot. Details of the protocols in terms of data accessing and sharing arrangements with the various partners involved to monitor the Pilot were contained in the report.

It is the intention to introduce Activity Agreements in August 2009 to approximately fifty school leavers who have been identified as being not ready to move to formal learning, training or employment. The young people have been identified through the 16+ Learning Choices pathfinder and in discussion with Skills Development Scotland key workers and staff from Social Services and the Extended Outreach Team. Young people will have access to the non-formal learning opportunities and activities developed by CLDS, the Volunteer Centre and CEIS in the first instance.

Work will begin in September 2009 to identify the winter leavers who are at risk of entering a negative destination on leaving school in order to assess their eligibility for an Activity Agreement and to begin planning to meet their needs.

Work requires to be undertaken with regard to administration of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) to young people participating in Activity Agreements. Funding will be allocated from the Activity Agreement grant to cover costs relating to the amendment of the administration arrangements for EMAs to allow payments to be made to young people taking part in the Pilot.

The report proposed that all young people participating in the Activity Agreement Pilot in August will receive a weekly EMA payment of £30.00 and detailed the criteria for payment of the EMA, and role of the trusted professional.

Increasing the number of young people leaving school for positive destinations (further or higher education, employment, training or volunteering) is a key outcome in North Ayrshire Council's Single Outcome Agreement.

As Activity Agreements will be focused on supporting our most vulnerable young people it will be important to ensure that inequalities issues are addressed in developing the model. The Scottish Government's equality impact assessment clearly identified a need to focus on transitions for young people with disabilities as well as the likelihood that more young men than women will access Activity Agreements. Through the Pilot the MCMC partnership will also focus on the above issues and will also identify whether there is a particular impact on young people due to race, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

The Scottish Government consulted with MCMC partnerships during November 2008 to February 2009 on the development of 16+ Learning Choices: First Step Activity and Financial Support. The Activity Agreement Pilot is based on the response to the national consultation.

The Education Executive was advised that, in order to properly monitor the Pilot, regular progress reports will be brought back in due course, the first by the end of 2009.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) the development of the Activity Agreement Pilot; and (b) receive further progress reports at future meetings.

3. Irvine Royal Academy Progress Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on progress made by Irvine Royal Academy since the HMIE follow-through in March 2008.

HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Irvine Royal Academy in March 2006. Working with the school, Educational Services prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE report.

Subsequently, HMIE carried out an interim inspection in February 2007 and published an interim inspection report in May 2007.

HM Inspectors revisited the school in March 2008 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report. The Inspectors acknowledged that the school, with the strong support of the Council, had made good progress since the original inspection in addressing the main points for action.

Progress made by the school in terms of the follow-through was last reported to the Education Executive on 19 August 2008. At that time it was intimated that a further progress report would be shared with HMIE.

A visit to the school was undertaken by the Quality Improvement Service in May 2009 to evaluate the continuing progress made by the school in responding to the main points for action in the initial report. Details on progress were provided in appendix 1 to the report.

Irvine Royal Academy and the Council have worked hard to build on the progress made by the school since the publication of the follow-through report in 2008. As a result the school has made very good progress in addressing the main points for action identified in the original report. The Headteacher and staff recognise the need for improvement in attainment.

In June 2009 HMIE launched the publication "Learning Together: Lessons about School Improvement" and invited the Quality Improvement Service to present a case study featuring Irvine Royal Academy as an example of good practice.

The school has significantly strengthened its capacity for improvement and levels of attainment. The Quality Improvement Service will continue to monitor the work of the school as part of the quality improvement programme.

In terms of the Single Outcome Agreement the improvements noted demonstrate improved provision for developing in pupils the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. Pupils have demonstrated improvements as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Mr. S. Mackie, Headteacher of the school was present and answered Members' questions.

The Education Executive acknowledged the progress made.

4. Extra 100 Teachers for Curriculum for Excellence Implementation

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to provide funding for 100 extra teachers to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

The report indicated that North Ayrshire Council will receive £120,000 of the £4m funding available. 75% of this funding will be distributed by March 2010 with the remainder by March 2011. The funding will enable the release of experienced teachers from the classroom to work across the authority to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. It was further indicated that the secondment of three experienced teachers will result in the creation of three new teaching posts for the 2009/10 school year.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note (i) the arrangements made to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence; and (ii) the creation of 3 new teaching posts; and (b) receive a report on the impact made by the additional teachers in supporting the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in North Ayrshire at a future meeting.

5. The Provision of Educational Services to Children with Additional Support Needs and Requiring Placement External to the Resources of North Ayrshire Council

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on tenders received for the provision of Framework Agreements with external service providers for the provision of educational services to children and young people with additional support needs who require to be placed outwith the resources of North Ayrshire Council. Details of the service providers who submitted rates were contained in an appendix to the report.

The Education Executive agreed to accept the tenders submitted by the eight service providers listed in the appendix to the report

The meeting ended at 2.10 p.m.