

Education Executive
6 January 2009

IRVINE, 6 January 2009 - At a Meeting of the Education Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 1.00 p.m.

Present

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

In Attendance

I. Snodgrass, Chief Executive; C. Kirk, Corporate Director, M. Docherty, J. Leckie and J. Ward, Heads of Service (Educational Services); S. Gault, Head of Service (Community Care) (Social Services); and J. Montgomery, General Manager, P. Shiach, Committee Services Officer, and A. Wattie, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's).

Also In Attendance

E. Ness, Headteacher, St Mark's Primary School, Irvine and A. Nicholson, Headteacher, Cumbrae Primary School, Isle of Cumbrae.

Chair

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Reverend David Karoon.

1. The Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on current developments in relation to healthy eating in schools.

The Schools Health Promotion and Nutrition (Scotland) Act 2007 was passed by the Scottish Parliament in March 2007 and received Royal Assent in April of that year. The Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008 were approved by the Scottish Parliament in June 2008 and came into effect for primary schools on 4 August 2008. Regulations 3 and 4 which respectively relate to school meal requirements and provision of other food and drink will come into effect for secondary schools on 3 August 2009.

In summary, the Act:

- imposes duties on the Scottish Ministers, education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools to endeavour to ensure that public schools and grant-aided schools are health promoting;

- places duties on education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools to ensure that all food and drink provided in schools complies with nutritional requirements specified by Scottish Ministers in regulations;
- places a duty on education authorities to have regard to the nutritional requirements regulations when purchasing a place at an independent school;
- gives education authorities the power to provide pupils with snacks, either free of charge or subject to a charge;
- places a duty on education authorities to promote school lunches and, in particular, free school lunches;
- places a duty on education authorities to take steps to protect the identity of those receiving free school lunches, and
- places a duty on education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools to have regard to any guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers on the application of the principles of sustainable development when providing food or drink or catering services in schools.

The Regulations apply to pupils in local authority schools, grant-aided schools, and hostels maintained by a local authority for pupils. The Regulations apply whether the food and drink is provided by the authority or by a catering company or other organisation on behalf of the authority or grant-aided school. Educational Services works in partnership with the Council's Catering Services and NHS Ayrshire and Arran to promote healthy lifestyles within schools and the wider community. Schools and local authorities were provided with a guide by the Scottish Government.

The Summary guide to implementing the nutritional requirements for food and drink in schools, a copy of which was appended to the report, has been produced by the North Ayrshire Hungry for Success Partnership Group. The Quality Improvement Officer with responsibility for Health Promotion will organise appropriate in-service training for Health Promoting School Co-ordinators across North Ayrshire to ensure effective implementation of the regulations. The Hungry for Success Multi-Disciplinary Group will continue to liaise with schools and service providers to support developments.

Questions were raised about (a) exceptions to the nutritional guidance of the Act and areas outwith the scope of the Regulations, such as food brought into the school by parents and pupils, and (b) the possibility of preventing pupils from leaving school during lunch breaks. Questions were also raised in relation to the provision of healthier alternatives to popular meals, and the position in relation to fast food vans.

The Education Executive was advised that schools could not regulate the contents of packed lunches and that there were difficulties inherent in preventing pupils leaving school during these times, with the effects in terms of behaviour outweighing the effect on health. Confirmation was given that the guidance contained information on the frequency with which certain foods could be provided, and that the position in relation to the siting of fast food vans in close proximity to schools would be clarified.

The Education Executive then heard from the Headteachers of St Mark's and Cumbrae Primary Schools on their respective experiences of the success of the initiative.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note the contents of the report, and (b) to receive future reports on (i) the impact on the uptake of school meals arising from the initiative and (ii) on the experiences of schools in this regard and on their different approaches to healthy eating.

2. Irvine: St Mark's Primary School and Nursery Class: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on St Mark's Primary School and Nursery Class, Irvine.

St Mark's Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in September 2008 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. HM Inspectors evaluated how well children learn and achieve, the impact of self-evaluation in improving learning, the quality of relationships, and leadership of the school. The evaluation of both the primary school and the nursery class contribute to the achievement of targets within the Council's Single Outcome Agreement.

HMIE ceased inspection activity earlier than expected due to the high quality of self-evaluation and the clear direction of the school. The Report by HM Inspectors was published on 18 November 2008. It highlighted the strengths within the school and nursery such as the impact of the Headteacher's leadership on improving children's learning, strong staff teamwork and commitment, effective approaches to meeting children's learning needs and the support and involvement of parents in the life and work of the school. The report also outlined areas requiring attention including the need to continue to improve the curriculum across the nursery and school and to develop links between key areas of children's learning. There is also a need to improve children's performance in English language and mathematics.

In consultation with the designated Quality Improvement Officer and staff, the Headteacher will incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE into the School Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan 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 the revised follow-through arrangements, HM Inspectors will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. A report for parents and carers will be provided by Educational Services within two years of the publication of the report.

Mrs Ness, the Headteacher of St Mark's Primary School advised the Education Executive of her proposals to address the key recommendations of the report.

In response to discussion concerning the conduct of the Inspection, the Education Executive noted that the reaction from the school staff was positive and that they had been encouraged by the comments and actions of the Inspectors.

The Education Executive (a) congratulated the Headteacher on the excellent report; (b) agreed to approve the proposals made to address the key points for action arising from the HMIE Inspection Report; and (c) noted the arrangements for follow-through.

3. Millport: Cumbrae Primary School and Nursery Class: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on Cumbrae Primary School and Nursery Class, Millport.

Cumbrae Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in September and October 2008 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. HM Inspectors evaluated how well children learn and achieve, the impact of self-evaluation in improving learning, the quality of relationships and leadership of the school. As part of the inspection, Inspectors met the Chairperson of the Parent Council, representatives of local partners and a group of parents.

HMIE ceased inspection activity earlier than expected due to the high quality of self-evaluation and the clear direction of the school.

The Report by HM Inspectors was published on 16 December 2008. It highlighted the strengths within the school and nursery such as the outstanding provision for babies and their parents in the baby room, the positive relationships between staff and children, the leadership of the Headteacher and improvements to children's learning experiences through effective self-evaluation, the quality of links with parents and the local community and the wide range of activities to promote healthy lifestyle choices and children's wider achievements. The report also outlined areas requiring attention including continuing to build on the good practice already developed and ensure tasks and activities meet all children's learning needs.

In consultation with the designated Quality Improvement Officer and staff, the Headteacher will incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE into the School Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan 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 the revised follow-through arrangements, HM Inspectors will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. A report for parents and carers will be provided by Educational Services within two years of the publication of the report.

In the course of discussion on the success of the baby room, Mrs Nicholson, the Headteacher of Cumbrae Primary School advised the Education Executive that as a result of the progress and popularity of the initial pilot scheme for two year olds, provision was now being extended to include babies from 6 month to two year olds. She outlined the positive effect that the scheme had had on parents who would otherwise have been unlikely to engage with the nursery or school.

The Education Executive (a) congratulated the Headteacher on the excellent report, (b) agreed to approve the proposals made to address the key points arising from the HMIE Inspection Report, and (c) noted the arrangements for follow-through.

The meeting ended at 1.45 p.m.