

Education Executive
18 November 2008

IRVINE, 18 November 2008 - At a Meeting of the Education Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 1.00 p.m.

Present

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

In Attendance

C Kirk, Corporate Director, M Docherty, J Leckie and J Ward, Heads of Service (Educational Services); and P Shiach, Committee Services Officer; and A Clarke, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

John Reid.

1. Stevenston: Glencairn Primary School: Future Use of Old Building

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on progress of the extension to Glencairn Primary School and proposals for future use of the former school building.

The Council previously approved the building of an extension at Glencairn Primary School, Stevenston, to enable classroom provision to be contained within one building. Progress in this regard was detailed within the report and the expected completion date is November 2008.

Once complete, the current two-storey building will become vacant. The report detailed proposed uses for the property which would support the school in the delivery of PE and offer opportunities to rationalise the property estate of Educational Services.

To make best use of the old building, given its location within the primary school campus it is proposed that the lower floor be converted into a gymnasium and pupil changing areas, and the upper floor be converted into offices for Community Learning and Development and Active Schools Co-ordinators.

The report indicated that the lower floor of the old building is well suited to conversion to a PE facility consisting of two small gyms and two changing areas.

The upper floor of the old building consists of a number of classrooms which could be developed into office areas to accommodate the Active School Co-ordinators and the Community Learning and Development staff from Princes Street in Ardrossan. This would free the Ardrossan office to be declared surplus to Educational Services requirements and would enable the building to be considered within the context of the Irvine Bay Regeneration development.

Several members expressed concern over the possibility of the Ardrossan office, located in a prominent part of the town, being left unoccupied and the subsequent detrimental effect this would have on the area.

The Education Executive agreed (a) to note the progress in relation to the new extension, (b) to proceed with the conversion of the lower storey of the old two-storey building to a PE facility, (c) that a further report on proposals for the upper floor of the building be submitted to the next meeting, and (d) that a report on proposals for the rationalisation of the Educational Services estate be submitted to a future meeting.

2. Stevenston: Ardeer Primary School and Nursery Class: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE report on Ardeer Primary School and Nursery Class, Stevenston.

Ardeer Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in May 2008 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. HM Inspectors evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school and nursery, the environment for learning, the processes for self-evaluation and the capacity for improvement.

The Report by HM Inspectors was published on 7 October 2008. It highlighted the strengths within the school and nursery, such as the learning experiences in the nursery class and at the early stages of primary, pupils' confidence, personal development and contribution to the life of the school and local community, the leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of staff to the children's care and welfare, and the strong partnerships with parents, carers and other community bodies. The report also outlined areas requiring attention including continuing to ensure continuity and progression in the development of pupils' skills across curriculum areas, developing further pupils' attainment in English language and aspects of mathematics, improving further the approaches to teaching and learning to better meet the needs of all learners, and developing more rigorous approaches to self-evaluation in order to further improve the work of the school.

In consultation with the designated Quality Improvement Officer and staff, the headteacher has put plans in place to incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE 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 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.

The headteacher of Ardeer Primary was in attendance at the meeting and the Chair congratulated her on the positive aspects of the report.

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

3. Irvine: Dreghorn Primary School and Nursery Class: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE report on Dreghorn Primary School and Nursery Class, Irvine.

Dreghorn Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in June 2008 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. HM Inspectors evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school and nursery, the environment for learning, the processes for self-evaluation and the capacity for improvement.

The Report by HM Inspectors was published on 7 October 2008. It highlighted the strengths within the school and nursery, such as well behaved courteous pupils and nursery children who were keen to learn, staff commitment to the care and well being of pupils, pupils' involvement and success in a broad range of wider activities, and the very positive culture of inclusion and effective links between pupils in the Educational Support Resource and the school and leadership of the headteacher. The report also outlined areas requiring attention including building on the most effective practice in learning and teaching to ensure greater consistency across the school, improving the pace and challenge of work to meet the needs of all learners, continuing to develop more rigorous approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school including more effective use of assessment data to raise attainment, and improving aspects of accommodation raised in the report.

In consultation with the designated Quality Improvement Officer and staff, the headteacher has put plans in place to incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE 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 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.

The headteacher of Dreghorn Primary was in attendance at the meeting and the Chair congratulated him on the positive aspects of the report.

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

4. Additional Support for Learning: Children in Scotland Research Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcomes of the large-scale Children in Scotland research project around provision of Additional Support for Learning.

The Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 strengthens the duty placed on authorities in the Children's Act (1995) to "seek and take account" of the views of children and young people who have additional support needs in all matters affecting their lives.

Children in Scotland is a well placed national children's charity. Between October 2007 and March 2008 a research team from Children in Scotland was commissioned to conduct a wide scale research across North Ayrshire, details of which were contained within the report.

To date, North Ayrshire is the only authority in Scotland to have conducted such a wide scale exercise. Details of the levels of response were contained in the report which indicated a very high level of stakeholder satisfaction with the current provision of Additional Support for Learning in North Ayrshire. Those responding to the research wanted to see improvements in communications between home and school.

The report proposed that the Quality Improvement Service work with Psychological Services to undertake continued development work at school level to ensure that the quality of information provided to both children and parents is consistently high, and to ensure that information about additional support needs is shared early with children and their parents/carers to ensure that children receive the help they need as early as possible.

Further guidance about how schools can practically seek the views of children is being developed.

The Education Executive noted the outcomes of the research and the commitment made to consult with stakeholders.

5. Youth Work and Curriculum for Excellence

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the contribution of the Community Learning and Development Youth Work Service to improving levels of achievement for young people across North Ayrshire.

Youth work programmes provide opportunities for and support personal achievement making a significant contribution to the MCMC Agenda and assisting young people in need of more choices and more chances to move into positive and sustained post-school destinations.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) recognises the need for schools to work with a range of partners to address the needs of all children and young people and to provide motivating and challenging opportunities.

The Community Learning and Development Youth Work Service has developed a number of local programmes that contribute to wider achievement and support young people's transition into employment or further training. Full details of current developments in North Ayrshire were contained within the report, including The Caley Centre in Stevenston in partnership with schools and the James Watt college offering creative learning opportunities in music and associated information and community technology, the Princes Trust XL programme engaging young people at risk and the Duke of Edinburgh Award being delivered in 4 secondary schools.

The achievements of all learners in community based learning opportunities is tracked in the Performance Information and Evaluation System (PIES).

The Education Executive (a) noted the role of youth work staff in providing personal achievement and personal development opportunities for young people in North Ayrshire, and (b) agreed to receive further reports on future progress.

6. Curriculum for Excellence: A Consultation on New National Qualifications

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the consultation on the new National Qualifications within North Ayrshire Council, and on the Council's response to the Scottish Government.

In June 2008 the Scottish Government published two documents "Building the Curriculum 3" which proposed a number of significant changes to Curriculum for Excellence as reported to the Education Executive on 19 August 2008, and "A consultation on the new generation of national qualifications in Scotland".

The consultation sought views on four main proposals, namely Access, Higher and Advanced Higher Qualifications will be retained as points of stability and updated; a new qualification will replace Standard Grades and Intermediates; new awards in literacy and numeracy , and increased flexibility when taking qualifications.

The Scottish Government has suggested that the new and revised qualifications may be needed from 2012-2013 onwards, and views were requested by 31 October 2008.

Two working groups, the Curriculum for Excellence Strategy Group and the S1-S Working Group have met on several occasions to discuss the proposals. Staff in secondary schools in particular have been given the opportunity to discuss the consultation proposals and these responses helped to shape the final response made by Educational Services on behalf of North Ayrshire Council. The response was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Education Executive noted (a) the consultation process, and (b) the response sent to the Scottish Government on behalf of North Ayrshire Council, Educational Services.

7. Arts-in-Schools Programme

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the development of the Arts-in-School Programme for North Ayrshire.

The North Ayrshire Arts-in-Schools programme is an important contributor to the Curriculum for Excellence, not only in its aim to support raising attainment in Expressive Arts, but also to improve attainment across the curriculum by supporting teachers in deploying a range of techniques to improve learning.

The Arts-in-Schools Programme contributes to and develops local and national priorities for education including improving children's wider achievement. Through initiatives such as Excellent StART, residential workshops at the Harbour Arts Centre and Arran Outdoor Centre, the team contributes to increasing educational achievement by promoting levels of attainment in art. Full details were contained within the report. Examples of the range of work delivered by the service in support of the Council's priorities and its impact on pupils and families were detailed in appendix 1 to the report. In 2007/08 the programme resulted in 13,387 pupil contacts and 250 staff development contacts with teachers.

The Education Executive (a) noted the contribution of North Ayrshire's Arts-in-School Programme in promoting the achievements of young people and (b) agreed to receive further progress reports.

8. Raising Attainment in Literacy Team (RALT)

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the Raising Attainment in Literacy Team Initiative, employed to further improve the reading attainment of pupils in primary schools.

Educational Services has identified and prioritised the need to improve primary aged pupils' attainment in reading.

A team of three experienced teachers, funded from Fairer North Ayrshire have been seconded to work with staff and pupils in those schools identified as in need of additional support, with a target of maximising the number of pupils who attain Level C or better by the end of primary 7.

Current research supports the view that pupils need a minimum of level C in reading to successfully access the secondary curriculum.

The Raising Attainment Literacy Team will work with and build on the successes of the Literacy Strategy Group which has operated within Educational Services since 2002. Attainment in reading over the period 2002-2007 has been tracked in all primary schools and 18 have been identified for additional challenge and support.

A detailed and individualised Action Plan has been agreed with the headteachers of these schools and monitoring and evaluation procedures have been established.

The Education Executive (a) noted the establishment of the Raising Attainment in Literacy initiative, (b) approved the action to be taken to raise attainment and agreed to receive further progress reports.

The Meeting ended a 2.25 p.m.